

# The Ultimate Guide to Graduate School and the Application Process

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Brought to you by the A.C.C.E.S.S. Peer Mentors and the  
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# What Degrees are Offered in Graduate School?

Brought to you by Joanna Williams, Adan Morales and Loren Bacallo

## Sociology Degree Options

### **Master of Social Work**

“Social Work is the professional activity of helping individuals, groups, or communities enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and creating societal conditions favorable to this goal. Social Work practice consists of the professional application of Social Work values, principles, and techniques to one or more of the following ends: helping people obtain tangible services; counseling and psychotherapy with individuals, families, and groups; helping communities or groups provide or improve processes. The practice of Social Work requires knowledge of human development and behavior; of social, economic, and cultural institutions; and of the interactions of all these factors” (Wright State University, 2011). Populations social workers attend to include child and family services, geriatric, veterans, mentally ill and more.

### **Master or Doctor of Public Administration**

To find solutions to pressing public problems and tackling challenging issues that defines public agenda (National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, 2008).

“Professionals in these careers often must tackle very challenging problems such as expanding services to meet the needs of changing populations without necessarily raising taxes, implementing information technologies that better connect citizens to their governments, and improving responses to natural disasters” (National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, 2008).

### **Master or Doctor of Public Health**

“The degree focuses on public health practice, as opposed to research or teaching. Public Health programs are available throughout the world in Medical Schools, Schools of Public Health, and Schools of Public Affairs. The traditional degree is designed to expose candidates to ten core areas of public health: biostatistics, epidemiology, health services administration, health education, behavioral sciences, environmental health, maternal and child health, public health nutrition, public health practice and public health administration and policy” (Wikipedia, 2011).

### **Master of Sociology**

The objective is “to broaden one's knowledge of society, to strengthen skills of sociological analysis and to research in-depth in an area of particular interest” (California State University, Fullerton, 2010).

It educates for careers in “community college teaching, participation in research or for a variety of positions in business and industry, corrections, non-governmental organizations or government” (California State University, Fullerton, 2010).

## **Master of Urban and Regional Planning**

Students interested “in working with the critical issues of social, environmental, and physical change in cities and regions.” A Master degree is “designed for those interested in management-level planning” (California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, 2011).

Work as planners, managers, analysts, advisors, and designers, at urban, regional, state, and national levels. They work for local governments and governmental agencies, for private consulting firms, and for nonprofit and environmental groups. Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds and disciplines (California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, 2011).

## **Doctor of Sociology**

Obtaining a Doctor of Sociology degree prepares students for faculty positions at research universities and teaching colleges. Areas of research vary to include “immigration, race and ethnicity, political sociology, social networks, mathematical sociology, social movements, family, life course, gender, culture, and global studies” (University of California, Irvine, 2011).

## **Psychology Degree Options**

### **PhD Programs**

Abbreviated for Doctor of Philosophy, a PhD in Psychology will take four to eight years to complete depending on the program (Asher, 2008). The equivalent of a Master’s Degree is earned along the way; however, students should not pursue a PhD unless they want the terminal degree, because the program is highly research based rather than clinical/practice based. The course work taken to complete the equivalency of a Master’s might not be recognized by outside organizations or institutions as an actual degree. According to Dr. DeJonghe of Cal Poly Pomona, universities prefer professors with PhD’s, while a Master’s and even Bachelor’s Degree is usually sufficient for professor positions at community colleges or teaching positions at the high school level. Once the degree is earned, one can pursue post-doctoral degrees and training.

### **Masters in Psychology**

Universities offer a Master of Arts or Master of Science in Psychology and typically, the only difference in these programs is the department that houses the specific program.

A terminal Master’s degree goal is to prepare students for a specific occupation that requires graduate coursework and training. The majority of classes taken for a terminal degree do not apply towards doctoral programs therefore, for students aspiring to earn a doctoral degree, a nonterminal master’s program would be a better option. A nonterminal degree is awarded to students usually as a part of the university’s Doctoral program (Graduate Degrees).

