

GETTING INTO GRADUATE SCHOOL

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CAREER SERVICES TELECONFERENCE (Notes)

Sponsored by Missouri Western State University



Why should you go to graduate school?

1. Interest: You have an academic or vocational interest in advancing your education.
2. Increased satisfaction: You have personal, social or work related reasons that justify your desire to attend graduate school.
3. Money: You have quality of life issues that motivate you to pursue a graduate degree.

Average Salary per Month for:

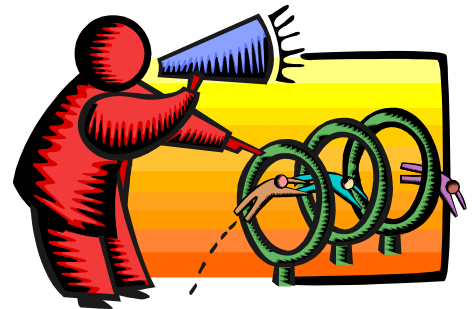


High School Graduate	\$1077.00
Bachelor's Degree	\$2116.00
Master's Degree	\$2822.00*
JD/MD	\$4961.00
PhD	\$3855.00

*The average salary increase between a bachelor's degree and master's degree is \$8472.00 per year.

Why you should **NOT** go to graduate school.

1. To please someone else. (i.e. parents, spouse, employer, etc.).
2. Don't know what you want.
3. To avoid a tight job market.



Ask yourself the following questions.

1. Where do I want to be in 3-5 years?
2. How long does it take to get this degree?
3. Who are the faculty and what is the content of the program?
4. What is the student mix? (Academic majors, professions, age, ethnic background, etc.).
5. What is the attrition rate? (What percentage complete the program?)
6. What is the placement rate of graduates from this program?

What schools offer the program I want?



1. What is the universe of possibilities? How many schools offer your program?
2. Peterson's Guides: Check this reference for a list of schools.
3. Ask professors for recommendations on schools.
4. Talk to your parents, friends of parents, parents of friends, etc.
5. Ask professionals in the field.
6. Check with the Alumni Office for graduates who attended schools on your list.
7. Check citations. (Where are professors getting their PhD's?)

Rank the Schools.

1. Rank schools according to two criteria: Your interest in that school.
How difficult is it to get in.
2. Divide selections into three categories: Reach schools (Those that are most difficult)
Probable/Maybe (Those you think you would be accepted)
Safe (You know you will get in)



How to Rank Schools.

1. Gossip. Talk to as many people as possible.
2. The Gorman Report.
3. Peterson's Guides
4. Read major business publications i.e., US News & World Report.*
5. Call and ask "How difficult is it to get in."

* Caution: Be sure to check the criteria they use to rank the schools.

Make your list of schools.

Select some schools from each category. (Reach/Probable/Safe)

Apply to the same number in each category i.e., if you select 2 per category that would be 6 targeted schools.

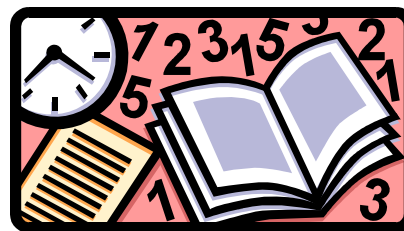
Targets.

1. Write to each of the schools. If time is short, call the schools.
2. Ask for an application, a catalog and the name of the person you talk to.*

* Caution: You are already on the judging block so make a good first impression.

Catalogs.

1. Comb the catalog for obligations and deadlines.
2. Build a time line for each school.
3. Apply as early as you can.



Let's say applications are accepted between September 30th and December 30th

9/30	10/30	11/30	12/30
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If you apply now:	If you apply now:	If you apply now:	
Be able to tread water	Be able to walk on water	Be able to create water	

4. Look up professors' biographies
5. Call schools and ask for bibliographies of their professors.
6. READ them in preparation for writing to the professor.



Comment on the articles, or
Ask for a clarification of the program, or
Ask for a reading list, or
Propose a study topic.

What are they looking for?

- Someone who is:
1. Unusual (stands out/diversity)
 2. Thoughtful
 3. Motivated (mission/vision)
 4. Mature
 5. Well prepared
 6. Going to succeed anyway.



How do they decide?

- Paradigm for decision:
1. Grades \ If these are good
 2. Test Scores / you are a maybe.

 3. Essay/Application \ Then these are
 4. Recommendations / considered.

Recommendations.



1. Professors “control” the recommendations.
2. Level with the professor
3. Prepare the writer by providing transcripts, papers, resume, etc.
4. Provide envelopes and stamps
5. Prompt them weekly. Give them deadlines.
6. If you need three, ask four
7. Thank the writers.

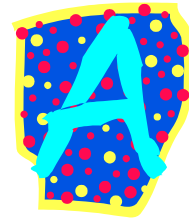
Exam Scores.

1. Study for exam.
2. Take a practice test.

The first time you take a test you score X
The second time you will score X + 10%
The third time you will score X + 10% + 5%

Grades.

1. Never fudge your GPA (they always verify this information)
2. You need ALL transcripts from ALL colleges.
3. If GPA is not impressive: compute GPA in major, or lop off freshman year, or a bad semester, or compute the last two years. Explain in the essay.



Applications.



1. Leave nothing blank.
2. Make nothing up.
3. Send something extra. (Paper, lab, samples of work)
Make it good and it must be directly related.
4. Take your research seriously (don't list just "intern")
5. Use working titles (not just "work study")
6. Get published. (i.e. in student journals, or if assisted a professor, get on et al list, or submit an article to a major journal.)

Essays.

Overcome adversity

Have a strong opening line (Bold, Controversial, Epiphany)

Substantiate your interest.

Substantiate your preparation. (Why are you prepared?)

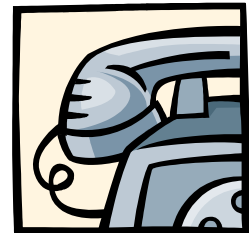
Have a vision of your future.

****Your essay must be perfect. Proofread for grammar, spelling, punctuation. NO ERRORS.**

Waiting.

How do you find out if you are on the wait list?

Call and find out. Ask for the person whose name you got earlier.



If you don't get in.

1. Apply to more schools.
2. Take an intermediate degree.
3. Take additional classes at the graduate level. Accumulate a 4.0 GPA
4. Go to summer school at targeted school. Accumulate a 4.0 GPA
5. Wait and apply again.
6. Gain experience.