

GETTING INTO GRADUATE SCHOOL

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CHOOSING A GRADUATE PROGRAM

APPROACHES TO CHOOSING A GRADUATE PROGRAM

- ❖ **The “Divine Calling” Mentality** – I have known what my life's work will be ever since I was a child so there is no need to explore this question at all (e.g., psychologist, doctor, social worker, lawyer).
- ❖ **The “What Ever Comes Along” Mentality** – I am keeping my options open as long as possible because I do not even want to think about it. I will just take whatever graduate program falls into my lap.
- ❖ **Don’t Leave My Comfort Zone**
- ❖ **The “Department Store” Mentality** – Just tell me what is available, and I will choose the one that is the most attractively packaged.

Each of these approaches to choosing a graduate program is very limiting. These approaches involve little research into the available options or the advantages and disadvantages of different graduate programs.

- ❖ **The “Effective Consumer” Mentality** – involves researching potential options to see which is the best “fit.”
 - For example, effective and satisfied car shoppers will research different types of cars to see which is the best fit for their personality and fits within their available means. Then they will look at different dealerships to compare prices so as to get the best deal possible.
 - If a person approaches a graduate program in the same manner as the effective car shopper (i.e., consumer), then this person may get the better graduate program than one who (1) only has one option, (2) who takes what comes along, or (3) who takes the most attractive job.

INVEST ADEQUATE TIME IN SEARCHING FOR A GRADUATE PROGRAM

- ❖ Many individuals who are looking for graduate programs invest limited time and resources. Instead, make the search for the right graduate program(s) a full-time job.
- ❖ Don’t wait until your senior year or after graduation to seek out graduation programs.

Positive Reasons for Going to Graduate School	Negative Reasons for Going to Graduate School
Necessary for many careers	Often times used to postpone a career or to avoid employment
More well-rounded education	Pressure from peers, parents, faculty, etc.
Broadens skills	To find one's self
Makes more options available	Just because financial assistance was offered
Gives an edge over competition	

DEGREES

Some Popular Degrees

Bachelor Degrees	Master Degrees	Doctor Degrees	Professional Degrees
Bachelor of Science (B.S.)	Master of Science (M.S.)	Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)	Juris Doctor (Law) (J.D.)
Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)	Master of Arts (M.A.)	Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.)	Medicine Doctor (M.D.)
Bachelor of Social Work (B.S.W.)	Master of Marriage & Family Therapy (M.F.T.)	Doctor of Marriage & Family Therapy (D.M.F.T.)	Doctor in Dentistry (D.D.S. /D.M.D.)
	Master of Education (M.Ed.)	Education Doctorate (Ed.D.)	Doctor in Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.)
	Master of Human Relations (M.H.R.)	Doctor of Social Work (D.S.W.)	Doctor in Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.)
	Master of Public Health (M.P.H.)	Medical Doctorate (M.D.)	Doctor in Theology (D.Th., Th.D., D.Theol.)
	Master of Science in Counseling (M.S.C.)	Doctor of Public Health (D.P.H.)	Doctor in Chiropractic (D.C.)
	Master of Social Work (M.S.W.)		Doctor in Pharmacy (Pharm.D.)
	Master of Engineering (M. Eng.)		Optometry Doctor (O.D.)
	Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.)		Doctor in Podiatry/Podiatric Medicine (D.P.M.)

DEGREES

- ❖ **Master's degrees** – The master's degree generally takes one to two academic years of full-time study to complete, and they usually require either a thesis, a creative component (project), and/or an oral/written exam to complete the degree. Ranges from 30-60 units/hours past the bachelor's degree.
 - **Terminal degree vs. doctoral preparation programs**
 - A terminal degree master's program refers to programs where (1) the students can pursue their career with just the master's degree, and (2) where the vast majority of students in the program do not pursue a doctorate.
 - Examples of programs that are generally (but not always) terminal degree programs – social work, marriage and family therapy, school counseling, university counseling, business administration, healthcare administration, public administration, nurse practitioner
 - A doctoral preparation master's program is specifically designed to help students prepare for a future doctorate (e.g., research methods and statistics classes, faculty research mentor). A thesis is almost always required.
 - E.g., post-baccalaureate pre-medical preparation program, psychological sciences master's program
- ❖ **Professional degrees** – Generally require a total of at least six years of college work for completion.
- ❖ **Doctorate degrees** – Doctoral programs consist of course work in conjunction with a dissertation (presentation and defense of results of independent research). Approximately 90 units/hours past the bachelor's degree.
 - **Professional Model** (also called the Practitioner-Scholar Model) – A graduate program using this model prepares students to be a clinician/practitioner. Hence, the focus is developing and using skills based on the practical application of scholarly knowledge. An understanding of current research and scholarship is important so as to improve practice.
 - **Scientist-Practitioner Model** – A graduate program using this model prepares students to be both scientists and practitioners. Hence, the focus is on clinical/applied research as well as clinical/applied experience.
 - **Research Scientist Model** (also called Bench Science) – A graduate program using this model prepares students to be researchers/scientists. Hence, the focus is on basic scientific concepts and theories. Although the research may be basic or applied, the focus is the research process itself.
- ❖ Note: In many Ph.D. programs, students will complete a master's degree as part of the Ph.D.

MARKETING YOURSELF

ONLINE PRESENCE

- ❖ **Examine your social media presence.**
 - Use various search engines to see what comes up when you type in your name.
- ❖ **Censor your social media.**
 - Censor controversial, divisive, and potentially offensive posts.
 - Advocating for an issue does not have to be divisive. Think through how and what you say online (and in person).
 - Censor negative comments about others or too much personal self-disclosure.
 - Censor photos that might be inconsistent with the professional image you are trying to perpetuate (e.g., partying, using drugs, sexually suggestive).
 - Even if you make your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube pages private, other people can still tag your post, forward your post, copy your post, etc.
- ❖ **Create a social media presence.**
 - For positions in corporations, government, nonprofit, etc., create a profile on <https://www.linkedin.com/>
 - For academic positions or Ph.D. programs, create a profile on one of these pages:
 - <https://www.academia.edu>
 - <https://www.researchgate.net/>
 - If you have a position that has a profile on your (e.g., research lab, job profile), make sure it is consistent with your graduate school goal and career goal.

CONTINUING EDUCATION, CERTIFICATES, AND LICENSURES

- ❖ Seek out continuing education that shows you have knowledge beyond just your university coursework.
 - Many universities provide free professional development training, courses, etc.
 - Also, many organizations provide free trainings
- ❖ Seek out certifications that can show your expertise in a discipline.
 - Ask your faculty mentor about possible certifications to pursue while you are an undergraduate or graduate student.
 - Look at the resume or vitae of individuals in your field to see what certifications they have.

