

Applying to Graduate Schools in the U.S.: Tools and Strategies

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**The key to a successful
graduate school application is:**

Finding the right match or right fit

Researching and Selecting Graduate Programs

- ❑ Do thorough initial research

- ❑ **Finding the right fit** in terms of a **program** and a potential **advisor/mentor**
 - Find a **program in the field** that best matches your research interests and career goals

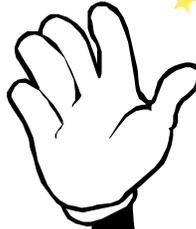
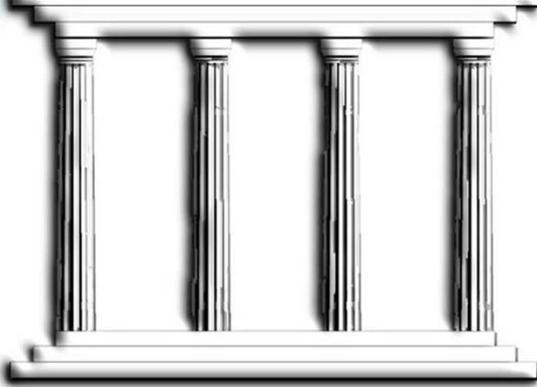
 - Find the **right potential advisor/mentor** in the field of study/area of specialization you wish to pursue. Align your interests with faculty interests when making graduate school choices. Review the research areas of the faculty (very important); look at the courses offered

The Professorial Link

- From departmental website: Learn about professors and their research. You could write to them about your academic interests (specially for doctoral programs)
- **Communication is the key**
- They should know you before they receive your application!
- Professors control teaching and research assistantships (**\$**)
- Either through direct communication or through your application: Make the professor/department understand how you will contribute to their research and be an invaluable addition to the program/graduate group

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- Select the best graduate program that fits you:
 - **A program that best matches your preparation and your qualifications**
 - Review the **admission criteria** carefully – do you have what they are looking for?
 - Aim high - do not underestimate your competitiveness
 - **But be realistic**

GRADUATE SCHOOL





Some Other Considerations

- Accreditation & recognition of university and degree program
- Ranking
- Funding
- Opportunities for training and internships
- Student services
- Location, climate, cost of living, etc.

How many universities do you apply to?

- Must apply to the schools recommended by the VEF interview panel (unless there is a legitimate misfit)
- Applying to graduate schools is not an inexpensive exercise – VEF only pays for a certain number of applications
- However, you can apply to as many as you like
- Apply to a wide variety of schools
- Be strategic in your choices and how many universities
- **Have a safety net. Have some safety schools**



Criteria for Admission

- **Your Preparation and Promise**
- Past academic performance
- Test scores
- Statement of purpose
- Letters of reference
- Experience – particularly research and teaching experience. Work experience
- Match between academic goals and university program and availability of resources and mentors

What is an outstanding application?

- What makes your application stand out?
 - What makes you different from the average applicant?
 - Why should the university pick you?
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- Potential and promise for graduate study
 - Motivation
 - Demonstrated ability to take on challenges
 - Understanding of what graduate studies would involve
 - Significant research/teaching or work experience
 - Awards, recognitions, publications, leadership roles
 - Original, unique and personalized statement
 - Superior letters of references
 - Well written (includes grammar and composition) and complete application – **Meet the deadlines!**

You have an exciting journey ahead of you. Applying to graduate school in the U.S. is not a simple task; you have to put in a great deal of effort and you need to be strategic.

Good luck!

We look forward to talking to you at our monthly advising sessions.

Questions

