

GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

Applying to graduate/professional school is hard work, so it is important to think ahead and plan your application strategy. When thinking about graduate or professional school, you need to consider: your interests, skills and experiences; knowledge of the occupational field; schools offering programs of interest; and admission requirements.

Self Knowledge

- Are you interested in continued study for the purpose of immersing yourself into a subject area for pure knowledge or for employment opportunities?
- Are you burned out academically and need to take some time off?
- Are you postponing the job search by going to graduate school?
- Can you identify your interests, skills, and experiences and describe how they relate to an occupational field?
- Can you balance continued education with other life roles?
- Are you motivated to continue your study for another two or more years?

There are resources available through the Career Development Center to help with the above. Be sure to view the resources available in the CDC Resource Library and on the web site. Schedule an appointment to talk with a career counselor.

Field Knowledge

- Do you have accurate reality based information about the field of interest?
- Have you talked with professionals to see if an advanced degree is necessary for entry into the field?
- If an advanced degree is important, are there several options available in terms of programs?
- Would it be wise to work for a year or two to decide which graduate program to pursue?
- Do you have related experience through an internship, externship, or summer job?

Some resources available through the CDC to help you gain knowledge of a chosen field include: Career Network (alumnae and friends of the College who have volunteered to talk with you about your career interests), internships, externship, summer jobs, and books and web sites on particular occupations.

Information on Specific Programs

- Have you consulted with your major professors about their graduate school experience and about the quality of graduate universities? They can also provide excellent guidance in terms of the overall graduate school experience and job market.
- Have you talked with people in the field to get their suggestions on schools?
- Do you know the admission requirements for schools/programs of interest?
- Have you taken the appropriate graduate admission test (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, MCAT)?
- Have you reviewed the schools/programs web site to gather information?
- Have you written to get information on the school/program?
- Have you opened a recommendation file for reference letters?

Applying to graduate school takes time and consideration. The earlier you begin your graduate school search, the smoother the process will be. Be sure to check with each graduate or professional school for exact deadlines because they will vary from program to program.

Factors to Consider for Research

- Areas of specialization within the discipline
- Number of students enrolled in the program (Consider the male/female ratio and average age of the student body)
- Number of full-time faculty; student to faculty ratio
- Publications or research by faculty and distinguished faculty in the discipline
- Areas of specialty of the faculty
- Stress: How competitive is the program? Are you prepared for the stress?
- Quality and cost of the program
- Housing
- Location
- Financial assistance: teaching assistantships, research assistantships, scholarships, fellowships, and other financial awards
- Reputation: Talk with RC faculty, review professional journals and scholarly articles in the field of interest to determine who is on the cutting edge of research
- Placement statistics, if available
- Admission requirements: residency, quality point ratio or class rank, academic major and classes completed, references, deadlines, graduate school test(s).

Personal Statement

You should be aware that admission committees place significant weight on this portion of the application. Your personal statement should be the requested length, not longer and not shorter as a rule. Never exceed the space provided. While it is clear that you may not extend the limits of the page, there is no recommendation for how much to write; nor are you given much direction about what to say in your statement.

You can use the personal statement to emphasize your qualifications, interest in the field and why you think that you will make a good X, Y, or Z. You can describe your

motivation for study or preparation for a career in the particular discipline, experiences which have contributed to your decision and your goals for the future.

Prepare several drafts, refining and editing each version with every rewrite. Allow some time to lapse before reading your first draft, then read it aloud to yourself and listen carefully to what you hear. Be sure that you have written what you meant to communicate. If you stumble over your reading or a phrase sounds awkward, that's a clue that you may need to revise your statements.

Have someone else read your essay and give you feedback. Some of the most valuable assessments of your essay come from questions that are raised when other people read your essay. If your writing is not clear, you are not communicating effectively. And finally, ask a writing tutor in the Writing Center to critique your essay. There are books in the CDC on writing a personal statement.

Letters of Recommendation

Generally, letters of recommendation should be written by your faculty advisor and other faculty members. Choose a faculty member who thinks highly of you and who can give you high praise. The writer should be familiar with your academic ability, writing ability, and preparation.

In your senior year, please give at least 3 weeks notice to your faculty to write this reference on your behalf. Do not assume they will do this; it is a request once they agree to be a reference for you. Have your updated and approved CDC resume and a link to the graduate/professional school you are applying to send to them in advance. This will help them write a targeted reference letter.

Transcripts

Schools will want copies of your academic transcripts. Transcripts must be requested through the Randolph College Registrar's Office.

Graduate Tests

Each graduate school requires a specific graduate test for admission to their school. The most common of the tests is the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). The CDC has practice test books so that you can familiarize yourself with the GRE and other graduate tests i.e. LSAT, GMAT, and MCAT. These books are available for check out. Also available in the CDC is the Peterson's Guide to Graduate Schools.