The advantages a master’s terminal options are that admission requirements are less stringent, the program takes less time (usually 2-4 years), and it provides specific and sufficient training and credentials for their holders (Graduate Degrees). A major disadvantage of a master’s terminal option is the limited career options because of state licensing and certification.

Keep in mind the fact that while a Masters Degree will give you the opportunity to teach/work in community colleges, only a Ph.D. gives you the opportunity to teach at universities. However, there are

several types of Master's degrees in Psychology, and depending on which kind you choose, you'll have different opportunities. Here are some of the programs offered by universities:

**Master of Arts in Psychology**- great preparatory program for aspiring Ph.D. student, offers coursework and research experience to students who are committed to the field of psychology but are undecided on a specialty (California State University, Fullerton, 2011).

**Master of Science in Counseling**-meets requirements for license as a Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) (California State University, Bakersfield, 2011).

**Master of Science in School Psychology**- prepares students to work in Higher Education settings (California State University, Chico, 2011).

**Master of Science in Industrial/Organizational Psychology**- provides training and background in how psychology is applied to organizations and work setting (California State University, San Bernardino, 2011).

The California State University offers a comprehensive list of Master's Degrees programs at each university on their website: <http://www.calstate.edu/gradprograms/documents/majors-matrix-graduate.pdf>

## How Do I Decide Where to Apply?

Brought to you by Jacquelyn Andersen and Marilyn Martinez

When searching for a school to apply, research the particular programs offering degrees at that university. It is important to find out what kind of degree you want to get as well as in what area. First, you should make a list of possible schools by doing some research as well talking to advisors and professors. Specialty guides, such as *Graduate Study in Psychology* published by the American Psychology Association, offer great information on all psychology degree granting universities in the nation. Websites, such as [gradschools.com](http://gradschools.com), also are a great place to start your search. Second, get in contact with these schools and see if you can attend information sessions or email the admissions department to request more detailed information on the programs. While this will help rule out some schools, narrowing down the list further can still be daunting.

It is recommended that you apply to anywhere from 4 to 15 schools. Depending on what program you are interested in, you may need more or less schools on your list. Avoid applying to an excessive amount of schools (application fees can be expensive) but also avoid applying to too few (lowering your chances of getting in somewhere). You want a balance of "safety" and "dream" universities on your application list. *The Graduate Admissions Essay* illustrates a handy formula to help students select schools and narrow down their list (Asher, 2008).

First prepare a list of schools you are considering and then rank them in order of interest to you, starting with most appealing or attractive and descending from there. Following Asher's formula, from this list of possible schools you should divide the list into 3 different categories:

1. Those schools to which you are pretty sure you can get admitted, namely, safety schools
2. Those schools to which you probably, maybe can get admitted
3. Those schools to which it would be a reach for you to be admitted, perhaps even a miracle

Now refer to your first list in which you ranked the different schools. Choose the two top “ranked” schools from each of the three categories you made on the second list. You should now be left with six schools. Applying to the six schools you narrow down to using this formula is a good amount and variety. However, it is important to always verify this list with your faculty advisor to gain their insight as well!

## Where and When to Begin

Brought to you by Rachelle Lynn Webb

Begin the process of applying to graduate schools by researching programs throughout the nation. For psychology, each year the American Psychological Association publishes *Graduate Study in Psychology*, a comprehensive report of every graduate program in the United States and Canada that offer degrees in the psychological sciences (Buskist & Burke, 2007). *Graduate Study in Psychology* provides current and detailed information on each program’s admission requirements and contact information. This information can also be found on university websites or by contacting their respective Admissions Departments.

