
2019 Liberal Arts Macroeconomics Conference
PREPARING LIBERAL ARTS UNDERGRADUATES FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL
Breakout Teaching Session

MOST IMPORTANT COMPONENTS OF A GRADUATE SCHOOL APPLICATION

1. Letters of Reference
 - Strength of letter > Well known letter-writer
 2. Grades
 - Math and Micro/Macro Theory most important
 3. GRE Scores
 - Most Important: Quantitative
 - Aim for percentiles in the 90's
 4. Quantitative/Mathematical Courses
 - Most Important: Intermediate Micro and Macro, Econometrics
 - Calc. 1, 2, and 3
 - Linear Algebra
 5. Work Experience
 - Research Experience > Workforce Experience
 - Not uniform: more applied places prefer students with some research/policy experience
 - May decrease success within program, harder to adapt to schoolwork again
 6. Well-Constructed Research Statement
 - Communicate passion for economics and careful thought about a topic
 - Can signal a field
- } CRITICAL
- } High Variability

CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS TO BEING LIBERAL ARTS STUDENTS

CHALLENGES TO BEING A LIBERAL ARTS UNDERGRAD

- Fewer opportunities to take lots of math, methods courses
- Intermediate/Theory courses not math heavy enough
- Letter writers less well known
- Less access to wide ranging Economics topics
- Transition to graduate school can be a bigger shock
 - Likely familiar with more teaching-focused faculty
 - Less exposure to the math used in grad classes

BENEFITS OF BEING A LIBERAL ARTS UNDERGRAD

- Close relationships with faculty
 - Stronger, more personalized letters
 - More comfortable interacting with faculty
- Liberal arts curriculum contributes to strong skills in:
 - Writing
 - Presenting/Public Speaking
 - Team-work

IMPLEMENTABLE ACTIONS

- Identify strong students and encourage them to consider graduate school early on
 - Just a quick email at the end of each semester makes a big difference. Mine looks like this:

“Dear ___,

I just wanted to let you know that you did a great job in [Course that just finished] this semester. If you haven't already done so, I would encourage you to think about Economics graduate school. I would, of course, be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Professor Luedtke”

- Point interested students to grad school information and resources
 - GRE prep books
 - Advice materials written by big state schools
 - Books, articles, related to their interests
- Encourage students to take math courses
- Encourage students to apply to the AEA Summer Program
- Bring speakers to campus to introduce students to areas of economics that may not be represented in a small department
- Widen your network (conferences, refereeing, etc.) to increase the effect of your letters
- Incorporate students into your research projects
 - Apply for research grants that allow for undergraduate RA's
 - Point students to other research opportunities
- Increase placements at Fed branches, think tanks, policy institutes, etc., for students to gain relevant research experience
- Add calculus to your department's intermediate/theory courses
- Add more advanced electives, particularly those with a heavy math component