

# GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL HANDBOOK



Career Development Services  
805.437.3270  
career.services@csuci.edu  
[www.csuci.edu/careerdevelopment/](http://www.csuci.edu/careerdevelopment/)



## GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES & COUNSELING SERVICES

Career Development Services offers graduate school exploration and preparation counseling, the Graduate School Bound Program as well as assessment tools and resources.

### GRADUATE SCHOOL COUNSELING

To schedule an appointment to meet with a career counselor to discuss graduate school research, planning and preparation methods, please contact Career Development Services (CDS). You can also attend a drop-in counseling session hosted every Thursday from September 13, 2012 through November 29, 2012 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Career Development Center, Bell Tower 1548.

### GRADUATE SCHOOL BOUND PROGRAM

The purpose of Graduate School Bound Program is to assist CI students who are interested in graduate school exploration, decision-making, planning and the preparation process of applying to graduate school. This program is intentionally designed to provide in-depth assistance with the graduate school planning process. Additionally, Graduate School Bound is a cohort-model program, which means that each semester a group of students will attend each training session together. This program requires a bi-weekly commitment from those who sign up, as the graduate school planning process is multi-staged. Register for a Graduate School Bound Information Session in the beginning of the semester to find out more! Visit the Career Development Center, Bell Tower 1548 to register.

### ONLINE RESOURCES

#### EUREKA

[www.eureka.org](http://www.eureka.org)

- *College Majors/Training Programs:* There are more than 150 college majors and training programs described on EUREKA.org. You can filter your search results many ways, including finding out which schools offer programs in your area of interest.

- *Colleges and Universities:* This database includes more than 3,000 four-year colleges and universities located throughout the United States; and includes approximately 300 international institutions.

- *Short Term Training:* This database includes more than 700 schools or colleges that offer training from the diploma/certificate level through the associate's degree. These schools are located throughout the United States.

### ONLINE RESOURCES

- [WWW.EUREKA.ORG](http://WWW.EUREKA.ORG)
- [HTTP://NCES.ED.GOV/COLLEGENAVIGATOR/](http://HTTP://NCES.ED.GOV/COLLEGENAVIGATOR/)
- [WWW.USNEWS.COM](http://WWW.USNEWS.COM)
- [WWW.MYPLAN.ORG](http://WWW.MYPLAN.ORG)
- [WWW.GRADUATEGUIDE.COM](http://WWW.GRADUATEGUIDE.COM)
- [WWW.CALSTATE.EDU/GRADPROGRAMS/](http://WWW.CALSTATE.EDU/GRADPROGRAMS/)

## **COLLEGE NAVIGATOR**

<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

This research tool allows access to information on more than 9,000 colleges, universities, and postsecondary vocational and technical schools in the U.S. Users may search the database by location, type of institution, program and majors offered, availability of housing, and many more options. Users have the option of selecting several school profiles for side-by-side comparisons, and all search results can be sent to a valid e-mail address, printed, or exported as an Excel spreadsheet. The site and all of its information is also available in Spanish. This is a product of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), part of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences.

## **US NEWS**

[www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com)

The publisher of U.S. News and World Report has consistently produced one of the most outstanding guides to education information on the Web. Dedicated sections of this area of the website focus on college, community college, graduate school, e-learning, and financial aid, and each is filled with quality news, information, and resources. USNews also lists the annual rankings of colleges and graduate schools.

## **FINANCIAL AID RESOURCES**

### **FINAID**

[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

Established in 1994, FinAid is possibly the finest single source for information and resources for all types of educational financial aid including military aid programs and prepaid tuition/529 savings plans. Under each category visitors will find comprehensive information on various programs, advice on how to approach each, important legislative information, warnings about potential problems or scams, and much more. There are numerous calculators to help students and parents figure out how much is needed, the true cost of a loan, and almost anything else a user should ask. This continues to be the premiere site for financial aid information online, and it continues to be free.

