Graduate School

**How to Research Programs**

**Tips:**

1. Contacting graduate advisors or faculty in the program you're interested in is important because it helps establish a connection and demonstrates your genuine interest in their work and the program. These conversations allow you to:
	1. **Understand Program Fit:** Faculty can provide insights into the program’s culture, research opportunities, and how your interests align with theirs.
	2. **Gain Guidance:** Advisors can clarify expectations, application processes, or funding opportunities, helping you strengthen your application.
	3. **Showcase Your Initiative:** Reaching out shows your proactive attitude and can leave a positive impression that sets you apart from other applicants.
	4. **Explore Mentorship Opportunities:** Identifying potential faculty mentors ensures that the program aligns with your academic and career goals.

Engaging with faculty early can also foster a professional relationship that may benefit you throughout your graduate education and beyond.

1. Creating a graduate program checklist is essential for staying organized and ensuring you make informed decisions when preparing and applying to potential programs. Here's why it's important:
2. **Streamlines Research:** A checklist helps you systematically compare programs based on key criteria, such as faculty expertise, funding options, curriculum, and location.
3. **Tracks Deadlines:** It keeps application deadlines, required documents, and important dates in one place to prevent missed opportunities.
4. **Identifies Requirements:** Each program may have unique prerequisites, like test scores, specific coursework, or writing samples. A checklist ensures you meet all requirements for every program.
5. **Focuses Goals:** It helps you align program offerings with your academic and career aspirations, ensuring a good fit.
6. **Simplifies Decision-Making:** Organizing all your research makes it easier to weigh the pros and cons when choosing where to apply or enroll.

By organizing your application process, a checklist reduces stress and increases your chances of successfully applying to programs that align with your goals.

1. Things to add to your checklist

**Program Questions:**

* 1. Why am I interested in this program?
	2. Degree types (MFA, AuD, MA, PhD, etc)
	3. Faculty/Student Ratio
	4. Extracurricular/Professional/Diversity Organizations

**Application Questions:**

1. Due date for application
2. Pre-requisites needed
3. Test required (GRE, MCAT, LSAT, etc)
4. Personal Statement and Resume/CV required
5. Recommendation letters

**Financial Questions:**

1. Yearly tuition and fee
2. Assistantships/graduate funding
3. Related practicum/internships/work sites
4. Rent, utilities, cost of living

**Surroundings Questions:**

1. Potential local employers
2. Community organizations
3. Average weather
4. Community organizations

**Materials to Prepare**

1. **CV** | Academic resume that includes academic, work, and extracurricular experiences
2. **Personal Statement** | A concise, reflective essay that provides insight into your background, motivations, and goals. It’s your opportunity to share your story, highlight your academic and professional achievements, and explain why you are a strong candidate for the program. Tailoring your statement to each school shows your genuine interest and commitment, making it an essential part of your application.
	1. Every program has different requirements, so be sure to read the admissions criteria to ensure that you follow the guidelines for the essay.
3. **Reference Letters** | Formal endorsements written by individuals who can attest to your academic abilities, professional skills, and character. Typically written by professors, employers, or supervisors, these letters provide an external perspective on your qualifications, achievements, and potential for success in a graduate program.
	1. Admissions committees use reference letters to gain insight into your work ethic, critical thinking skills, leadership qualities, and suitability for the program. Strong reference letters should highlight specific examples of your accomplishments and strengths, making them an essential component of a competitive application.