

EVALUATING THE PROGRAM AND MAKING A DECISION:

There are many factors to consider when deciding where to attend graduate school. It is extremely important that you find a program that has a high caliber faculty, mentoring opportunities and research opportunities that excite you. Some faculty and career services professionals feel that these are the single most important criteria in choosing a graduate program. Once you have identified what you want to study located the schools that have the top researchers and publishers in your area of interest, it is time to evaluate your options. This evaluation process will hopefully lead to identifying those places where you wish to apply.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Program Characteristics:

- Total size, faculty-student ratio
- Quality of the program and reputation within the field
- Background requirements: Some programs have prerequisites before being considered for admittance to the program. Be sure to check these out as you research the programs
- Academic requirements, credit hours, internship requirements, etc.; how long it will take to complete your degree, course availability, concentrations, residency requirements
- Philosophy and orientation of the program; blend of research and practical experience
- Faculty: specialties, quality, reputation, diversity, interaction with students
- Career Services Offered: Quality and availability of internships, employers who recruit from the program, geographic distribution of employers, will geographic location of school affect where you would later secure employment
- Percentage of students who begin program and actually complete it
- Location
- Program costs: Tuition, fees, books, supplies, and school location (cost of living, in-state or out-of-state)
- Other issues to consider: Moving costs, travel home for the holidays, employment opportunities available in the area, transportation costs, safety of the area, diversity of the area, leisure activities
- Graduation requirements

Admissions and Financial Aid:

- Selectivity and admissions requirements
- Commitment to women, minority applicants and students with disabilities
- Availability of financial aid or assistantships
- Facilities
- Size of campus
- Library facilities, library collection in your field
- Computer, laboratory and other facilities
- Geographic location, quality of life in the community, distance from loved ones
- Housing conditions and cost of living
- Social and academic atmosphere (collaborative vs. competitive)

Consider schools in three categories: (1) “reach” schools where admittance will be difficult for you; (2) schools where you have a fifty-fifty chance of gaining admission; and (3) a few schools you are relatively sure to get in. In general, it is usually easier to get accepted to a master’s degree program as compared to a Ph.D., medical school program or law program.

Important Considerations Regarding Admissions Requirements: Weighing your likelihood of acceptance to a school will save your time and money. There is little reason to apply to schools to which you have no chance of being accepted, or that you would not attend if you were accepted. It is extremely important to research programs carefully and narrow your list to a few well-chosen schools. Also, keep in mind that minimum requirements are just that – the minimum standard for admission. The strength of the application pool will determine whether just meeting the minimum is enough.