### **STUDENT AID ON THE WEB**

[www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)

This is a one-stop center for all of the U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid (FSA) programs. Available in English and Spanish, this site will guide the user through the process of preparing for college, and

## WHY GO TO GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL?

- Requirement for entry into the field (e.g. law, medicine, speech therapy, teaching)
- Professional growth
- Career change
- Personal growth, fulfillment
- Potential for increased income
- Postponement of career decision or job search
- The competition of the job market

Your decision should be based on your own personal situation and long-term goals. Careful reflection on your reasons for pursuing an advanced degree will help to ensure you select appropriate programs aligned with your career and educational goals.

securing funding from a variety of sources, attending college, and repaying loans. Information is available for high school, undergraduate, and graduate students as well as parents, international students, and other targeted student populations. The site links to FAFSA, the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) for easy access and application processing. A few portions of the site require the user to create a login and password, but this is to allow the users to save profile information, store applications, and customize areas for specific needs. Users can review their extensive privacy policy from the link at the bottom of each page for information on how this data is used and protected. Under "Tools and Resources" are links to additional funding resources, including StudentLoans.gov, the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS), and more.

## GRADUATE SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS

If you are unable to commit to the Graduate School Bound Program given your current academic and personal responsibilities, consider reviewing the following overview of the graduate school application process. If you find that you have additional questions about the process, please schedule an appointment by contacting the Career Development Center.

## APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

Graduate and professional schools offer an opportunity for you to undertake advanced study in areas of interest and/or to accomplish a career goal. There are some professions that require an advanced degree such as law, medicine, and postsecondary teaching. However, if you are uncertain as to your career goal, careful thought and consideration should be given before applying to a program. Making an informed decision about pursuing a graduate or professional degree requires an in-depth self analysis, research of schools, and development of a plan. It is recommended that the planning and preparation begin approximately 18 months before expected entrance. This would include a self analysis, graduate school research, and a plan of action.

## SELECTING A DEGREE

There are generally two types of graduate school degrees awarded: Masters and Doctorates. Professional schools commonly award advanced degrees in law, health and the medical field. The timelines in completing degree programs vary. The degree sought, number of classes taken in a semester or quarter, required fieldwork experience, whether a comprehensive exam, thesis or dissertation is chosen, and residency requirements will all influence the length of time for completing a degree program.

A Professional Master's gives you a specific set of skills needed to practice in a particular field, such as education, business, engineering or



## FACTS TO CONSIDER WHEN THINKING ABOUT GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL:

- Personality
- Skills/talents
- Interests
- Self-discipline
- Motivation
- Persistence
- Tenacity
- Career Path
- Intellect

A personal assessment will help in clarifying your career goals and directing you to a graduate program that will be a good match. In addition, your self-assessment will be valuable during the application process, in particular when writing your personal statement and in the event a personal interview is part of the application process.

### QUESTIONS FOR SELF-REFLECTION:

- What is your commitment level to pursuing graduate school?
- Where do you see yourself in the next five years academically and professionally?
- How does attending graduate school align with your career goals?

other profession requiring specialized training. It is generally a final or "terminal" degree, and often involves an internship, practicum or fieldwork.

A Research Master's provides experience in research and scholarship, and it may be a final degree or a step toward a Ph.D. A master's degree usually takes one or two years of study.

A Professional Doctorate: The M.D. for medical practice and the J.D. for law are the most common types of professional degrees. There are also practical-based doctorate degrees in the Social Sciences fields such as a Doctorate in Education, Psychology or Sociology.

A Research Doctorate: The Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) is the primary credential for college-level teaching. The Ph.D. typically involves both course work and a major research project. The Ph.D. usually takes a minimum of four to six years of full-time study.

## RESEARCH GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS

Thoroughly researching graduate schools will significantly enhance one's ability to make a good decision, and help to prioritize which schools match an individual's educational and career goals. Make a list of criteria that are important to your decision. Although no absolute criteria are available for judging graduate or professional schools, the following may serve as a checklist of criteria to consider:

- school offers degrees in your area of interest
- strength and reputation of the academic program
- geographic location
- weather
- Meets your goal
- required entrance exams
- demographic makeup of campus population
- cost of tuition, books, relocation, housing
- financial aid availability
- number of applicants vs. number accepted
- application deadline
- faculty to student ratio
- undergraduate preparation
- size of institution
- program accreditation
- program reputation
- length of time to complete program
- campus culture
- placement record of program's graduates
- completion rate

Many schools include web sites and virtual tours that can introduce you to their school and programs. If you have some schools in mind and do not know their web site address, do an Internet search by going to any search engine (Yahoo, Google, etc.) and typing in the school name. This should connect you to the school's web site.