Helpful Websites

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| ◆ Grad School Test Prep Information | http://www.kaplan.com |
| ◆ Association of American Medical Colleges | http://www.aamc.org/ |
| ◆ Association of America Veterinary Medical Colleges | http://aavmc.org/ |
| ◆ GRE Test Information | http://www.gre.org |
| ◆ Law School Test Information | http://www.lsat.org |

Questions to Ask Graduate and Professional School Representatives

- What is your process for the review of applications?
- Is there any advantage to applying early? Does your school have early admissions?
- When do you typically inform applicants about admissions decisions?
- How important is the personal statement in your admissions process?
- What kinds of recommendations are most helpful?
- What joint degree programs are offered?
- How is the program curriculum organized?
- How would you describe the faculty-student relationship/ratio?
- Describe the physical location of the school.
- Describe the on and off campus housing opportunities for students.
- How is financial aid handled at your school? When do you notify the student of financial aid?
- What are the average costs at your school for tuition, and all other expenses?
- What makes your school unique?

The Interview Process

You will be expected to interview with the school. The interviewer will be assessing your personality, communication skills, motivation, emotional stability, intellectual potential, maturity, and fit to the program.

- Be prepared to discuss your specific interest in their program.
- Search the Career Network for alumnae who would be able to talk to you about their graduate school experience.
- Ask to have time with other graduate students already in the program and be prepared with questions to ask them.

Typical Interview Questions

1. Why did you attend Randolph College?
2. Why do you want to become a _____?
3. What other schools have you applied to?
4. Which school is your first choice? Why?
5. What do you plan to specialize in? Why?
6. What experiences led you to your career choice?
7. Why do you think you are better suited for admission than another applicant?
8. Who was the greatest influence in your life?
9. What has been your most significant accomplishment to date?
10. What will you do if you are not accepted?
11. Where do you see yourself ten years from now?
12. What were your most favorite and least favorite course in college?
13. What topics of conversation do you enjoy most?

Timeline For Graduate School Application

Randolph College, Spring & Summer Semester Junior Year ~ Six Months Prior to Applying

- ✧ Research areas of interest, institutions, and programs.
- ✧ Talk to Advisors about application requirements.
- ✧ Register and prepare for appropriate graduate school admission tests.
- ✧ Investigate national scholarships and financial aid.
- ✧ Contact alumnae on the Career Network to get their advice on their career and their graduate school experience.

Randolph College, Senior Year ~ Three Months Prior to Applying

- ✧ Take required graduate admission tests.
- ✧ Write for application materials or research the application process online.
- ✧ Visit institutions of interest.
- ✧ Write your personal statement.
- ✧ Check on application deadlines and rolling admissions policies.
- ✧ For medical, dental, osteopathy, podiatry, or law school, you may need to register for the national application or data assembly service most programs use.
- ✧ Confirm with references that your reference letters are complete.
- ✧ Take graduate admission test if you have not already.
- ✧ Send completed applications.
- ✧ Obtain a copy of the Free Application For Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Financial Aid PROFILE, if required.

Randolph College, Spring Semester, Senior Year ~ Early Spring, Before Enrolling in the Fall

- ✧ Confirm with all institutions before their deadlines to make sure that your file is complete.
- ✧ Visit institutions that accept you.
- ✧ Send a deposit to your institution of choice.
- ✧ Notify other colleges and universities that accepted you so that they can admit students on their waiting list.
- ✧ Send thank-you letters to people who wrote your recommendation letters, informing them of your success.

Suggested Web Sites

- Financial Aid for Grad School, www.finaid.org,
<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sites/default/files/graduate-professional-funding-info.pdf>,
www.Fastweb.com
- Peterson's Guides to Graduate & Professional Programs, www.petersons.com
- Comprehensive School Guides, www.gradschools.com
- Graduate School Masters & PhD Programs, <http://graduate-school.phds.org/education-index>

FINANCIAL AID FOR GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

Cost Factors

- * Considerations: in-state school, out-of-state school, where you live particular region.
- * A majority of graduate students receive at least some financial support. See types listed below.
- * Unlike undergraduate school aid, graduate support is often based on merit rather than need.

Sources for Financial Support

Fellowships are an outright grant of money, called a stipend, for which you are not required to perform any work or services. The basis of the award is your academic potential, not your financial need. Fellowship sources include institutional, government, and private grants.

Assistantships are financial assistance provided by the university in return for service or work you perform for the school or department. The amount varies. It may provide a full or partial tuition waiver; it may provide a sum of money each month. The advantage is that you receive not only money but also experience.

Teaching Assistantships are teaching positions with a specified amount of part-time undergraduate teaching while you attend school. Advanced students may teach a lab, or a discussion section of a course. TA positions can be a valuable experience if you plan a career in college teaching.

Research Assistants are similar to a TA except the student does research assignments under supervision of graduate faculty members. Sometimes work done on a research assistantship can be used to partially meet requirements of your degree program.

Administrative Assistantship is an assistantship in an administrative office on campus.

Resident Hall, Student Personnel, and Counseling Assistantships

frequently are given to students in fields like psychology, counseling, personnel and social work. They usually involve a combination of administrative work, counseling or advising. Resident Hall assistantships usually involve living in an undergraduate hall.

***Loans** can be applied for through banks, government agencies and in some cases through a special university fund.

Internet Resource

Student Aid site: www.studentaid.ed.gov