Preparing and Planning for Graduate School

The graduate school planning process begins when students identify a career he or she envisions for themselves. Once the career path is chosen, the next step is to find out if a graduate degree program is required for that field (graduate degree programs include PhD, MBA, MSW, Medical School, Law School, etc.) and begin to familiarize themselves with the program application and admission process.

Listed below are recommendations and questions every student should be asking about their program of interest. Although this document is a good place to start, students are advised to use multiple resources to acquaint themselves with every aspect of the graduate or professional program planning process; this type of research will help students make informed decisions that will best meet their goals and expectations. It is the student’s responsibly familiarize themselves with the program requirements (knowledge of pre-reqs, admission requirements, etc.) and application process, and important deadline.

Students are also encouraged to search that field’s professional organizations for great information and additional resources. For example, if you are interested in Industrial/Organizational Psychology, you should thoroughly familiarize yourself with www.siop.org (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology). Most careers have a professional organization group that students are able to join at a discounted rate. Information provided on these websites is free of charge.

If an information meeting exists for your program of interest, ATTEND ONE. These meetings will answer many questions you may have, but more importantly, these meetings could potentially help you establish a point of contact. These information meetings or online webinars are typically presented by a program advisor, academic services officer, or coordinator. Information about these meetings may be located on the program’s website. If your program of interest does not have a formal information meeting, schedule a meeting with their program advisor or coordinator. However, before scheduling that meeting, make sure to review all the content available on their website.
Information Meetings at WSU

- Psychology Information Meeting
- Pre-Med/Dental Information Meeting
- Pre-Health Information Meeting (pre-PT, pre-OT, pre-Pharm, pre-PA)
- Nursing Information Meeting
- Master of Social Work Information Meeting

Important Questions to Ask During the Graduate School Planning

(Not all questions may be applicable to your program of interest)

1. Does it matter what I major in?
2. What is the average GPA of applicants for the program?
3. What standardized exam (GRE, MCAT, PCAT, LSAT, etc.) is required for the program? (some programs may not require a standardized exam)
4. What is the average standardized exam score of applicants for the program?
5. What is the admission rate for the program? (how many students apply versus how many are admitted)
6. Once the GPA and standardized exam score are considered, what other items does the Office of Admissions look for?
   a. For example, does the program prefer clinical experience (patient contact hours, etc.), research experience, volunteering, or student organizations involvement?
7. Would earning a minor, double major, or participation in an honors program help in terms of gaining admission into the program?
8. Is it a disadvantage to take pre-requisites at a community college? (this question is especially important for pre-health students)
9. How much of an impact do withdrawals and repeat courses have in terms of gaining admission into the program?
10. If I am not admitted in the program, what can I do to make my application stronger next year?