Preparing for Graduate School

IS GRADUATE STUDY RIGHT FOR ME?
Ask yourself the following questions to determine whether graduate study is the appropriate next step in your professional development.

- What is my interest level in this field?
- How will graduate school advance my career/is it required?
- Am I willing to put in the time and effort demanded of graduate study?
- Is it more valuable to continue my education directly from my undergraduate degree or should I gain some more hands-on experience before applying?

RESEARCH
There are many factors to consider when choosing the program that is right for you. Here are some—the order of importance is up to you.

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<th>Location (geographically, online)</th>
<th>Support (academically, student resources)</th>
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<td>Financial considerations (tuition, plane tickets)</td>
<td>Culture/Demographics</td>
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<td>Experiential Learning (fellowships, externships)</td>
<td>Publications and Faculty Profiles/Research</td>
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<td>Accreditation</td>
<td>Requirements (capstone project, exams)</td>
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<td>Ranking</td>
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<td>Community (university, surrounding)</td>
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<td>Tuition reimbursement if full time staff member</td>
<td>Other personal factors</td>
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RESOURCES
When considering attending graduate school, there are many in-person and online resources available to you. Consider conducting an informational interview with someone currently in the field you desire to pursue. Informational interviews provide you with in-person insight and advice, which is extremely beneficial when paired with your own individual research. Utilize the resources below to help you identify graduate programs that meet your needs.

UF Graduate and Professional Schools Fair
www.gradschools.com
https://www.petersons.com/
https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools

UF Career Center Events and Programs
www.studentdoc.com
http://www.phds.org/

APPLICATION AND ADMISSION PROCESS
Ensure that you check with each individual program to meet specific requirements. Speak with an admissions representative! They are there to help. How many schools you choose to apply to is a decision based on various factors such as personal finances, competitiveness of the programs, timelines for the schools, types of programs, and career outcomes. It could be beneficial to keep a spreadsheet for each program you are researching. Not all programs require the same items, but here are some you may need to consider.
Separate university and program application
Application deadlines
Prerequisite courses
GPA
Resume/CV
Interview
Standardized test scores (GRE, MCAT, GMAT, TOEFL)
Official transcripts
Personal statement/letter of intent
References/letters of recommendation
Research/teaching statement
Supplemental information
Contact information for department
Hands on experience (shadowing observation, patient contact hours)

**SUGGESTED TIMELINE**
Note that this is a suggested timeline and may not apply to all programs, i.e. medical school or physical therapy school. Use this as a guide to keep you on track but remember to follow up with each program individually for specifics.

**Winter/Spring - Junior Year**
- Meet with career/academic advisors and professors to discuss your interest in graduate study
- Begin researching institutions/programs and visiting for campus tours
  - Gradschools.com, petersons.com, professors/advisors
- Attend graduate school fairs
- Draft the beginnings of your personal statement
- Write a resume/CV and have it reviewed by a Career Connections Center staff member
  - Schedule an appointment via Gator CareerLink
- Identify individuals for letters of recommendation and continue to develop these relationships
- Gain experiences needed to diversify your application
  - Observe, work with patients, gain experience in research labs, club involvement
- Register and take appropriate standardized exams
  - The GRE (Graduate Record Examinations) has a general test component, which is most often required for graduate admission, as well as several GRE Subject Tests that focus on a specific field of study.
    - Free GRE preparation materials may be found on the official GRE Web page and also at www.Number2.com and www.varsitytutors.com/practice-tests.
  - The GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test) may be appropriate for any individual interested in studying health administration or management.
  - The TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), IELTS (International English Language Testing System), and PTE (Pearson Test of English) are common English proficiency tests.
- Take practice exams if desired
  - Kaptest.com, Princetonreview.com
- Register with appropriate application systems
  - i.e. AMCAS for medical school, OTCAS for occupational therapy graduate programs, CASPA for physician assistant programs
Summer
- Continue to research/visit schools
- Network with professors to discuss overlapping research interests and how your skills might contribute
- Work on your personal statement
  - Visit the Career Connections Center and Writing Center for review
- Ask individuals for letters of recommendation
  - Provide your resume and other helpful documents to assist them with your letter
- Gain experiences needed to diversify your application
- Make a checklist of requirements and schedule for each application
- Complete and submit medical school applications

Fall/Winter – Senior Year
- Register and take appropriate standardized exams
- Request copies of official transcript from Registrar’s office
  - See application guidelines for how to submit (with application or sent separately)
- Finish personal statement
- Collect letters of recommendation
- Attend appropriate graduate school information sessions/events
- Apply for scholarships and awards
- Complete applications and submit
  - Preferably in advance before deadlines/rolling deadlines
  - Be sure to be intentional and strategic when applying – it is beneficial to apply to more than one program to greater the chances of acceptance
- Submit financial aid applications

Spring – Senior Year
- Interview with institutions that require an interview for program admittance/assistantships
- Visit institutions that accept you
- Contact/talk to students currently enrolled in the program to gain more information
- Secure financing
  - Consider what will be best for you (scholarships, assistantships, student loans)
- Submit tuition/housing deposits upon acceptance
- Notify other institutions that accepted you so they may admit students on their waitlist
- Send thank you notes to those who wrote your letters of recommendation, and inform them of your success