A Few Certifications in the Helping Profession, Medical Profession, and Business

Certifications	
Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)	Six Sigma
Family Life Educator (CFLE)	Human Resources
Addiction Counselor or Drug Educator	Risk Management
Marital and Premarital Enrichment & Assessment (e.g., Prepare Enrich)	Project Management Professional (PMP)
Parenting Education (e.g., Los Niños Bien Educados, STEP, PET, Positive Parenting)	Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
Divorce Mediation	Medical Transcriber
Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory	Medical Billing & Coding
Sexuality Educator	Protection of Human Subjects

- ❖ Acquire licensure in your field
 - Licensures in the helping profession generally require completing at least master's degree in related area, completing approximately 3000 supervised hours, and passing a licensing exam.

A Few Relevant Licensures in the Helping Profession

Licensures	Webpage
Licensed Clinical Psychologist	http://www.psychology.ca.gov/applicants/license.shtml
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist	http://www.bbs.ca.gov/app-reg/mft_requirement.shtml
Licensed Clinical Social Worker	http://www.bbs.ca.gov/app-reg/cs_requirement.shtml
Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor	http://www.bbs.ca.gov/lpcc_program/lpcc_is_traditional_path.shtml

WHAT ARE GRADUATE SCHOOLS LOOKING FOR?

WHAT ARE GRADUATE PROGRAMS LOOKING FOR?¹

Very Important Criteria

- ❖ All materials turned in on-time!
- ❖ A clear and focused statement of purpose (⇒ Refer to the “Guidelines for the Statement of Purpose” section).
- ❖ A strong fit between the graduate program and your goals, interest area, and skills/attributes.
- ❖ Admissions tests (⇒ Refer to the “Admission Tests” section).
- ❖ Good grades are necessary, but good grades are not enough. Most applicants will have excellent grades.
 - It is difficult to compare grades across departments or campus. That is why grades are just one of many criteria used to evaluate applicants. This is also why many programs emphasize scores on an admissions test.
 - Many students will not have a high GPA at the beginning of their academic career (possibly because they originally majored in a field they were not excited about). If your overall GPA is not high, but your major GPA or last 2-year GPA is high, briefly point that out in your personal statement.
- ❖ **For research scientist and scientist-practitioner programs** – Research experience resulting in a publication or professional conference presentation(s).
 - Publishing for novice scholars: <http://www.csun.edu/plunk/documents/PublishingPresentation.pdf>
 - There are many undergraduate research journals that are peer-reviewed.
 - List of undergraduate journals: <http://www.cur.org/ugjournal.html>
 - Undergraduate Research Journal for the Human Sciences: http://www.kon.org/CFP/cfp_urjhs.html
- ❖ **For professional model programs and terminal degree programs** – practical experience in the field (e.g., internships, volunteer, work).
- ❖ Letters of recommendation (⇒ Refer to the “References” section).

Generally Important Criteria

- ❖ Honors and scholarships – It is difficult to meaningfully compare honors/scholarships among candidates.
- ❖ Course work
 - Undergraduate major(s) and minor(s)
 - Most candidates will likely complete the prerequisites (e.g., biology and chemistry classes for medical schools).
 - For Ph.D. programs, statistics/research courses will be especially relevant (even if they are not prerequisites).

Avoid Liabilities (discussed in later sections)²

- ❖ Damaging personal statements
- ❖ Weak or harmful letters of recommendation
- ❖ Poor writing skills
- ❖ Misfired efforts to impress

A study found individuals who took graduate school admission tests while still in school generally scored higher than those who waited until after they graduated.

ADMISSIONS TESTS

- ❖ Check the graduate program admissions criteria to see what scores are required or recommended.
 - Some programs (especially those that follow the “professional model”) do not require an admission test.
- ❖ Take a preparation course and practice exams to increase scores. Study, study, study!
- ❖ Test services typically report your scores from the last five years to the school.
 - Some schools use the highest score, while others average all scores.
 - Don’t take the test just for practice unless you know the school only uses your highest score.

¹ Keith-Spiegel, P. & Wiederman, M. W. (2002). *The complete guide to graduate school admission*. Lawrence Erlbaum.

² Appleby, D. C., & Appleby, K. M. (2006). Kisses of death in the graduate school application process. *Teaching of Psychology*, 33(1), 19–24. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15328023top3301_5

- ❖ Take your test early so your scores will be available by the deadline and you can retake the test if needed.
 - Generally, try to take the test during your first semester senior year.
- ❖ Medical school applicants should take the MCAT during their junior year.

Some Admission Tests for Graduate School

	Exam	Agency	Webpage / Phone
DAT	Dental Admission Test	American Dental Association	http://www.ada.org
GMAT	Graduate Management Admissions Test	Educational Testing Service	http://www.gmat.org
GRE	Graduate Record Examination	Educational Testing Service-GRE Sylvan National Registration Center	http://www.gre.org 800-473-2255
LSAT	Law School Admission Test	Law School Admission Council	http://www.lsac.org
MAT	Millers Analogies	Psychological Corporation	800-622-3231
MCAT	Medical College Admission Test	MCAT Program Office Association of American Medical Colleges	http://www.aamc.org
Praxis Exam	Formerly known as the National Teachers Exam	Teaching & Learning Division, Educational Testing Service	http://www.ets.org/praxis
OAT	Optometry Admission Test	Optometry Admission Test	(312) 440-2693
PCAT	Pharmacological Admission Test / Pharmacy College Admission Test		
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language	Educational Testing Service - TOEFL	http://www.toefl.org
VAT	Veterinary Admission Test		

TENTATIVE TIMELINES

Tentative Timeline for Terminal Degree Programs

Action	Tentative Timeline
Decide on type(s) of program(s) in which you are interested	Spring or early summer
Review admissions criteria for the types of programs	Summer
Study for admissions test (e.g., GRE, LSAT, MCAT)	Summer
Decide which schools/programs you intend to apply	Fall
Update resume/vita	Fall (and throughout the process)
Create marketing/networking webpage (e.g., Academia.edu, researchgate.net, LinkedIn.com)	Fall
Attend informational sessions provided by the program	Fall
Take admissions test (if required)	Approximately one month prior to application deadline
Solicit commitment from faculty/supervisors to write letters of recommendation (usually 3 letters are needed)	Approximately two months prior to application deadline
Finalize list of programs	Fall
Secure transcripts	At end of semester prior to deadline
Submit materials to letter writers	4-6 weeks before deadline
Submit all materials	Check to see if there is a priority deadline. If so, submit materials before the priority deadline because preference is sometimes given for admission and funding
Remind letter writers that the letters are coming due	One week before deadline
Remind letter writers again that the letters are coming due	One day before deadline
Send "thank you" email/card to all people who wrote letters	One week after deadline
Wait ... and wait some more ... and wait some more	January-March
Rejections, acceptances, and/or interview offers	Spring
Review program webpages prior to visit	Day before visitation/interview
Interview or attend campus visitation days	Late January through March
Send 'thank you' email to individuals you met with during the interview	Day after visitation/interview
If not accepted, send "thank you for not accepting me" letter	Day after non-acceptance
Make decision	March-April
Send update emails to all people who helped you in the process	March-April

