



# Applying to Graduate School



**What You Need To Know About  
Selecting & Applying To Graduate  
School**

**Dr. Christie Scollon, 2019**

# Where Does Grad School Fit?

**Is graduate school necessary to reach my goals?**

**Begin with the end in mind**

Your Future Goals

YOU ARE HERE



# Content Areas in Psychology

- Social/Personality
- Cognitive
- Developmental
- Industrial/Organizational
- Clinical
- Counseling
- Quantitative
- Human Factors
- Neuroscience
  - General
  - Behavioral
  - Affective
- Biopsychology
- Learning/Behaviorism
- Educational Psych
- Experimental Psychology



# Finding Graduate Schools

Think about your content classes

- ▶ Readings from 300-level courses

Ask people with knowledge/experience

Use resources

- ▶ Peterson's Guides
- ▶ US News Rankings
- ▶ *Careers in Psychology* – By Tara Kuther

Google departments/programs/researchers

# Typical Application

- **3.0 GPA minimum**
- Psychology major or complete prerequisites
- 3 letters of recommendation
- Personal statement
- GRE scores
- Official transcripts from all schools you attended
- Application fee--\$75--\$125 for Psych (*\$200+ for MBA*)



# When to Apply

- Deadlines vary by degree & program
- One year before you plan to attend, you will need to be in full prep mode
- Ph.D program– Fall Deadlines common
- Master's programs- Winter/Spring common (WWU counseling is February 1<sup>st</sup>)
- **Apply early** for the best chances of getting financial aid, assistantships, fellowships, and clarification that your application is complete.



# A Strong Applicant Has...

- Specific and clear research interests and goals
  - Identify 1 or 2 faculty members whose research interests you and why
- Good GPA and GREs
- Research experience
- Relevant coursework
  - 302, 303
- Strong letters of recommendation



# Letters of Recommendation

- No friends or family
- Ph.D level professors are preferred
- Get to know your professors, do well in your courses, work in a professor's research lab
- Ask early!
- If you plan to work for a time before going to grad school – ask to have letter drafted as you leave WWU for later submission
- Thank letter writers and update them about the outcome of your applications (good or bad)





# Personal statement

- Make Each School Feel Special: Don't copy-paste the same essay for different schools; Tailor it!
- PROOF READ Strive for perfect grammar & spelling
- No fancy fonts or frills
- **Be specific!**
- Some Potential Topics:
  1. Research interests (be specific)
  2. Career/future goals
  3. Life and related work experience that brought you to their door
  4. Personal attributes to show off (work ethic, organization)
  5. Specific faculty that you want to work with



# Resume/ Vita

Career Services (OM 280) can help you with your personal statement & resume/vita.

- Include Contact Information (Tip: update any cheesy email address)
- Be Brief (save a long description for cover letter or essay)
- Use Action Words (supervised youth, designed original research; implemented programs, analyzed data etc).
- Talk yourself up but don't pad the list
- Include months/years for all experiences
- Most recent, or most relevant goes first

Purpose

Volunteer experience

Clinical experience

Honors/Awards/Achievements

Work experience



# Financial Aid

- **Assistantship:** you work a certain number of hours a week, tuition waiver, monthly stipend (should be enough to live on), Options: Teaching, Research, Administrative
- **Fellowship:** Same as an assistantship, but does not require you to work. (Like a scholarship) Some will ask you to do research.
- **Grants:** government money that you don't have to pay back
- **Scholarships:** In your program, college, or community See WWU site or things like: [www.fastweb.com/college-search/articles/the-latest-and-greatest-for-grad-students](http://www.fastweb.com/college-search/articles/the-latest-and-greatest-for-grad-students)
- **Loans:** Stafford, Perkins, independent
- **FAFSA:** Fill out every year! As a GRAD you are considered an independent regardless of your situation (more \$ is available to you)



# What if I do not get accepted?

- ▶ **You may be discouraged but don't give up!**
- ▶ **Graduate school is selective**, so many programs will only accept 6-24 students depending on the program. This is why you need to apply to several programs!
- ▶ Take more courses to better your GPA, get applicable work experience, and study for the GRE to better your chances for future applications.

# Resources

- APA Resources for Students:  
[www.apa.org/apags/resources/](http://www.apa.org/apags/resources/)
- Association for Psychological Science (APS):  
[www.psychologicalscience.org/members/apssc](http://www.psychologicalscience.org/members/apssc)
- CACREP for Students: [www.cacrep.org/for-students/](http://www.cacrep.org/for-students/)
- Directory of Programs: [www.gradschools.com](http://www.gradschools.com)
- GRE: <http://www.ets.org/gre>
- What Can I Do With A Major In?  
[uncw.edu/career/whatcanidowithamajorin.html](http://uncw.edu/career/whatcanidowithamajorin.html)
- WWU Career Center: <http://www.wwu.edu/careers/>
- Innovative Psych Degree Programs:  
<http://www.bestpsychologydegrees.com/top/innovative-graduate-psychology-degree-programs/>



The WWU Psychology Faculty Are  
Ready To Help You Plan Your Future!!