Organize your findings by creating an Excel Spreadsheet to keep track of all your prospective schools and relevant information related to each, especially deadlines. This will be an organized way to keep track of what needs to be done and how schools compare to each other. Use the following as a guide for how you will create your spreadsheet:

	<b>Address &amp; Contact Information</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Size of Dept.</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>Deadline to apply</b>	<b>Deadline for Support</b>	<b>Number of faculty with my interest</b>
<b>Northern U.</b>		Cognitive	23	Ph.D.	Jan. 1		3
<b>Western U.</b>		Neuroscience	12	Master’s	Feb. 1		1
<b>Southern U.</b>		Biopsych.	8	Master’s	Feb. 15		0
<b>Eastern U.</b>			16	Ph.D.	Jan. 1		2

	<b>Min GRE Score</b>	<b>Min GPA</b>	<b>Assistantship Opportunities</b>	<b>Application Fee</b>	<b>Fee Waiver?</b>	<b>Faculty Connections</b>
<b>Northern U.</b>	600	3.5	research	70	yes	Joe S.
<b>Western U.</b>	600	3.3	teaching	85	yes	Billy I.
<b>Southern U.</b>	600	3.0	teaching, research	60	no	
<b>Eastern U.</b>	600	3.5	research	70	yes	Jessica R.

<b>Address &amp; Contact Information</b>	<b>Date App Verified as Complete</b>	<b>Accepted/ Rejected/ Waitlisted?</b>	<b>Deadline to respond</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Northern U.</b>	Dec. 20	accepted		
<b>Western U.</b>	Jan. 1	waitlisted		
<b>Southern U.</b>	Jan. 5			
<b>Eastern U.</b>	Dec. 20	accepted		

## What will my application materials include?

Your application will generally include the following; some departments may have their own specific requirements which you will need to look into (Buskist & Burke, 2007).

- Completed online application
- Transcript(s)
- GRE Scores
- TOEFL scores (Required if English is your second language)
- Personal Statement, also known as Letter of Intent
- Three letters of recommendation along with any specific forms for recommendation the school provides.

## Time Line

### Freshman Year

- Declare major in Psychology or Sociology.
- Earn as high a grade as possible in general education requirements and prerequisites courses.
- Participate in research studies taking place on campus in order to gain insight in the field.

### Sophomore Year

- Do well in classes to maintain high GPA.
- Take high quality notes in core classes to keep for review.
- Get to know faculty on a first name basis, think about who you might want to do research with.
- Learn to conduct literature reviews using the library's databases. Learn how to cite following proper format. The library hosts workshops regularly on both these skills.
- Research volunteer opportunities.
- Become a member of Psi Chi and/or AKD to gain support group within major. Consider attending regional conferences with these clubs.

- Keep an eye out for areas of interest you might want to pursue. Read current journal articles to see if you're interested in any particular area.

## **Junior Year**

### **September to November**

- Continue to get high grades in advanced core classes.
- Regularly see advisor to make sure you stay on track to graduate in a timely manner.
- Look into starting to do research with a professor on campus. Meet with professors during their office hours to discuss their current research projects and ask to read any publications they may have.
- Apply for scholarships and scholarly program, such as McNair, if eligible.

### **December to February**

- Volunteer for psychology/sociology related organizations, through clubs on campus or independently.
- Conduct research with professors.
- Consider joining professional organizations such as WPA, PSA, APS, or ASA.
- If conducting research start saving for travel to present at conferences.
- Consider applying for a summer research/internship program. Discuss opportunities with advisor.

### **March to May**

- Start to draft a CV and keep track of all activities, conference presentations, and awards received.
- Attend a regional professional conference such as WPA or PSA. Even if you are not presenting it is a good opportunity to meet people in the field and learn about new trends in your area of interest.
- Meet with advisor and discuss schools you should research over the summer.

### **June to August**

- Research schools you would like to apply to. Make Excel spreadsheet of graduate school admissions information if you have not already done so.
- Schedule date to take GRE, if applicable. Begin studying and take practice tests every month.
- Keep up to date on areas of interest by reading current journal articles.
- Begin drafting personal statement and other application essays now before you are loaded down with course work once the school year begins.
- Research opportunities for financial assistance during graduate school. Keep in mind application deadlines for assistantships can be before admissions deadlines.
- Begin saving up for application fees; research if you can get application fees waived.