Tentative Timeline for Doctor Programs

Action	Tentative Timeline
Decide on type(s) of program(s) in which you are interested	Spring or early summer
Review admissions criteria for the types of programs	Spring or early summer
Study for admissions test (e.g., GRE, LSAT, MCAT)	Summer
Decide which schools and advisors in which you intend to apply	September deadline
Update resume/vita	September (and throughout the process)
Create marketing/networking webpage (e.g., Academia.edu, researchgate.net, LinkedIn.com)	September
Take admissions test	September/October
Send short email to prospective advisors at doctorate programs	Early October
Solicit commitment from faculty/supervisors to write letters of recommendation (usually 3 letters are needed)	Early October
Finalize list of programs	October
Prepare writing sample (if required)	October
Secure transcripts	October
Submit materials to letter writers	4-6 weeks before deadline
Submit all materials	November 15-March 15 (depending on programs)
Remind letter writers that the letters are coming due	One week before deadline
Remind letter writers again that the letters are coming due	One day before deadline
Send "thank you" email/card to all people who wrote letters	One week after deadline
Wait ... and wait some more ... and wait some more	Winter break and early spring
Rejections, acceptances, and/or interview offers	Spring
Review program and faculty webpages prior to visit	Day before visitation/interview
Interview or attend campus visitation days	Late January through March
Send 'thank you' email to individuals you met with during the interview	Day after visitation/interview
Make decision	March-April
Discuss and/or negotiate funding	March-April
Send update emails to all people who helped you in the process	March-April

EVALUATING/CHOOSING GRADUATE PROGRAMS

EVALUATE THE UNIVERSITY

- ❖ Find out whether the university is regionally accredited (see next table).
- ❖ If relevant, find out whether the specific graduate program is professionally accredited.
 - U.S. Department of Education
 - Council for Higher Education Accreditation
 - Professional organization in your discipline (e.g., American Psychological Association, Foundation for Interior Design Education Research [FIDER])
- ❖ Determine if there is housing available for graduate students.

Regional Accrediting Agencies

Accrediting Agencies	Region	Home Page
Middle States Association of Colleges and School	DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands	http://www.msache.org
New England Association of Schools and Colleges	CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT	http://www.neasc.org
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools	AK, AZ, CO, IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, NM, OH, OK, SD, WI, WV, WY	http://www.ncacihc.org
Northwest Association of Colleges and Schools	AK, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA	http://www.cocnasc.org
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools	AL, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, TX, VA	http://www.sacs.org
Western Association of Schools and Colleges	CA, HI, Guam	http://www.wasc.web.org

EVALUATING THE PROGRAM

- ❖ Decide what type of program you want and what your primary focus will be.
- ❖ Research graduate programs
 - Begin at least one semester before the application deadline. For example, if the application deadline is in December, you should be researching graduate programs in the prior spring or summer.
 - Find a graduate program that has a strong program in your area of interest.
 - Examine the school's home page to identify the faculty members' academic interests and publications
- ❖ Examine admission requirements.
- ❖ Attend informational meetings on campus or at professional conferences.
- ❖ Do not write to faculty members for a catalog and/or admission material. Write to the graduate coordinator or department for that information.
- ❖ Talk with alumni from your prospective school.
- ❖ Talk to current graduate students about the program, funding, and the specific faculty.
- ❖ Check the course catalog to determine if the school offers the courses you want.
- ❖ If you can, visit schools you are interested in before applying to the program.
 - Many schools provide funding for prospective graduate students to come visit.
 - Many schools provide summer research fellowships. A summer research fellowship can help students determine if they are a good fit with the program.
- ❖ Determine if funding is available (e.g., fellowships, research/teaching assistantships, and/or tuition fee waivers).

EVALUATING THE FACULTY (This section is primarily for Ph.D. students)

- ❖ Search out information about the faculty in the prospective graduate program.
 - Do the faculty hold advanced or terminal degrees in their field?
 - Are the faculty respected by colleagues in the field?
 - Are there faculty members with interests similar to your career goals?
- ❖ For those pursuing a Ph.D., examine faculty research interests.
 - What research topics are studied?
 - Does the faculty member present and publish with students?
 - Does the faculty member have grants?
- ❖ Talk to faculty members at the school you are interested in.
 - Your goals are to introduce yourself, find out if they are taking students, discern what they are planning with their research in the future, but not take too much of their time.
 - Send a very short email to the faculty members that says you are interested in their program and that their research is a good fit with your research interests. Then politely ask if (1) they are taking students, and (2) if their research interests are the same as published on the webpage.
 - Faculty members are very busy, and they are likely to just skim a long email to see if/how they should respond.
 - Do not use the email to tell them about yourself. If they are interested, they will examine your webpage. Also, they will eventually see your application materials.
- In the subject line, put something like, "Inquiry from potential Ph.D. applicant"
- Some advocate attaching a resume or vita to the email.
 - Plunk's opinion: *I wouldn't put an attachment because (1) the attachment can increase the likelihood of it being viewed as spam or including malware (I won't open an attachment from most people), and (2) it is almost like saying, "Please evaluate my application materials now ahead of everyone else."*
- In your signature line, include a link to your academia.edu, researchgate.net, or LinkedIn.com webpage.
 - A bonus of having an academia.edu page is you can check to see if someone accessed the page from the geographic area where you sent an email. Thus, you can see if a faculty member was potentially interested in you.
 - Have a PDF copy of your resume or vita on your webpage.

- Do not be discouraged if a faculty member does not reply back. At highly competitive programs, they likely receive numerous emails from prospective students.
- If they do email back, be respectful of their time.
- Network with faculty members and/or their students at professional conferences.
- If a faculty member is interested, he/she may get in contact with you and/or have the admissions personnel forward your application packet. Additionally, if your credentials look promising then the faculty member may advocate for you when the admission committee makes its decisions.
- ❖ For similar and divergent views, read this informative webpage: <https://lucklab.ucdavis.edu/blog/2018/9/17/emailing-faculty>

GUIDELINES FOR THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE / PERSONAL STATEMENT

PERSONAL STATEMENT

- ❖ Also referred to as autobiographical statement, letter of intent, personal statement, or statement of interest.
- ❖ Most graduate programs require some type of personal statement or essay. However, the requirements vary widely. Some programs only require a couple of paragraphs regarding your reasons for applying to their graduate school while other programs require numerous essays on a variety of topics.
- ❖ Sometimes there are multiple statements required (e.g., a personal statement and a diversity statement).
 - Read the distinction carefully.
 - It is okay if some parts overlap, but you should use your words wisely.