### **OTHER WEBSITES FOR RESEARCHING GRADUATE SCHOOLS:**

- Peterson's Graduate and Professional Schools - [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)
- Grad Schools - [www.gradschools.com](http://www.gradschools.com)
- Grad Guide - [www.graduateguide.com](http://www.graduateguide.com)
- Graduate and Professional School Profiles - [www.gradprofiles.com](http://www.gradprofiles.com)
- Council of Graduate Schools - [www.cgsnet.org](http://www.cgsnet.org)
- Association for Support of Graduate Students - [www.asgs.org](http://www.asgs.org)
- National Association of Graduate Students - [www.nagps.org](http://www.nagps.org)
- U.S. News & World Report Rankings & Guides - [www.usnews.com/usnews/rankguide/rghome.htm](http://www.usnews.com/usnews/rankguide/rghome.htm)

Faculty from your college, alma mater or local institutions can be another excellent source of information. Discuss your interest with them and ask them to suggest potential graduate school programs that match your goals. Additional sources to consider are currently enrolled graduate students. Conduct informational interviews with students and ask questions regarding the campus environment, accessibility of faculty, diversity within the program, employment opportunities, and other questions that will factor into your decision.

Plan to attend the annual Graduate & Professional School Fair which will be hosted by Career Development Services on Thursday, November 10, 2011, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Broome Library Plaza.

After gathering information, it is best to narrow your selection to four or five potential schools. Your visit to each of the prospective schools is an important part of the decision-making process. There are often factors that you can only accurately assess by visiting each school in person. If you are unable to visit all the institutions you are considering, prioritize your top two or three and visit only those schools.



## FINANCING YOUR EDUCATION

Graduate awards are usually given on the basis of past academic performance and or financial need. Financial aid for graduate and professional schools is offered in three basic forms:

### GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Grants and scholarships are awarded on the basis of financial need and/or academic performance. This type of grant money does not obligate the recipient to repay the award. Check with religious organizations, foundations, labor unions, businesses, or town and city groups for scholarships based on achievement, ethnicity, hobbies, or talents. Armed forces may also offer financial opportunities. Your employer may also have an educational reimbursement program.

### FELLOWSHIPS AND ASSISTANTSHPS

Fellowships and assistantships are available through your department of study and/or they may be funded by the state. These types of awards may cover part or all of your tuition and provide stipends. There are a number of private fellowship offerings available based on merit, area of interest, and minority status. Apply with national fellowships including Fulbright Mellon, National Research Foundation, and/or National Science Foundation.

### LOANS

Loans are available through a variety of private and government sources. Student loans must be repaid. Student loans feature lower interest rates and/or deferred payment options. Apply for loans at each institution to which you have submitted an application for admission through the Financial Aid office. Also, check with banks, credit unions, or educational loan organizations for private loans.

## TYPICAL ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

1. A Baccalaureate degree
2. A minimum grade point average (often of 3.0 or better). *Your major GPA rather than your cumulative GPA may be used to meet this criterion.*
3. A minimum score on an entrance examination (GRE or specified test)
4. Some preparation in the proposed field of *study (i.e. internship, research)*
5. Experience relevant to the proposed field

Admissions requirements can vary depending on the program. It is important to discuss program requirements directly with admissions representatives and faculty associated with the program to maintain up-to-date admission requirements.

## **THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

Application policies vary greatly among institutions and even among departments within the same institutions. Make sure you have obtained the most recent information from schools to which you are applying. The way you present yourself and your achievements should be tailored to each specific program. You may be required to supply the following in order to be considered for admission to a graduate program:

- Completed application
- Official undergraduate transcript(s) from the Registrar's office
- Personal essay/statement of purpose
- Required entrance examination scores
- Letters of recommendations (minimum 3)
- Writing sample, tape, portfolio, audition as requested
- Application fee (typically ranges from \$50.00 to \$75.00)
- Personal interview

### **COMPLETED APPLICATION**

Be sure that each application you submit is complete, accurate and on time. Applicants greatly outnumber the spaces available in graduate school, so the appearance of your application is as important as the information on it. Answer all questions and adhere to the deadlines.

### **TRANSCRIPT**

An official transcript from the Registrar's office must be sent directly from the institutions you have attended to the schools to which you are applying.

### **PERSONAL ESSAY/STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The purpose of the personal statement is to show the admissions committee how you think as well as your writing ability. Your goal in writing a personal statement is to create a portrait that is both persuasive and personal. It should be a concise, well-written essay about your background, knowledge of the field and your reasons for pursuing graduate study in the field or profession you have chosen.

