

How to Gain Entrée and Thrive in Your Post-Graduate Program of Choice

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Undergraduate vs. Postgraduate

Undergraduate Level

- Student
- Breadth over depth
- Recipient of knowledge
- Externally directed
- Casual/passing relationship with faculty

Graduate Level

- Apprentice to expert
- Depth over breadth
- Analyzer and creator of knowledge
- Self-directed
- Intense relationship with faculty

Is Postgraduate for You? Right Now?

- Reasonably sure of career goals?
- Need a break/Will you go back?
- Enhanced job/career prospects?
- Cost?

General Preparation for Postgraduate Career

- Identify your interests and career goals...
- Grades...
- Experience...

Experience

- Research/Internships
 - Get involved
 - Have an end-product to show for your efforts
- Meetings
 - Go to scientific meetings
 - Present your work
- Connections
 - Advisor
 - Other faculty

How to Find Schools

- Advisor and professors
- Reading the literature
- Web searches
- Professional organizations' websites
- Directories and rankings

Searching for a Program

- <http://www.gradschools.com/programs/neuroscience.html>
- <http://www.andp.org/programs/programs.htm>
- http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/usnews/edu/grad/rankings/rankindex_brief.php

Choosing a School

- Things to Consider - *Academic*
 - Do you meet the basic criteria for the program?
 - Is there a specific faculty with which you would like to work?
 - What are the curriculum/program requirements?
 - Are the required courses available on a regular basis?
 - Are there ample research opportunities/funding?
 - Do most students finish the program in a timely manner?

Choosing a School

- Things to Consider - *Personal/Logistical*
 - Location
 - Resources
 - Housing
 - Health insurance
 - Paying the bills
 - Graduate assistantships
 - In-state vs. out-of-state tuition

Application Process

THEY ARE ALL DIFFERENT - READ THE APPLICATIONS

Most require at least the following:

- Application and fees
- Official transcripts
- Official test scores
- Letters of recommendation
- Personal statement
- Curriculum vitae

Admissions Tests

- Determine which tests are required for programs that you are interested in
 - GRE (graduate school)
 - General
 - Subject
 - MCAT (medical school)
- Take required tests at end of junior year or beginning of senior year
 - You may want to take them again....

Letters of Recommendation

- How many do you need?
- What is the format?
- Depending on the writer, should address
 - Academic performance
 - Communication skills
 - Trouble-shooting abilities
 - Technical abilities
 - Maturity
 - Ability to work independently & in a team framework
- Ask **EARLY**

Letters of Recommendation

- What to take to meeting with reference
 - Transcript
 - Curriculum vita
 - Any forms required by the program
 - List of other references
 - Latest draft of personal statement
 - Addressed, stamped envelopes

 - An idea of particular area(s) that you want this particular reference to emphasize

Personal Statement

- Tailor statements to individual programs
- Be specific
- Proofread
- Have others read and make comments
- This should go through numerous drafts, with feedback at each stage
- This will be the most difficult part of the process

**You're In - Now
What????**

The *Perfect* Student

- Thinks and works independently
- Works in a team
- Follows direction
- Communicates well
- Writes well
- Is motivated
- Jack/Jane of all trades - Master of at least one

Expectations

- Intense study of literature
- Devote extraordinary amounts of time to research
- Think outside of the box
- Persevere in the face of adversity
- Pursue funding








Funding...

- Indicates you are a team player
- Demonstrates ability to perform at the next level
- Enhances professional development

Funding Possibilities

- National Science Foundation
 - Graduate Research Fellowship Program
- National Institutes of Mental Health
 - National Research Service Awards
- Private Foundations
 - Epilepsy Foundation
 - Parkinson's Foundation
- Professional Societies
 - <http://www.apa.org/apags/members/schawrds.html>
 - <http://www.endo-society.org/awards/awardsgrants/index.cfm>
- Travel funds

Keys to Success

1.  **Be proactive** – take responsibility for your own grad school experience
2.  Establish a **positive relationship** with your advisor/supervisor and the members of your committees as they form
3.  Know your **program requirements** and timelines
4.  Bring a **professional approach** to your work and interactions
5.  Push your **boundaries**
6.  Create and maintain a **support system** for yourself
7.  Seek **balance** in your life

GOOD LUCK!