WRITING THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

- ❖ Start composing your statement of purpose early.
- ❖ Before writing:
 - Think of your audience. Who will be reading this statement?
 - Examine the application materials and literature about the desired graduate program to determine the primary focus and interests of the faculty and department.
 - Consider what the admission committee might be looking for.
- ❖ Demonstrate the quality of your writing.
 - Have a clear focus.
 - Be organized – Make an outline prior to starting the writing.
 - Be succinct.
 - Be concise.
 - Avoid repetition or overelaboration
 - Avoid colloquialisms (e.g., “I’m a people person,” or “I hung out”).
- ❖ Keep your essay positive.
 - In general, do not mention potential liabilities about yourself or your current program.
 - Be enthusiastic about the field and your career goals.
- ❖ Make sure your statement fits with the graduate program mission.
- ❖ If you are applying to a Ph.D. or master’s program that uses the research-scientist or scientist-practitioner model, then make sure your statement fits with a specific faculty member’s interest areas.
- ❖ Follow guidelines exactly!
 - Each school has different guidelines, so you will have to tailor each statement of purpose accordingly.
 - Address EACH aspect of their questions.
 - Some programs often ask multiple questions. Address each question separately.
 - E.g., social work programs often ask you to write about your work/volunteer experiences, how you fit within the mission of social work, what area of social justice you are interested in, and your experiences with diversity.
 - Do not exceed the page limit or word limit.
- ❖ Draft an initial statement and revise the draft. Then set it aside for a day or two, and then revise the draft again.

- ❖ Have others proofread and critique your statement (e.g., major advisor, references)
- ❖ The statement should be modified for each school/program.

CONTENT OF THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

- ❖ Identify your educational and career goal.
- ❖ Briefly (1-2 sentences) explain how you became interested in the field.
- ❖ Highlight your specific educational and occupational experiences that facilitated your desire to achieve a graduate degree in the field:
 - Education background.
 - Explain how your paid and volunteer experience validated your desire to pursue this career.
 - Each of these experiences should demonstrate how they ultimately led to your educational/career path.
 - For Ph.D. and master's programs leading to Ph.D., explain your research background.
- ❖ Explain your personal attributes that make you a good fit with the program and future career (e.g., fluency in languages, fluency in statistical programs or programming languages, ability to overcome obstacles, work ethic).
 - Identify why are you applying to this specific program and/or faculty member.
 - Generally, you should tie your research interests with at least 2 faculty members to increase your chances.
 - Obviously, these faculty members need to be doing similar research.
 - Explain how this program will position you for your career.
- ❖ Throughout the statement, emphasize what you bring to the program, without overstating your abilities.
 - Strengths and achievements.
 - Mention relevant skills (e.g., research and computing skills).
- ❖ Every sentence on the statement should be designed to help the reviewer (1) understand that your applying to this program was well thought out, and (2) what you can bring to the program and career.
- ❖ Always remember this is your professional representation of yourself.
- ❖ Damaging personal statements³
 - Do not engage in excessive self-disclosure that takes you away from the important point (i.e., why they should accept/interview you).
 - Avoid getting caught up in all the minuscule details that led you to pursue the career.
 - Do not over disclose personal mental health issues.
 - Do not demonstrate “excessive altruism”
 - *“I want to make the world a better place” or “I want to help humanity.”*
 - Avoid unprofessional writing
 - Inappropriate humor
 - Overly clever or cutesy comments
- ❖ Integrate characteristics that show you have overcome challenges without creating a damaging personal statement.
 - E.g., if you immigrated to the USA as a child, neither of your parents had a college degree, and you grew up in a high-risk neighborhood, it would be easy to write many paragraphs about all of the challenges you have overcome. However, this “telling of your story” takes you away from why they should accept you into the program. Instead, you can integrate these ideas into your research interests, without providing too much focus on the minute details
 - *“As an immigrant to the USA, I believe I can provide an insider’s view when interpreting research on immigrant families.”*
 - *“Having grown up as an immigrant in high-risk neighborhoods, I am very passionate about conducting research (or clinical practice) on identifying qualities that promote positive mental health in low SES immigrants”*

³ Appleby, D. C., & Appleby, K. M. (2006). Kisses of death in the graduate school application process. *Teaching of Psychology*, 33(1), 19–24. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15328023top3301_5

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL

REFERENCE LETTERS (GENERAL)

- ❖ Letters of reference are not necessarily a high priority for your references; therefore, make the process as easy as possible for your references.
- ❖ Ask potential references if they can write a strong letter of recommendation.
 - Ask your references cordially and formally.
 - If a professor hints that he/she does not have much to say about you, that they have a few concerns, or do not have time, then politely thank them and ask someone else. It is possible that the professor is hinting that he/she does not feel comfortable writing a letter for you.
- ❖ Tell your references the deadline when you need the letters.
 - For online submissions, let them know the exact date. Many online submissions will also inform the letter writer of the due date.
 - For letters that need to be picked up, ask for the letters before the official deadline since you will need to coordinate picking up the letter(s), and then deliver the letter to the program.
- ❖ Provide pre-addressed envelopes or peel off labels and postage if they need to mail reference letters.
- ❖ Do not wait until the last minute to ask for letters. Ask references well before any deadlines.
 - Ask for the letters at least 4-6 weeks before the application is due.
 - Faculty need to be able to schedule their time around the letters.
 - *Note from Plunkett: I write 400-500 letters from October to March for about 40-60 students. Thus, the earlier you get me all the information and links (for online letters), the more likely I will be able to complete the letters on time.*
- ❖ Send a short, polite, and friendly reminder about the deadline one week before the letters are due. Send another friendly reminder the day before letters are due.
 - Note from Plunkett: *Some letter writers do not want to be reminded of the deadlines; they find the reminders to be annoying. Unfortunately, these are often faculty who submit their recommendations at the last minute, which can be very stressful to the student. I would ask each reference if they want to be reminded, and if not, when they usually submit the recommendations so as to relieve any stress you might get from waiting.*
- ❖ **Waive your rights to read the letter or form.**
 - Recipients place more credence in letters that are not read by students. If you are in doubt about the kind of recommendation the reference will write, then ask.

