What Is Graduate School?
Application Timeline and Preparation

Presented by James Luyendyk, PhD
Michigan State University
Applying to Graduate School

Where to apply?
• Research each potential institution in advance
  ▪ Coursework
  ▪ Quality of faculty
  ▪ Facilities
• Select institutions based on the specific programs
  ▪ Match to your interests and goals
  ▪ Potential advisors at that institution

See “Tips for Applying to...Graduate School” on the SOT website for details to consider.
Preparation

• Junior Year
  ▪ Begin investigating graduate training options
  ▪ Take advanced science courses
  ▪ Strengthen your course performance
  ▪ Build relationships with faculty who might provide references
  ▪ Engage in research, attend scientific meetings, participate in other enrichment activities

• Senior Year
  ▪ Finalize choice of programs
  ▪ Complete your applications
  ▪ Take GREs or any required exams

See “Tips for Applying to...Graduate School” on the SOT website for additional details.
Application Process

• Determine a specialty/program based upon your interests and talents
• Assess, prepare, and submit all items required by the institution and the program
  ▪ Electronic application(s)
  ▪ Transcripts
  ▪ GRE or other standardized test scores
  ▪ Letters of recommendation
  ▪ Personal statement and/or admissions essay(s)
• Meet deadlines!

Incomplete applications will not be reviewed
Elements of Applying

• Personal Statement: introduce...
  ▪ Yourself, future goals, how you’ve prepared to reach those goals
  ▪ Research or other relevant experience
• Official transcript: sent by undergraduate institution
• Official GRE scores: sent by GRE
• Curriculum Vitae may be a nice touch
• Message to appropriate department contact highlighting your strengths, desire to be in their program
• If you’ve identified potential graduate mentors, send a message to them stating your desire to work with them, arrange a visit
• Prepare for admission interviews at schools where your application advances
Letters of Recommendation

- Who to ask? Someone who will be positive, knows your strengths.
- When to ask? Start asking September/October before application deadlines. Ask early!
- Provide information to help them write a strong letter: transcripts, CV, research experience, accomplishments.
- References are usually submitted directly to the program.
- Check frequently with your letter-writers. The process usually takes about 2 weeks. Replace those who fail to respond quickly.
- Thank everyone who submits a letter for you.
Graduate School Interviews

• Know the exact location and time; plan to arrive early.
  ▪ The interview may be conducted by phone or online.
• Dress professionally and appropriately.
• Be friendly and treat everyone you meet with courtesy and respect.
  ▪ Know the correct pronunciation of your interviewers’ names and address them by title unless invited to address them more informally.
Graduate School Interviews

Prepare well in advance

• Research the program, who will be interviewing you; what is their role?
• What are your interviewers’ areas of study and how would your proposed research fit with the department?
• Prepare for and anticipate questions about research you may have conducted.
• Prepare a list of your own questions.
Interview Questions

• Interview questions may range from broad and overarching to very specific questions about your skills and experience.
• Questions may not only address your research and academic skills, but also your commitment, working styles, decision making, and interpersonal skills.
• Be prepared to ask questions that are important for you to decide about accepting an offer.

See “Tips for Applying to...Graduate School” on the SOT website for possible specific questions.
Graduate School Interviews

• Learn about the program
• Be prepared to talk about your success, challenges, and next steps
• You **must** ask questions but be willing to listen as well
• Evaluate the interviewers and program to determine if it is a good fit
• Rehearse!
Qualities for Acceptance

• Potential to become a good scientist, i.e., independent thinker, good critical thinking skills
• Strong record of past achievement
• Desire and motivation to become a research scientist
• Ability to work independently and with others in teams
• Good GPA, especially last 2 years
• Respectable GRE scores
• Strong letters of recommendation
• Well-written personal statement
• Prior research experience is valuable
Factors That Could Influence Admission

- Residency, i.e., United States and state residency (for state institutions)
- Funding (department and grant resources), fellowship eligibility
- Do you know a faculty member in the department?
Selecting Your Graduate School

- Important to visit and get a sense of how well you fit
- Evaluate match of specific program or potential mentors
- Review courses offered, quality of faculty, facilities
- Explore with enrolled graduate students how your interests match that program

Review and consider the questions that directed your decision of where to send applications. See “Tips for Applying to...Graduate School” on the SOT website.
Good luck with your application!

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