- Contact Admissions Department of schools that interest you and visit schools if possible.

## **Senior Year**

### **September to October**

- Check graduation status with advisor and registrar's office.
- Begin a research assistantship with a professor or internship if you have not already done so.
- Meet with advisor and discuss which schools would be appropriate to apply to.
- Narrow down list of schools you will apply to.
- Download applications.
- Meet with faculty to ask for letters of recommendation.
- Form support group of peers who are also applying, keep each other motivated and on track.
- Arrange to have GRE scores sent to schools.
- Regularly see advisor to review application materials.

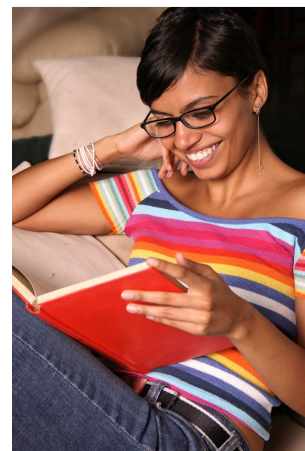
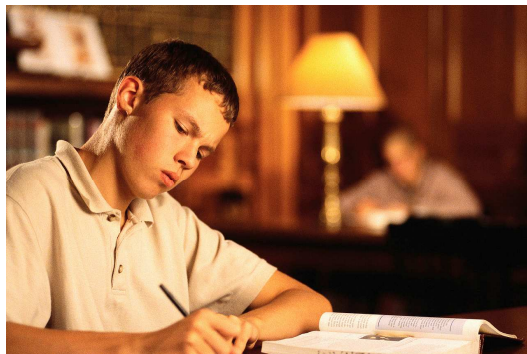
### **November to February**

- Prepare and submit applications to various schools
- Remember to apply for scholarships to help out financially.

### **February to April**

- Verify application materials have been received.
- Respond to programs accepting or declining admission.

**Sit back and relax! You did it!**





# How Much is This Going to Cost Me?

Brought to you by Perla Navarro and Monica Valenciano

Example of potential cost of applying to 10 schools:

General GRE: \$160  
Psychology GRE (not applicable for all programs): \$140  
GRE Preparation (books): \$40+  
GRE Preparation (classes): \$450+  
GRE Score Reports (\$23/each - 4 free): \$138  
Transcripts (\$6/each): \$60  
Application fee (\$60+/each): \$600+

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**Total** (excluding applicable postage, supplies such as ink and paper, and travel expenses):  
**\$1,588+**

## Tips on how to save:

- Borrow GRE prep books from friends
- Form study groups
- Keep class notes for review
- Take advantage of free online practice tests and questions
- Discounts on GRE fees often offered during August-September
- Apply for fee waivers if eligible

## Tuition

- The cost of tuition will vary from program to program, as well as, from school to school.
- “You cannot tell how much it will cost until you apply and are admitted,” (Asher, 2008).
- “It's often cheaper to go to an expensive school because those schools have deeper resources for financial aid,” (Asher).
- “It's often cheaper to pursue a Ph.D., because Ph.D. candidates are better funded than master's candidates... [However,] never pursue the Ph.D. unless you want the terminal degree,” (Asher).
- In general, it is cheaper to go to school full time rather than part time for two reasons.
  - First, the money you borrow to go full time is repaid after you graduate, when you should have a much higher rate of earnings.
  - Second, students who go to school part time frequently do not get the career boost that comes from completing a full-time degree program,” (Asher).
- You may be able to negotiate tuition expenses with certain schools if you have desirable academic attributes (GPA, GRE scores, research experience, etc.).



## **Financial Assistance for Graduate School**

“Much Financial aid at the graduate level is merit based, and failing to pursue these awards will leave you without the necessary credentials to obtain postgraduate employment and other opportunities” (Asher, 2008).

