



Crafting Your Graduate Application: A Few Strategies for Success

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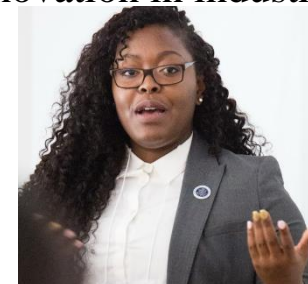
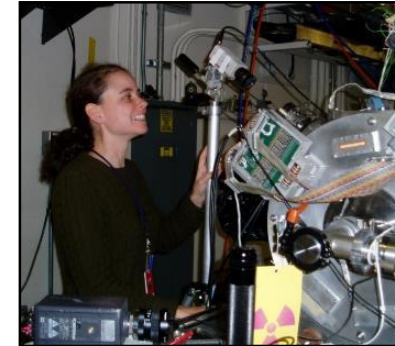
Components of the Application

- Application form
- Personal Statement/Statement of Purpose
 - Separate Research Statement may be required. If not, incorporate in your Personal Statement
- Recommendations – usually 3
- Transcripts
- Writing sample (depends on program)
- CV or resume (depends on program)
- Diversity Statement (depends on school/program)
- Application fee (\approx \$75 per school)
 - Rutgers has multiple fee waiver categories
- GREs – some programs no longer require or even consider



Personal Statement

- What have you accomplished in and what excites you about *proposed field of study*?
 - If you have done research, discuss *your* project(s)
 - What were *your* most important contributions?
 - What are the future directions of the work (even if someone else carries on)?
 - Discuss your scholarship. e.g. Junior seminar in *specify the topic*
 - Topic of *your* paper and what were *your* most important contributions?
 - Have you presented your work at a conference? Publications?
- What are your goals?
 - In graduate school? e.g. Study ____ in-depth - *specify the topic(s) and the evolution of your interest*
 - Future? e.g. Become a researcher or professor in this field, contribute to innovation in industry, or be a leader in science policy, etc., etc.
- Why this school and why this graduate program?
 - The strengths of the program in (*specify*) areas of study
 - *Specific* faculty doing research that fits with your interests
- If important to you: How will you contribute to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion and/or outreach?
- In summary: Why are you an excellent fit for the school and for the program? How will you contribute to the graduate and University community?



Transcript: More than Grades

What you say in your Personal Statement can impact how the Admissions Committee reviews your transcript!

The Admissions Committee review involves more than just your GPA

- Positive trajectory by semester is a big plus. Highlight an upward trend.
- Underscore breadth and rigor of courses.
- Point out how courses reflect your developing research interests
- If you had one weak semester due to special circumstances (illness, family or financial situations, etc.), explain.
- Avoid blaming a poor grade on the professor



Demonstrate your potential for academic success in graduate school!

Recommendations

- People who know you well from
 - Your research and scholarship
 - Advanced courses
 - Service or volunteer work or employment (only if appropriate and relevant to the field)



Examples

- Faculty mentor(s) for undergraduate research project(s).
 - If multiple mentors, request a letter from each (up to the limit)
- Professor in a class where you participated actively and demonstrated leadership or high level critical thinking



Pointers

- Recommender should be highly ranked, i.e. faculty members rather than Graduate TAs.
- Recommender should be someone who can say much more than “Got an A in my course.”
- Help the recommender by providing your Statement, CV, and an outline of key points for the letter.
- If you have faced life challenges that the Graduate Admissions Committee should know, suggest that the recommender refer to those challenges.

Interview

- An interview invitation may follow if the Committee is enthusiastic about your application.
 - May be virtual or in-person
 - If you are invited to campus, you may receive a travel allowance or expense reimbursement
- An invitation often means you are on the “short list.”
- But...it is not a guarantee. Prepare, Prepare, Prepare.
 - Learn about the research interests of faculty who are members of the graduate program.
 - If possible, find out whom you will be speaking with. Check out some of their papers.
 - Practice “elevator talks” about your own research experiences. Prepare versions of various length and targeted at specialist and non-specialist audiences.
 - Learn about the curriculum, interdisciplinary opportunities, rotation options prior to choosing a mentor, requirements to advance to PhD candidacy.
 - What resources are there for academic support, wellness, professional development, career exploration?
 - Learn about campus climate and culture, programs to promote diversity, equity & inclusion, outreach & community engagement
 - Try to meet with current graduate students.
- Remember that you are interviewing the University and the graduate program, too. Prepare questions to help you make an informed decision.

