Planning for Graduate School

Timeline and Steps to consider in the Graduate School Application Process

Note: *The timeline schedule noted below is a general outline for undergraduate students when considering applying to graduate programs as next steps after college graduation. Timelines may vary depending on school, specific program and application time frames.* ***Please note that many students decide to take a few years off after graduating from college to work in their field of interest before applying to graduate school. Not all fields or positions require a graduate degree.***

Junior Year - Fall and Spring

- If considering graduate school, begin to think about the fields that interest you and the credentials needed to work in this field.
- Speak to your academic adviser, faculty and professionals working in this field to learn more about specific programs that may interest you.
- Schedule a meeting with Bard CDO staff to discuss interest areas and have a conversation about if graduate school is right for you at this time. Have conversations with CDO staff about how you can gain field related experiences through internships and volunteer work or how to connect with professionals or alumni/ae for informational interviews to help in the decision-making process.
- Search online resources for graduate programs in your area of interest and geographic preference.
- Investigate financial aid options with the schools; grants, loans, fellowships and graduate assistant positions.
- GPA - Graduate schools typically look at grades from the last two years of undergraduate courses. Work hard to keep up a strong GPA.
- Look into the types of graduate entrance exams required for certain programs; GRE, GMAT, LSAT, MCAT, DAT or other. Note: Some graduate programs do not require entrance exams.
- Research test prep opportunities and purchase materials to help you prepare for the graduate school assessments. i.e. Kaplan Test Prep
- Give yourself plenty of time to adequately study and prepare for the assessments.

Junior Year – Spring and Summer semesters

- Schedule your entrance exams in the spring. This will give you time to retake the assessments if you would like the chance to improve your scores.
- Assess your resume - many graduate schools look for a combination of strong academics, relevant work or internship experience and community or campus involvement.
- Visit graduate school campuses, talk to admissions staff, faculty and students in the program to learn more about the specific program, school culture and living environment.

Senior Year – Fall and Winter

- Schedule to retake assessments if you are hoping to improve your score.
- Prepare your graduate school application materials.
- **Transcript** -You will need an up to date transcript for your application. Be sure to gather all transcripts from study abroad and other college credit transfer experiences.
- **Recommendation/Reference Letters** - Ask professors if they would be willing to provide a recommendation letter for you. If so, provide the professor/reference with all of the information needed. i.e. name of institution, address and contact information, and information about the specific program of study. Select professors who know you well and can speak to your work ethic, dedication and participation. Give professors ample time to complete and be mindful of the deadlines to apply. Send thank you emails/notes to professors.
- **Personal statement**- You will want to craft your personal statement which will outline your reasons for applying to the program and highlight your experiences or academics related to the field. Add your uniqueness to the statement, share personal insight or experience that leads you to apply for this program. *Remember a personal statement is a professional document outlining why you would be a strong fit for the graduate school and program. You will want to research the institution prior to writing your statement.*
- Visit Bard CDO to have your resume and personal statement reviewed. Ask family members and faculty to also review your materials to ensure error free documents.
- **Complete application materials**. – Make sure you read application directions carefully.
- Submit your applications. **Be mindful that each program may have different deadlines.**

Senior Year – Spring

- Acceptance letters may start to arrive.
- You may want to revisit your top choice schools if selected.
- Talk about your plans and ideas with your faculty and career advisers.
- Notify the school of acceptance. Inform the other schools that you will be respectfully declining their offer and thank them for consideration.
- Follow- up with financial aid options, grants, scholarships and graduate assistant opportunities.
- FAFSA – If requiring federal aid, complete the FAFSA at https://fafsa.ed.gov/
- Send thank you notes to your references and let them know where you decided to attend.

Please remember that only about 20% of Bard College students go straight on from undergrad to graduate school. It is important for you to take time to evaluate what you would like to study before applying.
Having work or internship experience in your field can be helpful for your graduate school application.