Here are the most common sources of aid:

- Teaching assistantships
- Research assistantships
- Fellowships
- Tuition waivers
- Loans

Note: Most assistantships have an early deadline! Sometimes assistantship deadlines are before the deadline required for grad school applications (Asher, 2008). Assistantships tend to require an essay and recommendation letters different than those used in the grad school application (Asher). In order to increase your chances of being chosen for assistantship, visit the department where you will be applying (Asher).

### **1. Teaching Assistantships**

- You can obtain a teaching assistantship by applying at the graduate school you will be attending (Asher, 2008)
- Having impressive grades is a must for teaching assistantships (Asher).
- It is beneficial to have some experience in tutoring or proctoring (Asher).
- “You can supplement your income with less well known assistantship from assignments somewhere else in the university system” (Asher). So do your research!

### **2. Research Assistantships**

- In order to obtain a research assistantship you must apply to a specific professor or lab at the graduate school (Asher, 2008).

- It is helpful for someone who is interested in a research assistantship to learn as much as he or she can about the research he or she wants to participate in (Asher).
- It is beneficial if you like doing original research, have participated in original research, and/or have already been published
- “To see how your stipend compares to other schools go to [gradschool.binghampton.edu/stipendsurvey](http://gradschool.binghampton.edu/stipendsurvey),” (Asher).
- If you can’t get a research assistantship in your department, look for other job opportunities in the department that will help you get closer to professors as well as helping you get know how the department works. (Asher)

### **3. Fellowships**

- “Fellowships are large rewards that come with no strings attached” (Asher, 2008).
- Internal fellowships are found in the department you are applying to (Asher).
- External fellowships are found outside the school by doing research.

### **4. Scholarships**

#### **Rhodes**

[www.rhodesscholar.org/](http://www.rhodesscholar.org/)

A two or three year scholarship to attend the university of Oxford.

#### **Fullbright**

[www.fulbright.state.gov/](http://www.fulbright.state.gov/)

Offers one year grant for postgrad study aboard.

#### **Rotary**

[www.rotary.org/en/studentsandyouth/educationalprograms/ambassadorialscholarships/pages/ridefault.aspx](http://www.rotary.org/en/studentsandyouth/educationalprograms/ambassadorialscholarships/pages/ridefault.aspx)

“A full ride year aboard to advance cross-cultural human understanding,” (Asher, 2008).

#### **Watson**

[www.watsonfellowship.org/](http://www.watsonfellowship.org/)

Favors travelers and adventurers (Asher).

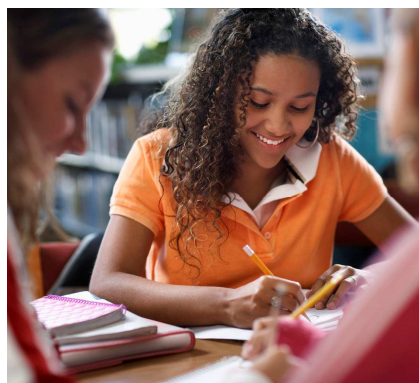
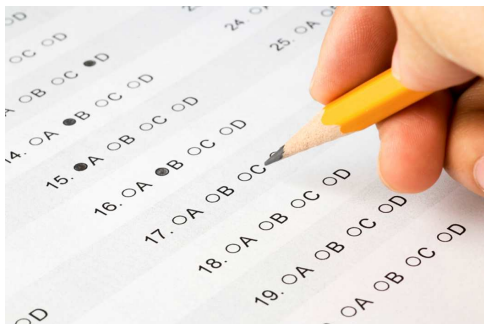
#### **Mellon**

[www.mellon.org](http://www.mellon.org)

“Seniors or recent graduates who have an interest in pursuing a Ph.D. in humanities in the U.S or Canada” (Asher).

