WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GRADUATE SCHOOL

Tabitha M. Hardy, Ph.D
tamhardy@iupui.edu
317-278-4644
TODAY’S TOPICS

- Making the Decision to Attend Grad School
- Admissions Process
- Test Preparation
- Personal Statements
- Letters of Recommendation
- Graduate Office Events / Programs
WHY AM I INTERESTED IN GRAD SCHOOL?

- Contribute to the knowledge base
- Teach at the university level (master’s and/or PhD)
- Earn the necessary credentials in my area of interest
- Develop skills and interests into a specific career
- Advance career
- Enhance job satisfaction
- Increase earnings
## WHAT TYPE OF DEGREE DO I NEED?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic doctoral</th>
<th>Traditional masters</th>
<th>Professional masters</th>
<th>Traditional professional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>MS, MA</td>
<td>MS, MA, MPH, MHA</td>
<td>MD, DDS, JD, DPT, MSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research-based</td>
<td>Research-based</td>
<td>Practice-based cross-disciplinary</td>
<td>Practice-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 7 years</td>
<td>2 to 3 years</td>
<td>1 to 3 years</td>
<td>3 to 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major research project with dissertation</td>
<td>Research with thesis or capstone</td>
<td>Research project or capstone</td>
<td>Clinical practitioner training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAKING THE DECISION TO ATTEND GRAD SCHOOL

▪ How will it be different than undergraduate studies?
▪ Do I have the time & can I put forth the effort to earn the degree?
▪ Will this degree help me reach my long-term goals?
▪ Do I really enjoy this field of study?
▪ Is now the right time?
▪ How will I pay for grad school?
MAKING THE DECISION TO ATTEND GRAD SCHOOL

- Do I have the right academic qualifications?
  - Have I taken the right undergraduate courses?
  - Are my grades good enough?
    - What if the answer is no to this question?
      - Consider a Post Bac or Graduate Non-Degree Program
MAKING THE DECISION TO ATTEND GRAD SCHOOL: FINDING THE RIGHT MATCH

- First step is learning about yourself and defining your personal goals
  - What do I find exciting?
  - Where do my passions lie?
- Does the program align with my interests?
- Do I like the location and size of the university?
- Have I visited the university?
- Have I talked to current graduate students in the program (and faculty)?
- What kind of reputation does the university/program have?
- Is there any funding available?
MAKING THE DECISION TO ATTEND GRAD SCHOOL: FINDING THE RIGHT MATCH

If uncertain about what graduate program you want to pursue, try some career/interest exploration sites:

- http://www.bls.gov/ooh/
- http://www.careeronestop.org/
- http://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip
MAKING THE DECISION TO ATTEND GRAD SCHOOL

- Talk to current graduate students
  - What is a typical day like?
  - What percentage of your time is spent doing what?
  - What do you find most satisfying about being a graduate student?
  - What are the challenges?
  - What advice can you offer a student considering this field of study?
  - What are your long-term goals?

- Talk to professors
  - Different perspectives and backgrounds
  - What are my career options?
  - Can they recommend other faculty members who might be willing to talk to you?
MAKING THE DECISION TO ATTEND GRAD SCHOOL: FINANCIAL ASPECTS

- How much will graduate school cost me?
  - Application process – fees
  - Tuition & fees – Fee calculator: [https://bursar.iupui.edu/apps/costestimator.aspx](https://bursar.iupui.edu/apps/costestimator.aspx)
- Cost of living
- Lost wages
MAKING THE DECISION TO ATTEND GRAD SCHOOL: FUNDING

- Types of funding available
  - Grants & Scholarships
  - Graduate Fellowships (Merit or Application based support)
    - [http://graduate.iupui.edu/admissions/financial-support/fellowships-awards/index.shtml](http://graduate.iupui.edu/admissions/financial-support/fellowships-awards/index.shtml)
  - Graduate Assistantships
  - Loans
  - Personal or family support
  - Employer tuition support
  - Savings from work
MAKING THE DECISION TO ATTEND GRAD SCHOOL: FUNDING

- Ask the program:
  - What portion of students receive funding and how are they funded? How long?
  - What are the stipend levels and benefits provided by departmental assistantships?
  - Is tuition waived with an assistantship or is the student responsible for the tuition?
  - How long does the average student take to complete this master’s/PhD program?
ADMISSIONS PROCESS

- Each school/program may have different processes and different deadlines

- Parts of an application
  - Demographic (Address, Phone, Birth date, etc.)
  - Educational History
  - Personal Statement and/or Essay Questions
  - Standardized Tests: GRE, GMAT, MCAT, LSAT, etc.
  - Letters of Recommendation
  - Transcripts
  - Admissions Interviews

- Apply early: [http://graduate.iupui.edu](http://graduate.iupui.edu) (for IUPUI programs)

- Plan ahead

- Take admissions tests/entrance exams early
ADMISSIONS TESTS

- Standardized exams
  - Help with comparison
  - Basis for awarding fellowships and other forms of financial aid

- Keep in mind the test is one piece of a larger application package
  - Personal Statement
  - Letters of Recommendation
  - Transcripts
WHAT ARE THE STANDARDIZED TESTS NEEDED FOR ADMISSION?

- GRE – Graduate Record Examination
- GMAT – Graduate Management Admission Test – business school
- LSAT – Law School Admission Test
- MCAT – Medical College Admission Test
- PCAT – Pharmacy College Admission Test
- DAT – Dental Admission Test
HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE GRE?

