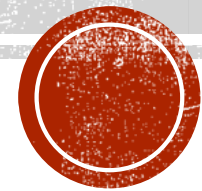


# GRAD SCHOOL APPLICATION WORKSHOP

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# ACADEMIC BACKGROUND



# GRADUATE SCHOOL IS A COMMITMENT

- Time
- Money
- Energy
- Consider your options carefully!



# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How might graduate school affect my career plans?
- Will a graduate degree enhance or narrow my employment prospects?
- Do I need to attend right away?
- Do I know exactly what discipline I want to study?



# ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Does my past academic record suggest potential for graduate study?
- Is a Master's degree enough, or will I need to pursue a Doctorate?
- Where will I choose to go?
- How will I afford it?



# BEST REASONS TO GO TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

- **Curiosity:** Love for a particular subject and the desire to study it in depth.
  - **Career Path:** Need an advanced degree to enter the profession of your choice
  - Self confidence or pride of accomplishment
  - Disrupt a field (Earn Turing Award?). Bond with others with similar interests / talents.
  - Get to wear the “cool” special gown at graduation
- 
- *Doing a Ph.D. is the intellectual equivalent of intense athletic training. Why would anyone spend years training to excel in a sport such as the Ironman Triathlon—a grueling race consisting of a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride, and a 26.2-mile run—when they aren't going to become professional athletes?*



# WHAT IS NEEDED?

- Application Form
- Resume/CV
- Statement of Purpose
- Letters of Recommendation
- Exam Scores (GRE, ...)
- Transcripts
- Application Fee (Waiver?)
- Interviewing?
- (Supplemental Materials--writing sample, )



# FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN EVALUATING PROGRAMS

- Intellectual environment (grad students, faculty, collaborative, interdisciplinary)
- Reputation of department, faculty
- Financial and professional support for graduate students.
- Social environment (esp. among grad students)
- Demographics of students...% minorities...% women
- Cost/Fellowships
- Career Services
- Geographic Location
- *Remember, choosing a graduate school is not like choosing an undergraduate college.*





# FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A RESEARCH LAB

- Are you interested in multiple professors' work?
- Faculty publishing record.
- Sufficient library, laboratories, research infrastructure.
- Size of the program and the school.
- Location (geography relative to family/significant other, city characteristics, available extracurricular activities)
- Housing, transportation.



# TIME TABLE

- **Spring of Junior Year** (Information Gathering)
  - Begin researching graduate programs
  - Visit websites and talk to career services/professors
  - Research examination test dates and fees
  - Take admissions test(s) if ready. Otherwise begin preparation process.
  
- **Summer after Junior Year** (Materials Preparation)
  - Identify specific department deadlines and requirements
  - Get research experience
  - Begin preparing application materials (letters, statements, etc.
  - Request letters of recommendation.
  
- **Fall of Senior Year** (Application Submission)
  - Register and take the required examinations (GRE, GMAT etc.)
  - Decide where to apply
  - Complete application materials and submit by required deadline(s)
  - Complete financial aid forms and apply for relevant scholarships.
  - Have transcripts and letters of recommendation forwarded to programs.



# TIPS ON LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- These are VERY important!
- For competitive programs, it is best if these letters are from faculty with whom you have conducted research. More on this later....
- Who to ask? Professor in your field of study, previous or current employers, internship supervisors, advisors for student organizations, administrators, doctoral level graduate students.
- Allow letter writers ample time to write you effective letters; do not “rush” your letter writer.
- Give your recommender copies of your resume, statement of purpose, and any other relevant work products



# TIPS ON CV

- Research experience!!
- GPA
- Membership and Leadership positions in Honor Societies
  - IEEE/ACM/Grace Hopper
- Honors / Awards
- Involvement in the field
  - going to and presenting research at conferences,
  - internships if relevant
  - publications
  - grant writing



# TWO CATEGORIES OF PERSONAL STATEMENTS

## 1) General, comprehensive statements

- Allow the applicant latitude in terms of what he/she writes.

## ▪ 2) Response to a specific question



# TIPS ON STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- **Show, don't tell.** Reinforce every claim you make with supporting evidence from your own experiences. Professors can easily sniff out fluff and bullshit.
- **Motivation, commitment, and enthusiasm for particular field/area.** Don't just list out your research projects as successive bullet points. What motivated you to undertake those projects? What did you learn from those projects that motivated you to further pursue research? Why do you want to pursue a Ph.D.?
- **Language.** Transitions are important. Don't just have sentences mash up against one another without any connective tissue. This is mostly a stylistic tidbit, so don't worry about it when you're doing your initial drafts, but an essay that flows well shows that you are better-organized and simply makes a more appealing impression.
- **Big Picture.** Try to put a 'researchy' spin on your work, even if the research work that you did was mostly grunt work,

<http://www.pgbovine.net/grad-school-app-tips.htm>



# SAMPLE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- What are the most compelling reasons you can give for the admissions committee to be interested in you?
- What are your career goals?
- When did you originally become interested in this field and what have you learned about it – and about yourself – that has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to this field?
- “*The unexamined life is not worth living.*” - Plato.
- In light of the above quotation, please discuss a decision you have made which, in retrospect, has had a profound influence on your present circumstances. In hindsight, would you have made a different decision? Please explain. (*Haas School/Berkeley*)
- How would you characterize the effects of your contributions to the groups of organizations in which you have participated? (*Yale*)



# RESOURCES

- <http://www.pgbovine.net/grad-school-app-tips.htm>
- <http://www.taoli.ece.ufl.edu/BadCareer.pdf>
- <http://www.pgbovine.net/fellowship-tips.htm>
- [https://me.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/advice\\_paper\\_web.pdf](https://me.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/advice_paper_web.pdf)
- [http://home.fnal.gov/~kendallm/grad\\_school\\_tips.pdf](http://home.fnal.gov/~kendallm/grad_school_tips.pdf)
- <https://www.quora.com/What-are-examples-of-some-exceptional-unique-or-mind-blowing-statements-of-purpose-SOPs-you-have-read-or-heard-about>





# QUESTIONS

- What is the tradeoff between industry job and graduate school?
- Is graduate school good for only academic jobs or industry as well?
- Is it possible to go back to graduate school after industry job for a few years?
- Should I email professors before the applications? What should I write?