Other sources of Financial Support to check out

- Council of Graduate Schools: [www.cgsnet.org](http://www.cgsnet.org)
- National Center for Education Statistics: [www.nces.ed.org](http://www.nces.ed.org)
- FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)
- Graduate & Professional School Financial Aid Service (GAPSFAS) [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)



## Ace the Graduate Record Exam (GRE)

Brought to you by Christopher Plant

### Beginning steps

1. Figure out exactly which programs you are going to apply to.
2. Research these programs through the school's website and see if they require the GRE and/or the GRE subject test.
3. If they do, look up the minimum requirement scores as well as the average scores of applicants they previously accepted
  - Your desired score should be close to or above the average of applicants previously accepted (ex. If the average is 650 for quantitative section at the school you are applying to you should aim for a score close to or higher than 650)
4. Go to the GRE website (<http://www.ets.org/gre>) and schedule your test date as soon as possible.
  - Reminder! If you have to do the subject test it is only offered three times a year so plan accordingly.
  - The regular GRE is offered all year round but schedule early if you want a specific date.

## Steps to success for the GRE and Subject Tests

1. Many different companies offer books for preparing for the GRE find one that suits your learning style best and buy it as soon as possible
  - Cheaper option: Ask around to see if you can borrow a study book from other people who have taken the test.
  - Getting one of these books for the subject tests is essential because preparation courses aren't usually offered for these tests (taking a lot of coursework in the specific subject can help too).
2. Preparation classes are offered for the normal GRE and these can be very useful if you can afford to pay for them (often pricey but helpful).
  - Note: Books are often provided with payment for the preparation classes (Do your research on what prep class is best for you).
3. Both the books and the prep classes should explain in detail the format of the test, which will save you a lot of time and effort on the GRE.
  - Reminder! The normal GRE is a computer adaptive test and the subject tests are paper tests.
4. Talk to others who have taken the test to get the inside scoop on preparation and test taking tips!
5. Start a study group: If you study better in groups try to ask around to see if anyone else in your classes or clubs (AKD and PSI CHI) are also preparing for the GRE of the subject test.

### Helpful Resources:

- <http://www.takethegre.com/> Allows you to register to take test, explains perks of revised test, offers free test prep for download with test taking tips and sample questions.
- <http://www.takethegre.com/official-gre-revised-general-test-prep> Test preparation materials for the GRE® revised General Test.
- [http://www.ets.org/gre/revised\\_general/prepare/powerprep2/download](http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/powerprep2/download) Free Download of POWERPREP® II Software: Preparation for the Computer-based GRE® revised General Test.

# How to Write a Personal Statement

Brought to you by Christine Featherstone

This is the portion of your graduate school application process that has many students stumped. What is a personal statement? It can be many things, but one thing it is not, is a chronological rehashing of your resume or CV. A personal statement is an opportunity for you to sell yourself to the members of the admissions department of the school you have your heart set on attending. This statement is just as it says, personal. Therefore, there is no one style of writing which is considered to be the correct model. Think of the personal statement as the heart and soul of your application. This is where you are telling the selections committee who you really are and show them why they want to interview you. Make yourself stand out above the rest in the stack of applicants they have received.

## Step #1 Before you begin:

Take some time, (a few days to be exact) to jot down ideas, randomly. Make a list of what you think are the most important points about you. The goal here is to build a pool of possible topics which will help form the basis of your essay. This portion of your writing should not be logical; you just want to get the creative juices flowing full of ideas. Write about you; a unique person.

- Think about who you are, and *what makes you unique?*
- Have there been favorite professors? Why? What stands out about each of them?
- What do you do when you leave the classroom? Hobbies & interest?
- Are there any particular writers or articles, within your field of study that have influenced your thought process?
- How have your interests in this particular career path evolved? Experiences, volunteering, or family? When was your ah- ha moment?
- What have you done to prepare yourself for graduate school?
- Do not forget the obvious; is there someone close to you practicing in this field who influenced you somehow?
- Have you been involved in any research projects?
- Have you thought about your goals for the years after grad school? (this may not be detail specific, but you must have some idea as to a direction if you are considering grad school)
- What is your greatest accomplishment to date? What are you the most proud of?