### **LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION**

Most graduate programs will require three to four letters of recommendation. The letters are supposed to communicate your ability to study at the graduate level, undergraduate preparation, and



commitment level to the proposed field of study. The individuals you ask to write your recommendations can impact how you are perceived as an applicant.

## **YOUR BEST CHOICES FOR RECOMMENDERS**

- Undergraduate professors (*in your major*)
- Other professors
- Professionals who have supervised you in volunteer or paid work related to your graduate field
- Employers

It is strongly encouraged that you request letters from faculty who can comment on your undergraduate academic preparation, potential for graduate study, and commitment to your proposed field of study. If a professor is not well acquainted with you, provide him/her with a resume of your professional goals and academic background. Also, provide each with a stamped envelope addressed to the appropriate graduate school. Although professors are your best bet, there are other people who can attest to your suitability for graduate school. These include:

- Colleagues
- Graduate students in your proposed field, or even in the program to which you are applying

Letters of recommendation can rank very high on an admission committee's list of evaluation criteria so be selective about who you ask for a letter of recommendation.

## **Writing Samples, Tapes, Portfolios and Auditions**

These items may be requested for consideration to enter specific programs. Be prepared to submit any additional information that is requested to enhance your opportunity for acceptance.

## **Application Fee**

Each application must be accompanied by a fee. Include a check or money order for the required application fee.

## **Personal Interview**

In some programs an interview may be required before admission is granted. In addition to being an important factor in gaining admission, it provides you the opportunity of assessing the program. Prepare for the interview by participating in a mock interview in the Career Development Center.

## ADMISSIONS EXAMINATIONS

Schools will designate which qualifying examinations are required for your chosen discipline. [Educational Testing Services](#) (ETS) provides information on a number of admissions examinations. There are a variety of private testing preparation organizations including Kaplan, Inc. which provides test preparation information at [www.kaptest.com](http://www.kaptest.com) or 1-800-KAP-TEST.

- Graduate Records Exam (GRE) - [www.gre.org](http://www.gre.org)
- Miller Analogies Test (MAT) - [www.milleranalogies.com](http://www.milleranalogies.com)
- Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) - [www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org)
- Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) - [www.mba.com/mba](http://www.mba.com/mba)
- Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) - [www.aamc.org/students/mcat](http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat)
- Dental Aptitude Test (DAT) - [www.ada.org](http://www.ada.org)
- Veterinary Aptitude Test (VAT) - [www.aavmc.org](http://www.aavmc.org)
- Optometry Admissions Test (OAT) - [www.opted.org](http://www.opted.org)
- Pharmacy College Admissions Test (PCAT) - [www.pcat.info](http://www.pcat.info)
- Teacher Testing (PRAXIS) - [www.ets.org/praxis](http://www.ets.org/praxis)

Plan to take the appropriate entrance examination during your junior year or at the latest during the fall of your senior year if you plan to go on to graduate school immediately after college.

## SUGGESTED GRADUATE SCHOOL CHECKLIST TIMELINE

### SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO APPLYING

- Research areas of interest, institutions and programs.
- Register and prepare for appropriate admission tests.
- If appropriate, obtain letters of recommendation.
- Three months prior to applying:
  - Take required admissions tests.
  - Obtain application materials.
  - Visit institutions of interest, if possible.
  - Write a draft of your application essay.
  - Get feedback from three academic professionals regarding your application essay.
- If needed for medical, dental, osteopathy, podiatry, or law school, register for the national application or data assembly service.

## FALL: ONE YEAR BEFORE STARTING GRADUATE SCHOOL

- Take admission tests.
- Send in completed applications.
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the CSS Financial Aid PROFILE, if required.
- Spring: One semester before starting graduate school:
- Check with all institutions before the deadline to make sure your file is complete. Send a deposit to your institution of choice.
- Notify other colleges and universities that accepted you of your decision so that they may admit students on their waiting list.
- Send thank you notes to people who wrote your recommendation letters, informing them of your success.

\* For further assistance please contact our center to set up a 30 minute Graduate School counseling appointment with one of our CDS team members. \*

## CONTACT INFORMATION



**Career Development Services**  
One University Drive, Bell Tower 1548  
(805) 437-3270 (office)  
(805) 437-8899 (fax)  
[career.services@csuci.edu](mailto:career.services@csuci.edu)