LETTERS FROM FACULTY

- ❖ In general, the best references for graduate programs are current or past professors.
- ❖ At least 2 letters should be from faculty members who can attest to your potential to succeed in graduate school.
 - The best letters are from faculty members who have had considerable contact with you, especially in a non-classroom setting, and/or worked with you professionally.
 - Examples: served as your academic advisor, supervised you on a research project, co-authored a paper or conference presentation with you, served as an adviser to you in your role as an officer in a campus organization, worked with you on a community project.
 - Ideally, your academic references will be an assistant professor, associate professor, or full professor.
 - If you get a letter from a part-time faculty member, it is best if they at least have the level of degree for which you are applying (e.g., at least a master's degree for a master's program, or a Ph.D. for a Ph.D. program).
 - Try to avoid getting letters from graduate student teaching assistants or graduate student research supervisors.

WHO ELSE CAN PROVIDE LETTERS?

- ❖ Some graduate programs (e.g., social work) require a letter from a faculty member and a current/past supervisor.
- ❖ If you have work or volunteer experience in the field, then ask a current or past supervisor write one of the letters of reference.
- ❖ Do not include letters from public officials, religious leaders, or lay people, unless they can attest first-hand to your academic capabilities, research skills, or professional abilities.

HELP YOUR RECOMMENDERS

- ❖ Provide your references with very brief and clear instructions (e.g., contact person at the graduate program, title, complete mailing address, deadline)
- ❖ Letters of reference are not necessarily a high priority for your references; therefore, make the process as easy as possible for your references.
 - Forms should be filled out completely (including the reference's name, address, affiliation, etc.); except for the reference's signature and ratings.
 - If you are applying to multiple programs, submit your materials to the programs around the same time. This way, your references are not getting email links spread-out across weeks or months.
 - Note from Plunkett: *When I complete references from students, I want to complete them all at once for that student. This helps me plan my time and keeps me organized. When the reference requests come sporadically, it is much easier for me to miss a deadline. Thus, if you are applying for multiple programs spread out over a couple of months (e.g., November 15 to January 1 deadlines), then submit your online letter requests in the same week. This saves me a lot of time writing the letters if I can open up all the information on you at once, and then focus just on letters for you. Thus, I don't have to reopen your letter, form, transcript, etc. each time I am writing a new letter. Also, if I have letter requests trickling in every few days or weeks, it also makes it more challenging for me to find time to do your letters.*
- ❖ **Prepare a packet to help your references write your letters of recommendation.** Include the following:
 - Your full name
 - A one-page letter to your reference. Your letter should include:
 - A reminder of your relationship with the reference, such as:
 - What classes you had with the reference, when you had them, and what grades you received
 - The number of hours/semesters you worked with them, what duties you performed
 - What type of program you are applying to and why you selected that type of program.
 - A description of your strengths and why you think you will be successful in a graduate program
 - Special skills or talents
 - Statement of career interests and goals
 - A description of your weaknesses and how you have or plan to address the limitations (e.g., taking statistics class).
 - A resume or vita (see <https://www.csun.edu/plunk/resources.html> for notes on resumes/vitas, and templates)
 - A statement of purpose / personal statement
 - A list of all programs, the title of the university, program, and, if appropriate the professor and description of the program and lab for each school. Make deadlines very clear – put the earliest one at the top. Also note if the letter is to be given to you or to the school.
 - A copy of your GRE scores (if applicable)
 - Your GPA (overall, major, minor)
 - List of courses taken in major and grades earned, or a copy of transcripts.
 - Reference forms and/or guidelines.
 - Provide pre-addressed envelopes and postage if they need to mail the letter.
- ❖ Send a short, polite, and friendly reminder about the deadline one week before the letters are due.
- ❖ Send a friendly reminder the day before the letters are due.
- ❖ After the application process is finished, follow up with a “thank you” card/email.
- ❖ After you hear back from all programs and/or make a decision, then inform your referrers about the outcome.

Sample of Completed Form to Provide to Your References

University	Program	Degree	Forms	Address if Hard Copy	Deadline	Delivery
California State University Northridge	Marriage and Family Therapy	Masters	No	Selection Committee 18111 Nordhoff Street Educational Psychology & Counseling Northridge, CA 91330	12/01/07	Mail to school
University of California Los Angeles	Clinical Psychology	Ph.D.	Yes	Jane Smith, Ph.D. Director of Psychology, UCLA 100 Westwood Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90000	11/15/07	I will pick up
Alliant International University	Clinical Psychology	PsyD	No	Not applicable	1/21/08	Online

Note: The name of the university, degree, and program should be exact since (1) references will likely copy and paste from your form, or (2) use a mail merge to put the information into the letter they write. Thus, don't abbreviate (e.g., Cal State Northridge).

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL INTERVIEW

GENERAL INFORMATION

- ❖ A graduate school interview is similar to a professional job interview.
- ❖ Be prepared to talk about your professional goals, your knowledge of the field, your strengths (e.g., personal attributes, skills), and if you are a Ph.D. candidate, your research interests
- ❖ Investigate the school's program before the interview so you can articulate how your goals match the program.
- ❖ For a Ph.D. program, look at faculty members' webpages to familiarize yourself with their names, faces, and research.
- ❖ Know the answers to these questions before you go to the interview
 - How did you become interested in this field?
 - Why do you want to pursue a graduate or professional degree?
 - What are your future goals? How will this graduate program help you meet your goals?
 - What have you accomplished so far that strengthens your interest in the program? (e.g., course work, honor's thesis, research projects, internships, volunteer experience, work experience, awards, and publications).
 - Why are you applying to this school? (e.g., faculty, curriculum, resources, field work, internships, and reputation of the institution and/or department).
 - What are your research interests? (primarily for Ph.D. candidates)
- ❖ Skim the program handbook if you can find it online. It will help to familiarize you with the program.
- ❖ You will be in multiple group settings where you are asked to introduce yourself. If they ask for something interesting about you, do not say something weird or crazy to shock them. Just say something unique about you that makes you marketable (e.g., "*I speak two languages fluently*").
- ❖ **Group interview with other candidates**
 - Show up early.
 - Graduate programs want to build cohorts of students. Always keep that in mind.
 - Introduce yourself to the other candidates sitting near you.
 - When another candidate is answering questions or talking, give appropriate support conversation (e.g., eye contact, head nodding).
 - It is okay if someone says the same thing you were going to say. You can just acknowledge their comment (e.g., "*My interest area is similar to Darnell's interests. I also would like to work with ...*").
 - When you are speaking, look at the faculty interviewers, and also look around at the other candidates.