Don't worry about all of the notes you have written, many of them will not be used in the writing of your personal statement. You just want to build a collection of possible topics to use during your first draft.

## Step #2 First draft:

The first thing you want to do is make sure that you read the question and understand the topic. Although most schools ask similar questions, they may vary a bit and it is vitally important that you have read the exact words of the essay question and understand what the school is asking. Be sure you have read it, reread it and then read it one more time, because regardless of how good your essay is, if you have not addressed the question, your essay will not be worth the paper it is written on. Write out the question and tape it up in your work area, so that as you are writing your essay, the question is staring at you, reminding you what you are to be addressing.

While writing your first draft, keep your language simple, straightforward and truthful. Your style is not important here. Your emphasis should be on your content.

- Minimize narrative exposition
  - Use vivid details to make your point
  - Say what you mean and avoid using vague words such as, challenging, always invaluable and rewarding. Get your point across by utilizing a series of vignettes.
  - Do not repeat other parts of your application; tie your essay into the other portions of your applications and give details and descriptions when necessary to give a new perspective.
  - Become familiar with the catalog and program for the school you are applying
- to, and find a “common thread” to tie your philosophies together. (Asher, 2008 pp.67)
  - Make sure you address the specific question asked by the admissions committee and have tied in all of the
  - Pertinent information about yourself that makes you a unique candidate.
  - Build your essay around a theme.
  - Do not forget your mentor’s role in your progress.
  - Keep excuses, whining and feeling sorry for yourself, at an absolute minimum.

The reason that your first draft is all about you, is to make sure that your writing is truly for the real you, not just a story that you think the admissions director wants to hear. You want your essay to reveal the REAL you!!!

## Step #3 Subsequent Revisions

The book *Graduate Admissions Essays* lists what they call “The Essay Hall of Shame” (Asher, 2008). This is the list of points taken from interviews with admissions directors. Many of these suggestions come from the top admissions departments of the nation.

- Errors, sloppiness and misspellings make admissions people wonder how you got the grades you did on your transcripts.
- Never say: “I’ve always wanted to be.....”
- Make sure you answer the question; it is asked for a reason.
- Do not recycle material you used for other schools.
- Red flag if the dates in all activities are brand new.

- Do not write what you think they want to hear. They want to know about the real you.
- The essay should be upbeat, convincing and persuasive, not full of personal problems and excuses.
- Too long and it shows no discipline.
- Take a risk and really tell them who you are.
- Do not use the essay to manufacture a person who does not exist.
- Do not tell them what your discipline is, tell them what it means to you.
- Make sure you have the name of the school you are applying for correct in your essay.
- Do not quote another person at the beginning or the end of your essay.

While finalizing up your essay here are a few more words of wisdom to help you write the best essay you can:

- You can talk about your failures, as long as you can show that you were able to triumph over hurdles. Risk but this can be done.
- Do not display arrogance or omniscience.
- Try to avoid revealing character weaknesses, turn them into strengths.
- Edit out sexist language or points of view. Utilize gender neutral language.
- Edit to get your message across the best you can.

Once you are finished editing your essay, no less than three times, have a few people read it over and give you constructive criticism about their understanding of the content, grammar and whether or not it portrays the real you.

Make sure you research and understand the standardized methods of submitting your personal essay. There are many books and web sites available. The schools you are applying to may also have their own guidelines to writing a great essay.

Make sure you begin this process well in advance of your deadline. Regardless of how good of a writer you are, the admissions people have read so many essays, that they can tell right away which ones are well thought out and worked on and which ones are thrown together at the last minute. An invaluable source for writing, editing and discussing a personal statement is your college advisor. Make sure you utilize their talents.

