How to Select, Apply to and Prepare for Graduate School

Southern CA Forum for Diversity in Graduate Education – Cal Poly Pomona

Presenters:
Maria Elisa Grandone, Ph.D.
Monique Limón
Introductions
Number of degrees conferred to U.S. residents by degree-granting institutions, percentage distribution of degrees conferred, and percentage of degrees conferred to females, by level of degree and race/ethnicity: Academic years 1999–2000 and 2009–10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>1,198,809</td>
<td>1,602,480</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>929,106</td>
<td>1,167,499</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>108,013</td>
<td>164,844</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>65.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>75,059</td>
<td>140,316</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>77,912</td>
<td>117,422</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>8,719</td>
<td>12,399</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>406,761</td>
<td>611,693</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>324,981</td>
<td>445,038</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>61.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>36,595</td>
<td>76,458</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>71.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>19,384</td>
<td>43,535</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>23,538</td>
<td>42,072</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>2,263</td>
<td>3,960</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor’s¹</td>
<td>106,494</td>
<td>140,505</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>82,984</td>
<td>104,426</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>7,080</td>
<td>10,417</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>5,039</td>
<td>8,085</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>10,684</td>
<td>16,625</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Includes Ph.D., Ed.D., and comparable degrees at the doctoral level. Includes most degrees formerly classified as first-professional, such as M.D., D.D.S., and law degrees.

- Personal/Intellectual Gratification
- Requirement for the Profession or Promotion within the Organization
- Enhanced Skill and Training
- Increased Earning Capacity
- Greater Career Opportunities

Why Graduate School?
Increase your GPA

Strengthen your study habits; written and oral communication skills; research and time management skills

Build relationships with faculty and staff mentors

Be strategic in your leadership, service, internship, volunteer, and study abroad experiences

Participate in research and other scholarly work with professors

Research graduate and professional programs

Explore your career interest(s)

How to Prepare?
Present at conferences, symposia, and other forums
Join honor societies in your department(s)
Read about professional organizations associated with your intended career
Attend graduate and professional school fairs, and program information sessions
Manage loan and other debt
Speak to professors, current graduate students, and program alumni
Take practice entrance exams whenever possible/offered

Cont. – How to Prepare?
What is graduate school and what you want to study at graduate school?

How is graduate school different from college?

Why you want to study it?

What kind of experience you have in your field?

What do you plan to do with your degree once you have it?

Why should I go to graduate school?

Should I complete a master’s degree first?

Should I work first?

What can I do to prepare for graduate school?

Ask yourself ...
Factors to consider when selecting graduate programs: (Do your research)

- Philosophy of the program or institution
- **Curriculum requirements**
- Strength and accessibility of faculty (publishing record, faculty research work, etc)
- Availability and quality of research, library, or other facilities
- **Tuition and availability of financial assistance**
- Sufficient library, laboratories, research infrastructure
- Student retention and attrition rates

Keep It Real …
Average degree completion rates
Job placement rate and assistance
Flexibility of classes (i.e., day vs. night, focus on graduate vs. undergraduate students)
Demographics of the student body
Reputation of the program/faculty/institution
Accreditation
Geographic Location/Size
Housing, transportation to school

Cont. Keep It Real
Studies indicate that graduate students who receive effective mentoring demonstrate greater productivity in research activity, conference presentations, pre-doctoral publications, instructional development and grant writing

- academic success in persisting in graduate school, achieving shorter time to degree and performing better in academic coursework
- professional success with greater chances of securing a tenure-track position if seeking employment in academe, or greater career advancement potential if seeking leadership positions in administration or sectors outside the University.

Mentoring
acquire a body of knowledge and skills

learn techniques for collaborating and networking

gain perspective on how a discipline operates academically, socially, and politically

develop a sense of scholarly citizenship by grasping their role in a larger educational enterprise

deal more confidently with the challenges of intellectual work.

Benefits of Mentoring
You should apply to 3-8 schools

Find online application materials and email the department materials and email the department staff with any logistical questions about deadlines, application materials, appropriateness of visiting/contacting faculty, etc.

Research faculty and contact them (where appropriate). Inquire about compatibility of your interest and the research they are currently conducting

Inform them you are interested in applying to their program

Contact students in the program, learn from their own experiences/satisfaction

Graduate Application 101
Grab the spotlight by highlighting your passion
Must be personal and personalized
No “one-size fits all” - Show instead of tell.
Perfect grammar and punctuation. Eliminate typos, misspellings or other inaccuracies.
Seek feedback.
Particularly for a specific graduate program- mention faculty by name
Provides a succinct account of research experience(s) to date with your specific role and accomplishments
Explains your interests in graduate school and beyond
Social Media

Statement of Purpose
Letters of Recommendation

- Should be confidential
- Should come primarily from researchers, if possible
- Even better if they come from faculty at your school of interest
- Should come from faculty rather than graduate students, post-docs or technicians
- Should not come from relatives or personal/family friends
- Should be specific for graduate school applications
- If you are also applying to medical school, ask your recommenders to write separate letters
GRE, General and Subject
LSAT, MCAT, PCAT, GMAT, etc.

Standardized Tests
Research experience and financial survival are not mutually exclusive.

Plan ahead- many professional societies offer funding.

School-year experiences.

Quality vs. quantity.

If possible, seek authorships.
CV or Resumé
Writing Samples
Poster Presentations
Publications
Cover letter/bio

Other documents
Decentralized among campuses, like the UC System. You apply to each campus separately.

Decentralized among departments, your application must specify an academic department.

Role of the Department vs. Graduate Division. Departments make “decisions” and Graduate Divisions handle administrative details.

The Admissions Committee
- Evidence of intellect, creativity, direction, tenacity
- Research experience
- Interest in their graduate program
- Should be a good fit on both sides
- Interest in graduate school rather than professional (i.e. medical) school
August: Online application opens

December: Many department deadlines close: each department has its own deadline, ranging from December 1 to May 1

January: Departmental nominations for central fellowships begin

January-February: Admissions notification begins for some departments

March: Admissions processing and notification continues

April 15: Deadline for student response to admissions offers
- Obtain research experience
- Write a compelling personal statement
- Secure a strong set of letters of recommendation
- Apply for independent fellowships
- Maintain solid grades and GRE scores
- Explain any gaps
- Remember grades are not the primary consideration and are not a great predictor of success in graduate school

Convince them you are the One