**HOW TO PREPARE FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL**

**The Three Basic Reasons for Going to Graduation School**

There are only three realizable goals in any graduate program:

1. To qualify you professionally.
2. To improve your career posture economically or in terms of responsibility likely to be attained.
3. To provide the satisfaction that higher learning offers.

**Choosing the Right Program is Critical**

Deciding on the right graduate program of training is critical. Without the proper research and guidance many individuals can be easily misdirected. Some of the potentially misleading factors you may face are:

1. Sorting out the opportunities at hundreds of institutions is a problem. Finding the right direction for your talents and interests may require considerable time and self-evaluation.
2. There is often an economic need for graduate schools to fill empty places simply to keep going. You could be talked into a program for which you are not suited, or which may not be of value to you.
3. Failure to do enough research on opportunities in the career fields that interest you can lead to your overlooking an exciting program of much greater interest.
4. Some go to a particular graduate school because it is a family tradition, only to find they do not like it.
5. The prestige syndrome can be inhibiting. It is ridiculous to say: ”If I can’t get into one of the top ten Engineering (or Ivy League) graduate programs in my field, I won’t go at all.” Refusing to go to graduate school because you can’t compete at the highest level is irrational.
6. There is a proneness to overlook excellent programs offered by state universities at reasonable costs, and consequently to decide against graduate work entirely because it seems too expensive.
7. Misunderstanding about the financial costs and benefits leads to faulty decisions.

**Tips for Applying to Graduate School**

1. Identify yourself - Why graduate school?
   * Be goal directed.
   * Do an honest evaluation of yourself and academic record.
2. Understand graduate education and admissions - The nature of graduate education.
   * Find out about the admissions process.
   * Where should I apply?
   * What programs am I a reasonable competitor for admission?
   * What institutions will best serve my interests and capabilities?
3. Explore the many program options
   * Selecting program for your talents.
   * Innovative graduate programs.
4. Determine your academic qualifications
   * If you have any weaknesses, you should consider improving your record by taking courses now to strengthen it.
   * Develop some specialty or pluses such as language or computer skills that make graduate school programs want you.
5. Prepare for graduate school standardized tests - GRE, GMAT, MCAT, LSAT, MAT.
   * Find out which test you need to take and how you can prepare for them.
6. Complete the admission process to the letter - Make sure application is complete.
   * Write a strong personal statement and have someone review it (faculty/professional). Market your strengths.
   * Find out if you qualify for an application fee waiver.
   * If possible, you may want to visit the school.
7. Examine the many ways to finance graduate school
   * Inquire about fellowship, assistantship, scholarships and grants.
   * Draw your own financial plan.

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