THINGS TO DO AND NOT DO AT THE INTERVIEW

- ❖ **Things to do at the interview**
 - Check weather beforehand to know what to wear/bring
 - Dress professionally.
 - Ask questions about the following – academic program, internships, teaching and research assistantships, access to faculty, job placement information, and student life resources. Do not ask questions that are on the webpage.
 - Be pleasant to everyone (even if you are tired from traveling).
 - Be appreciative and respectful of anyone who hosts you (e.g., graduate student who lets you stay at their place). Pack a few thank-you cards and give one to your host before you leave.
 - Be nice to the other candidates and socialize with them. Even if you don't end up in that program, they are likely to be your future colleagues. Do not act competitive and do not act like you are better than the other recruits.
 - Show excitement even if you don't think that you are going to end up in a certain program. Remind yourself that they have paid money and have gone through trouble to get you there.
 - Practice your 30 second elevator speech ("*My name is BLANK, and I would like to work with Dr. BLANK. I am currently doing this research at this university, and I am interested in studying...* (something that clearly aligns with the mentor's research)).
 - Make sure you explore the area (e.g., food, entertainment, living, cultures).
 - Read the program handbook if you can find it online. It will help to familiarize you with the program.

❖ Things NOT do at the interview

- Do not bad-mouth other programs, departments, etc.
 - Do not act competitive and do not act like you are better than the other candidates.
 - Try to avoid the “name game” as much as possible.
 - Do not ask about people’s personal/romantic relationships.
 - Do not pretend to know things you don’t know.
 - Do not call the faculty members by their first names unless they have clearly stated you should; even then, when you are talking about them with other students and faculty members refer to them as Dr. LAST NAME.
 - Try to avoid the “name game” as much as possible.
 - Do not ask about people’s personal/romantic relationships
 - Do not pretend to know things you don’t know.
 - Oftentimes, graduate programs will arrange socials for prospective students to meet current students, faculty members, and other prospective students.
 - Do not drink alcoholic beverages!!! (even at a social event with the current graduate students)
 - Do not flirt or gossip.
- ❖ There are websites where students post when they hear about interviews, acceptances, and rejections.
<https://www.thegradcafe.com/survey/index.php>
- ❖ Do not take off your suit jacket! (stories will be forever told if you do)
- ❖ Be thankful and respectful of anyone who hosts you (e.g., graduate student who lets you stay at their place). If you are staying with a graduate student, a handwritten thank-you note costs nothing and goes a long way -- pack a few blank thank-you cards in your suitcase and give it to them before you leave.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- ❖ Send a short thank you email or note (within 24 hours after the interview) to anyone who went out of their way to help you (e.g., graduate student who hosts you, graduate coordinator, potential advisor)
- ❖ Review the interview and evaluate your performance during the interview.
- ❖ After the interview, write down any thoughts you had about the program, faculty, etc. Also, write down questions you wished you would have asked so you can follow-up via email.
- ❖ Make sure you explore the area (e.g., food, entertainment, living, cultures).

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS IN COUNSELING / SOCIAL WORK GRADUATE PROGRAMS

- ❖ Why are you pursuing this degree/career?
- ❖ Tell us about yourself and why are you interested in this field?
- ❖ In the last 24 hours, what did you do to prepare for this interview today?
- ❖ Do you plan on working during the program? If so, how will you balance the coursework, practicum, work, and personal/family life?
- ❖ How do you balance competing obligations?
- ❖ How do you resolve conflict with another person? Given an example.
- ❖ What on your application did you think might keep you from getting into the program? (e.g., grades, experience)
- ❖ What might be a weakness or limitation you might have in the graduate program or in the field?
- ❖ What do you do to counteract your weaknesses?
- ❖ What was the biggest event that happened in your life that made you who you are today?
- ❖ How are you feeling right now about this interview?
- ❖ What would make you an effective counselor/social worker?
- ❖ What experience have you had that led you to choose this degree/career?
- ❖ What is an LMFT vs. social worker? Or school counselor vs. school psychologist?
- ❖ What experience do you have with diversity?
- ❖ What does cross-cultural mean to you?
- ❖ Do you think that counselor/social worker should only see clients of the same ethnicity? Why or why not?

- ❖ Do you think that counselor/social worker should only do therapy on issues they have experienced (e.g., addiction, divorce)? Why or why not?
- ❖ What do you believe are important qualities for a counselor/social worker to have?
- ❖ What qualities do you have that would make you a good counselor/social worker?
- ❖ How does change take place?
- ❖ What therapeutic paradigm do you currently believe in?
- ❖ What is the most important social issue that counselors/social workers should try to remedy? Or, what is the social issue you would like to focus on?
- ❖ What do you think would be stressful or difficult as a counselor/social worker?
- ❖ Identify a problem in a school setting and how you might try to resolve it.
- ❖ Some programs will ask you to explain what someone with this degree does (e.g., “*What is a school psychologist?*”). Historically, this question has flustered many prospective applicants, and has been a reason for someone not being given an admission offer! The easiest way to prepare for this question is by consulting the webpage of the professional organization for the field in which you are applying to see how they conceptualize the career.
- ❖ Anything brought up in previous questions you would like to add now?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS IN PH.D. PROGRAMS

- ❖ What would you like to accomplish as a Ph.D. student?
- ❖ What kind of position are you interested in pursuing after your Ph.D.?
- ❖ Ideally, what kind of relationship would you like to have with your major advisor?
- ❖ As a new person in the lab, you will be under the supervision of more senior Ph.D. students? How will you handle this? What if they are doing something in the lab you think could be done in a better way, how would you address that?
- ❖ What is your biggest challenge to completing your Ph.D.? What makes you anxious about pursuing a Ph.D.?
- ❖ What do you think makes you stand out from other Ph.D. applicants?
- ❖ Why are you applying to this school? (e.g., faculty, curriculum, resources, field work, internships, and reputation of the institution and/or department)?
- ❖ What experience have you had that led you to choose this degree/career?
- ❖ What have you accomplished so far that strengthens your interest in the program? (e.g., coursework, honor's thesis, research projects, internships, volunteer experience, work experience, awards, and publications).
- ❖ Why do you want to pursue a graduate or professional degree?
- ❖ How did you become interested in this field?
- ❖ What type of research experience have you had?
- ❖ What statistics do you know how to do? What statistics programs are you familiar with?
- ❖ What is your research interest?
- ❖ How do you see your research fitting with my research and the program?
- ❖ Do you have a plan for funding for your dissertation?
- ❖ What percentage of time would you like to spend doing research versus teaching?
- ❖ What do you think are your strengths as a future Ph.D. student?
- ❖ What do you think are your current weaknesses as a future Ph.D. student?
- ❖ What is your career goal? What are your future goals? How will this graduate program help you meet your goals?
- ❖ What type of university would you like to be a faculty member at? (Research 1, Ph.D. granting, Land Grant, comprehensive, teaching, community college)
- ❖ What type of teaching experience have you had? What would your students say about you?
- ❖ What other programs have you applied to? And which ones have given you admission? Are you considering any of them seriously?
- ❖ If there are any weaknesses in your application (e.g., low GRE scores, lack of experience in a certain method or

population the potential advisor specializes in), be prepared to talk about it and how you will/have corrected it. Practice this! Nobody likes talking about their failures or flaws and you don't want to be flustered in the meeting.

