

## **Graduate School Application Process**

### **1. Identify graduate schools**

Unlike undergraduate, for graduate school, your focus should be on both the school/department and the advisor. Therefore, before you apply to a department, you should make sure that there are at least 2-3 professors whose research you find interesting. When looking at professors, do not limit yourself to the department you are applying to. At most schools, it is possible to get a PhD in one department and work for a professor in a different department.

### **2. Narrow down the list**

- 1) Talk to professors and your advisor about the professors and schools you are interested in
- 2) If you know of graduate students who went to those institutions, talk with them
- 3) Essentially, get any and all information you can

### **3. Apply to the schools**

*Comment: The earlier you apply to the school, the better. Many schools have internal fellowships you can be nominated for, but these nominations may have different (earlier) deadlines than the posted deadline.*

- 1) Take the GRE (main and subject, if required)
- 2) Take the TOEFL (if required)
- 3) Write your personal statement and have someone (a graduate student, post-doc, or professor give you feedback)
- 4) Get at least 3 rec letters. These letters should be from professors (not graduate students or post-docs). Since you will most likely be asking for several from each letter-writer:
  - i. consolidate the letter request list into a single list and give it to them all at once, in chronological order
  - ii. give them at least 60 days, preferably 90 days, to write the letter
  - iii. give them your CV (and transcript, if appropriate)
  - iv. if you haven't worked with them recently, offer to meet with them to discuss your recent "achievements"
  - v. if letter must be submitted via mail, give them stamps
  - vi. send reminders every other week
  - vii. after the whole process is over, and you have made a decision, let them know!!! Writing a (good to great) letter takes several hours. I want to know the end result - did you get in, did you get the job, etc.
- 5) Follow-up with the schools to make sure that they have received all of your application files.

### **4. Email the professors at the schools**

- 1) The email should be individualized to the professor
- 2) The subject line is very important. It should be something short like:  
"Inquiry about GRA in Fall 2010" or "Graduate RA Opening in Fall 2010"

- 3) It should state/answer the following questions somewhere in the body of the email:
  - i. Who you are (what school you are currently attending, what your degree will be in, when you think you will be graduating)
  - ii. What you have done (brief summary of your past research – 1-2 sentences with specifics – ie used SEM to image ZnO nanowire-based biosensors); mention a more complete CV is attached. And remember to attach it.
  - iii. What you want to do next (research project/area XYZ which is a research area of their group)
  - iv. Why you are emailing (you have applied to their institution, and you would like to know if they anticipate having any open positions in fall 20XX)
- 4) It should have your CV attached. You should have a graduate student or professor look over your CV before you send it.
- 5) Note: professors are busy. If they don't answer your first email, wait a couple weeks, and email again.

## 5. Wait...

- 1) Many schools have rolling admissions

## 6. Fellowships

*Comments: For some of these you need to be a US citizen or permanent resident. Also, for some you can apply after you have started graduate school (during your first year). Below are the primary three, but there are many others.*

- 1) NSF (<http://www.nsfgrfp.org/>)
- 2) NDSEG (<http://ndseg.asee.org/>)
- 3) Hertz (<http://www.hertzfoundation.org/>)