

Considering Graduate School

Graduate school can be an extremely rewarding experience as it gives you the opportunity to explore your ability to think critically and build a network with experts in the field of your choice. However, before attending graduate school it is important to have a clear understanding of what you want to do with your career and how earning a graduate degree will help you reach that goal.

Below you will find a list of categories along with details of what you should research, evaluate and prepare for when considering graduate school.

Research Your Prospective Field:

- Talk with professors or other CSUSB staff
- Meet with people working in that industry or studying in that field,
 - Check out: Occupational Outlook Handbook online at www.bls.gov/oco
- Identify prospective schools and seek information on their programs. Check out the Peterson's Guide to Graduate and Post-Professional Schools online at www.petersons.com or Gradschools.com, an online directory of 18,000 graduate and post-graduate programs worldwide including descriptions, contact information, and institutional advertising.

Evaluate The Various Graduate Programs Based On:

- *Department:* Certain institutions are known for particular programs. Find the best graduate program for you using the U.S. News Best Graduate Schools or the Princeton Review, which is a college admission services company offering test preparation services, tutoring and admissions resources and online courses.
- *Faculty:* Research the reputation and areas of specialization of the faculty.
- *Program:* Each school has a different curriculum and philosophy. Make sure they meet your educational goals.
- *Facilities:* Find out about the libraries, laboratories, and research facilities. What is the depth of the library collection in your particular field of interest?
- *Size:* There are advantages and disadvantages to both small and large universities.
- *Placement:* Where do graduates go after completing the program?
- *Degree requirements:* List all requirements such as residency, clinical, unit requirements, language requirements, examinations, candidacy, dissertation, or thesis.

Prepare For The Admissions Process:

- *Complete your bachelor's degree*
- *Admissions tests:* In most cases, an entrance exam, such as the Graduate Records Exam (GRE) will be required. Check with each school to identify the appropriate exam.
 - The Hispanic Educational Technology Resources (HETS) Virtual Plaza offers CSUSB students free access to over 300 online practice exams. Practice exams include: SAT, GMAT, GRE, TOEFL, NCLEX, LSAT, MCAT and ASVAB.
 - You can log-in by visiting the Cengage Learning website and entering the code: calstate2013. Once logged in, select the Testing & Education Reference Center and then College Prep Tools from the menu.
- *Aim for a minimum of 3.0 GPA:* Some schools average your last 2 years of school, or the courses in your field of concentration.
- *2-3 letters of recommendation:* Choose individuals who know you academically and/or professionally and will give

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you the best recommendation. The job title or status of that person does not matter. Each graduate school has different requirement. Make sure to check if school or program request letter from professor, advisor, professional or supervisor. Before asking for a recommendation, meet with your reference to discuss your career goals and inform them about the program(s).

- *Personal Statement:* State why you are most qualified to be in that particular program. This is a qualitative way to show your eligibility, not quantitative like GRE scores, transcripts, and grades.

Finance Your Education:

- *Fellowships & Scholarships:* are generally merit-based internal or external awards to support a student in a full-time course of study.
- *Loans:* If you apply for financial aid, you may be offered loans as part of your school's financial aid offer. A loan is money you borrow and must pay back with interest. Check with the financial aid department of the schools to which you are applying about loan possibilities. Loans must be repaid.
- *Assistantships:* You receive a stipend for which you perform services related to your field.
- *Grants:* Like fellowships, are awarded to graduate students that do not have to be repaid. Grants are often need-based, while scholarships are usually merit-based.
- *Work study:* This type of financial aid assists graduate students by providing job opportunities within the institution or in a public or non-profit agency for up to 20 hours per week