- ❖ If switching programs (e.g., clinical psychology to school psychology), be prepared to discuss why you want to make the switch. Important: Do this without talking negatively about your previous program.

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK AT THE INTERVIEW IN COUNSELING / SOCIAL WORK GRADUATE PROGRAMS

- ❖ Note: Do not ask a question that is already answered on the webpage for the program.
- ❖ How are the practicum/internship sites selected?
- ❖ How would you describe the relationship between the faculty and the students in the program?
- ❖ What do you see as the biggest strength of this program?
- ❖ What is the biggest frustration for students in this program?
- ❖ How are faculty mentors/advisors selected?
- ❖ What types of jobs are recent graduates getting?

QUESTIONS TO ASK OF POTENTIAL ADVISOR IN THE PH.D. PROGRAM

- ❖ How would you describe the environment in your research lab?
- ❖ What do you think your graduate student mentees would say about you?
- ❖ How would you describe your mentorship style?
- ❖ How would you describe your research focus for the next 5 years? What do you see your graduate students working on in the next 5 years?
- ❖ What are your expectations for your advisees?
- ❖ What are you looking for in an advisee?
- ❖ What would you expect me accomplish in my first year of the Ph.D. program?
- ❖ What would you expect me accomplish in the whole Ph.D. program?
- ❖ What kinds of opportunities do you provide for co-authoring publications?
- ❖ How do your advisees select their thesis/dissertation topic?
- ❖ What is your view about your advisees working with other faculty members?
- ❖ What type of funding do your advisees normally get? (assistantships, fellowships, etc).
- ❖ What is your expectation for me regarding winter break and summer break?
- ❖ Is there funding for travel to conferences? (Can't stress this question enough, CSUN is great when it comes to this but most schools provide very limited funding)
- ❖ How many students have you advised in the past and how many have you co-advised? What are they doing now? (Ask specifically how many dissertations they have chaired to completion?)
- ❖ Do you plan to stay at this university for the next 5 years?
- ❖ If your potential advisor is working in the community, ask how the relationships are with these community partners? (not as gossip but how engaged are the community members).
- ❖ If you are doing community work, as if you can meet with community workers as well during your visitation as they may have a different perspective about the program.

QUESTIONS TO ASK OF THE PH.D. PROGRAM

- ❖ Is the funding guaranteed?
- ❖ Are there teaching opportunities in addition to research?
- ❖ What do you think are the primary strengths of this Ph.D. program?
- ❖ What do you think are the areas for improvement?
- ❖ What are the career paths the past graduates of this program have taken?
- ❖ How does the department contribute to students' professional development?
- ❖ Are there any graduate scholarships? (either in the department or from the university)

- ❖ What funding resource will be available for summer?
- ❖ Is the insurance covered?
- ❖ What kind of certificates or minors are available through college or university that some of the past students have gotten? What are the requirements for these certificates (e.g., stats, teaching and mentoring)?
- ❖ Are there any program-specific requirements (e.g., a mandatory minor, mandatory leadership requirements, mandatory TA requirements)?
- ❖ How many transfer credits are permitted, and what is the process for getting these credits approved?
- ❖ If you're entering an applied program, ask how many hours you will be required to complete and when/where you will be completing them.
- ❖ Ask about potential fees as they differ from tuition waivers. (Previous students have said programs seem to dodge this question, but it is important as fees range from \$200-\$1800 per semester at different universities).
- ❖ Ask about average in years it takes students to finish. Also ask about the dropout rate, and some common reasons students have dropped in the past.
- ❖ Ask about the comprehensive/qualifying exam process, or if they even do exams.

QUESTIONS TO ASK OF CURRENT GRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE PH.D. PROGRAM

- ❖ How would you describe the mentorship style of (your potential advisor)?
- ❖ How would you describe the relationship between the graduate students in the program?
- ❖ How would you describe the relationship between the faculty and the students?
- ❖ What do you see as the biggest strength of this program/lab?
- ❖ What is the biggest frustration for students in this program/lab?
- ❖ If the graduate student is working with your potential advisor and they work in the community, ask how the relationships are with these partners? (not as gossip, but how engaged are the community members)
- ❖ Ask about potential registration fees as they differ from tuition waivers.
- ❖ Can you live comfortably in this town on the graduate stipend?
- ❖ How would you describe the lab/program culture? Among students and among students and faculty?
- ❖ In your opinion so far, how is TAing/RAing? (can be asked of multiple students) Is it difficult to juggle both?
- ❖ What is something that the department could do to help reach your career goals?
- ❖ What kinds of things do you like doing in this town?
- ❖ If you're entering an applied program, ask the current students how they are accruing hours, keeping track of hours, balancing the hour requirements with other program requirements, etc.
- ❖ What kind of statistics resources are available through the university? (are they free for students?)

WAITLIST OR DEFERRED

BEING DEFERRED OR "PLACED ON HOLD"

- ❖ **Deferral until you gain experience**
 - For example, some MBA programs will grant a deferral to an outstanding graduating senior applicant who needs to gain some practical experience before entering the program. In this case, the school has accepted you on the condition that you work for a couple of years before starting the MBA program.
- ❖ **Deferral until you complete additional coursework**
 - For example, if you are business major, but you are applying to a psychology graduate program, the school may defer your application until you take so many hours of psychology courses to gain the necessary foundation for the graduate program.
- ❖ **Deferral due to possible deficiency in the application**
 - Applicants may get deferred when they have possible deficiencies in their applications (e.g., GPA, admission tests scores, not the best fit with the program, etc.).

- The admission committee may decide to look through more applications until they make a final decision on your application.
- You can strengthen your credentials by sending (1) additional letter of recommendation, (2) most recent grades (if unavailable when you submitted your application), or (3) letter that re-confirms your interest in the program.

BEING PLACED ON A WAIT LIST

- ❖ The admissions office accepts a certain number of candidates from a large pool of applicants and attempts to estimate how many of these applicants will accept their offer of admission. How close they come to their target will determine how many applicants they can take off the wait list. In fact, if more applicants accept than predicted, the graduate school may not even pull a single candidate off its wait list.
- ❖ **Improving your chances when "wait listed"**
 - Read the school's instructions on its wait list carefully. Some programs send a form that you must fill out and return to the admissions office to remain on the wait list. If the school does not receive your form on time, the admissions office will take your name off the list.
 - Call the admissions office to find out (1) how many other candidates are on the wait list, (2) the school's process for reviewing and evaluating those candidates, and (3) when they plan to notify them.
 - Ask the office if additional information would enhance your chances of admission. If so, send materials that will strengthen your application (e.g., additional letter of recommendation, copy of your most recent transcript, letter re-confirming your interest in the school and highlighting any recent accomplishments). Some programs note in your application file that you called to inquire about your status.
 - Call the admissions office occasionally to inquire about your status.
 - Send a "thank you letter" that (1) thanks the committee for taking the time to interview you and (2) lets them know you are still very interested in the program.
 - Be polite and calm to everyone you speak to in the admissions office. Be patient.