- Take practice tests through ETS, Cambridge, Princeton Review
- Plan 2-4 months of preparation/practice time
- Free test-prep tools for GRE from ETS:
  https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/about/fees/
  - General advice, sample questions with rationale, scoring guides & tips for answering question types for each of the test sections
  - Software – with two practice tests
  - PDF-Math Review
  - Webinars
- There are several commercial companies that also offer classes at a cost, but start with the free options first.
- The GRE costs $205 and you must sign up to take it ahead of time.
GRE TEST BREAKDOWN

ANALYTICAL WRITING

- QUESTIONS - Two essays
- TIME - 30 minutes each
- QUESTION TYPES - Analysis of an Issue, Analysis of an Argument

QUANTITATIVE SECTIONS [2]

- QUESTIONS - Approx. 20 per section
- TIME - 35 minutes per section
- QUESTION TYPES - Quantitative Comparison, Problem Solving, Data Interpretation

There is a 10-minute break following the third section and a 1-minute break between other sections.

VERBAL SECTIONS [2]

- QUESTIONS - Approx. 20 per section
- TIME - 30 minutes per section
- QUESTION TYPES - Text Completion, Sentence Equivalence, Reading Comprehension

*The GRE also includes an experimental section – either quantitative or verbal

© Kaplan Test Prep 2013
GRE SCORE Distribution

Verbal: 151
Quantitative: 152

Approx. Percentile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90th</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80th</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60th</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ETS

http://www.ets.org/gre/policies_advice/takes.html
http://www.ets.org/gre/policies directors/registration.html

ANALYTICAL WRITING
60 minutes

VERBAL REASONING
60 minutes

Section I
30 minutes

Section II
30 minutes

QUANTITATIVE REASONING
70 minutes

Section I
35 minutes

Section II
35 minutes

2 Questions/Tasks
0-6 Points

20 Questions
65-85 Points

20 Questions
65-85 Points

20 Questions
65-85 Points

20 Questions
65-85 Points
PERSONAL STATEMENTS

- What is it?
- Start early
- Know what the program wants & follow instructions
PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Most statements answer the following questions:

- Why are you interested in the program/institution?
- What are your academic or research interests?
- How did you become interested in this field or research?
- What experiences have you had that have contributed toward your interest?
- What are your long-term goals?

Be persuasive!
PERSONAL STATEMENTS

- Start with an outline
- Paint a picture/tell a story about yourself
- Attention grabber in the first paragraph, followed by explanation of why you want to be in the program
  - Sometimes easiest to write the attention grabber last
- If there have been obstacles/gaps/problems, address them briefly
- Last paragraph draws everything together
- Resume
PERSONAL STATEMENTS

- Proofread, edit, write several drafts
- Get someone else to look at it
  - Professors, advisors, peers
  - Writing center
RESOURCES

• Purdue Online Writing Lab
  https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/

• University Writing Center

• IUPUI PREPS
  http://sciencepreps.iupui.edu/write-compelling-personal-statement
LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- When to ask someone to write a letter of recommendation
  - Set up an appointment
  - Give notice and deadline

- Who should I get to write my letters of recommendation?
  - Knows academic qualifications
  - Knows your knowledge of the field

- How can I help the recommender write the letter I need?
  - Transcript
  - Resume
  - Personal Statement
  - Career goals
Start Planning for Your Graduate Career

- How can you use your time as an undergraduate to prepare for your future goals?
  - What prerequisites do you need for your career/grad program?
  - What graduate/professional admissions exam will I need for the program? (MCAT, GRE) Are you satisfied with your score? Do you need to retake it?
  - What research/intern experience do you need to be competitive? What techniques/skills would you like to learn?
  - Contact your school of interest, find out requirements and admission standards
    - How do I apply? (School by school or one system for multiple schools)
    - Application Deadlines/Timeline for admission
    - Admission standards (Average GPA, GRE scores of applicants accepted)
    - Determine how do you rank against current students? (What can you do to strengthen your application?)
  - What extracurricular activities have you or will you participated in that will help your application? Other activities will help you with your future? (Community service?)
# Suggested Timeline for Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Maintain a competitive GPA; Explore summer program/Internship options and apply or shadow someone in your field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Maintain a competitive GPA; Do an internship or summer research program; Volunteer/ do strategic community service; Take practice tests for GRE, MCAT, DAT, PCAT etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Maintain a competitive GPA; Reach out to programs of interest; attend grad/professional/job fairs. Take admissions exam. Do an internship or summer research program; Volunteer/ do strategic community service;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4/5</td>
<td>Maintain a competitive GPA; Retake admissions exam; Submit Completed Applications/Pay fees. Decide on what school to attend 😊</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT HAPPENS IF THINGS DON’T GO ACCORDING TO PLAN?

- Explore your options!
  - Consider alternative plans
- Re-evaluate your plan
- Develop an action plan
- What are you interested in?
- Take alternative routes
  - Post-bac
  - Certifications
  - Additional Degrees?
    - DO instead of MD
- Just keep swimming

When life gets you down do you wanna know what you've gotta do?

JUST KEEP SWIMMING.
JUST KEEP SWIMMING.
JUST KEEP SWIMMING.
Dr. Hardy's School Survival Tips

- Study hard and take the coursework seriously!
- Do your homework
- Find a support group (friends, other grad students, church).
- Find supportive mentors
- Get to know the administrative/office staff
- Find a balance
- Find your inspiration
- Focus on the goal
- If at first you don't succeed…
- Let your haters motivate you.
- Pay it forward.
QUESTIONS?

IUPUI GRADUATE OFFICE
INDIANA UNIVERSITY-PURDUE UNIVERSITY
Indianapolis

University Library 1170
(UL1170)
317-274-1577

http://graduate.iupui.edu/about/gradoffprogs/

Tabitha M. Hardy, Ph.D
tamhardy@iupui.edu
317-278-4644

Jennifer Mahoney
mahoney2@iupui.edu
317-278-4305