IF NO ONE ADMITS YOU

- ❖ Examine the reasons why you were not competitive. Was it a poorly written personal statement? Poor admission test scores? Lack of experience? Poor fit between you and the program? Did you apply to enough programs?
- ❖ If you are graduating, try to get a job in the field of interest.
- ❖ Take a graduate course at your local university on a non-degree basis just to keep your hand in and to show your commitment and ability.

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RESOURCES

Useful Internet Sites for Potential Graduate Students

Webpage	Description
FinAid (Financial Aid Home Page) http://finaid.org	Provides information about loans, scholarships, grants, and other types of grad school funds. In addition, information is provided about admission tests, college admissions, and career placement.
Educational Testing Service Network http://www.ets.org	Provides information and links to various admission tests (e.g., GMAT, GRE, TOEFL, PRAXIS), practice tests, scholarships, financial aid tools, tips, and resources
Minority On-line Information Service http://web.fie.com/web/mo	Provides current information about historically Black colleges and universities and Hispanic-serving institutions
National Association of Graduate and Professional Studies (NAGPS) http://www.nagsps.org	Provides information on taxes, financial aid, benefits of membership, and regional/national conferences
FastWEB http://www.fastweb.com	Provides information on graduate fellowships and scholarships based upon your answers to an individual profile
Business School http://www.finaid.org/otheraid/business.phtml	Provides information about awards, loans, and advice specific to M.B.A. students, admissions testing, M.B.A. Explorer, GMAT, and loans
Law School http://www.finaid.org/otheraid/law.phtml	Provides information about awards, loans, and advice specific to law students, LSAT, admissions testing, Law School Admission Council Online
Medical School http://www.finaid.org/otheraid/medical.phtml	Provides information about loans, professional organizations, and other resources specific to medical students, admissions testing page
Pre-Med Advisor http://medplaza.com/premed	Provides information about financial aid for medical school and the MCAT
M.B.A. Explorer http://www.gmat.org	The Graduate Management Administration Council (GMAC) provides information about graduate business schools, admissions and testing, as well as tips on financing your M.B.A.
US News & World Report.edu http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/beyond/bchome.htm	Provides graduate school rankings in many disciplines, database of graduate scholarships, and an interactive "Answer Zone" for advice on graduate schools
National Center for Education Statistics (N.C.E.S.) http://www.nces.ed.gov	Provides statistical reports on student financing, student debt, enrollment in institutions of higher education, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) section

FUNDING RESOURCES

❖ Funding for graduate school

- Determine if the graduate program has assistantships or fellowships. These ve often include tuition reimbursement and a stipend for either teaching an introductory-level course or working with a professor on a research project.
- Check into scholarships and fellowships that cover full or partial tuition.
- Contact the graduate school's admissions office, the career planning office, as well as campus newspaper and bulletin boards for information on where to locate job listings on campus.
- Check with financial aid office to make sure that you are aware of all the resources available for financial aid.
- FastWEB – Provides information on graduate fellowships/scholarships based upon your answers to an individual profile – <http://www.fastweb.com>

❖ CSUN financial aid – <http://www.csun.edu/financialaid>

❖ Fellowships

- Usually reserved for graduate students and not usually based on need
- Usually based on qualifications (e.g., grades, skills)
- Sometimes have work requirements (e.g., research, internship, teaching)
- **Ford Foundation Fellowship Programs** – increase ethnic and racial diversity of faculty in higher education – <http://sites.nationalacademies.org/pga/fordfellowships/>

The terms scholarship and fellowship are often used interchangeably.

❖ Paid internships

- California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) – Two academic years of stipends equal to two calendar years of work-back service in public child welfare agency anywhere in state of California. – <http://www.csun.edu/social-behavioral-sciences/social-work/california-social-work-education-center-calswec>
- Geriatric Social Work Education Consortium (GSWEC) – <http://www.csun.edu/social-behavioral-sciences/social-work/geriatric-social-work-education-consortium-gswec>

- ❖ **Research and teaching assistantships** (usually come with a tuition fee waiver)
 - Many graduate programs (especially Ph.D. programs) will offer research and teaching assistantships.
 - The assistantships are usually for 20 hours a week.
 - Often times, but not always, the assistantship will come with a tuition fee waiver.

CSU FUNDING RESOURCES

- ❖ **Sally Casanova California Pre-Doctoral Program** –increase the pool of potential CSU faculty by supporting doctoral aspirations of CSU students who have experienced economic and educational disadvantages. – <http://www.calstate.edu/PreDoc/>
- ❖ **Chancellor's Doctoral Incentive Program** – provides student loans to a limited number of individuals pursuing full-time doctoral study at accredited universities throughout the United States
 - Seeks to provide loans to doctoral students who are interested in applying and competing for CSU instructional faculty positions after completion of the doctoral degree. – <http://www.calstate.edu/hr/cdip/>

SOME SUMMER RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS (SROP)

- ❖ The HACU National Internship Program (HNIP) – <http://www.hacu.net/hacu/HNIP.asp>
- ❖ Department of Education Internship – <http://www2.ed.gov/students/prep/job/intern/index.html>
- ❖ NIH Summer Internship Program – <https://www.training.nih.gov/>
- ❖ University of Michigan Institute for Social Research Summer Internship Program (SIP) – <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/careers/internship.html>
- ❖ University Boston SURF – <http://www.bu.edu/urop/about/>
- ❖ Virginia Tech Multicultural Academic Opportunities Program (MAOP) – http://www.maop.vt.edu/Undergraduate_programs/summer_research.html
- ❖ Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) at the University of Texas at Austin – <http://www.txstate.edu/chemistry/research/REU.html>
- ❖ UC San Diego Summer Training Academy for Research in the Sciences (STARS) – <http://grad.ucsd.edu/degrees/summer-researches/stars/index.html>
- ❖ Mentoring Summer Research Internship Program (MSRIP) at UCR – <http://graduate.ucr.edu/msrip.html>
- ❖ UC Irvine SURF – <http://www.grad.uci.edu/about-us/diversity/grad-prep-programs/non-uci-students/surf.html>
- ❖ Google “Social Science Summer Research Program for Undergraduates”, and other programs will come up.