At the end of the day (or shall we say days of writing), your essay should be able to answer the following questions for you (Tolar):

- Who am I?
- Who do I want to be?
- What kind of contribution do I want to make and how?
- Does it make sense for me to study at (fill in the blank)?



## Sample Personal Statements

The following samples were retrieved from Studential.com. For purposes of keeping this handbook down on size, only the introductions are present here. The full text can be found online at **studential.com**. Also, full samples of personal statements can be found in the Appendix section of this handbook (Asher, 2008).

### Psychology personal statement

"Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar" (Sigmund Freud) To what extent should we humans accept things the way they are? When should we seek deep meanings and what are the circumstances that convert simple unambiguous certainties into complex facts? These and many other questions have aroused in me a keen interest in Psychology...

### Psychology personal statement

Being a keen boxer, I have had to train my mind significantly. I believe that a good state of mind is more important than the physically side of boxing. I have always found the way that the brain works interesting but never really thought about studying it as a subject...

### Social Work personal statement

Having spent the last four years working in the social care field, I have come to realize that my passion lies in helping people who are less advantaged. I am currently taking an access to higher education course to further my ambition to become a social worker...

### Sociology Personal Statement

I have always been passionately interested in society's influence on our actions and the structure of society, as these issues are relevant to everyone in everyday life, and Sociology is therefore a subject that affects me on a personal level...

## Helpful Books :

*Graduate Admissions Essays* by Donald Asher  
*How to Write a Winning Personal Statement for Graduate and Professional School* by Richard Stelzer's

## Helpful Web Sites:

About.com's page for graduate student admissions: [www.gradadmissions.about.com](http://www.gradadmissions.about.com)

All About Grad School: comprehensive directory about U.S. graduate schools  
[www.allaboutgradschool.com](http://www.allaboutgradschool.com)

Penn State, Writing Personal Statements:

<https://www.e-education.psu.edu/writingpersonalstatementsonline/>

Petersons: [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)

Purdue Owl: [owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/)

“Definition of a Personal Statement”: [www.wpi.edu/academics/FS/personal.pdf](http://www.wpi.edu/academics/FS/personal.pdf)

UC Davis, Admissions: [http://admissions.ucdavis.edu/apply/personal\\_statement.cfm](http://admissions.ucdavis.edu/apply/personal_statement.cfm)



## Scoring Letters of Recommendation

Brought to you by Kevin Tajji

**Step #1** Figure out which professor to ask.

- Are they a full time professor?
- Have you received good grades in their class?
- Have you regularly visited their office hours?
- Do they write letters for students often and do these students get accepted to the programs they are applying?
- Are you a research assistant for them?

If you answered “yes” to most or all, then they are a good candidate to ask for a letter.

**Step #2** Prepare the following for your professor before asking for a letter. Some professors won't require all these materials but they are good to have handy before you ask, just in case.

- List of schools you're applying to with descriptions of programs and deadlines for when letters need to be submitted.
- Transcript or list of classes completed in major.
- CV or summary of campus involvement and research experience.
- Work sample (a paper you got a good grade on and are particularly proud of, preferably from a class you took with the professor).
- Draft of Letter of Intent or Personal Statement (good opportunity to get this proof read and critiqued by your recommender).

- Details about yourself you want them to include: What is the nature of the program and what qualities are they looking for that you possess?
- Recommendation or Referral Forms from the schools you will be applying to. Most programs have a generic form they require recommenders to fill out along with writing a letter.
- Stamps and envelopes necessary for mailing your letters of recommendation.

### Step #3

#### Ask and Send Reminders

- Ask for letters two months prior to the deadline.
- Asking in person is generally preferred. Arrange an appointment through email to meet with the professor.
- Have copies of all materials from Step #2 with you when you meet.
- Give professors a due date for your letter that is a good two weeks before your application is due.
- Send friendly reminders when the deadline draws near, about ten days before; professors have a lot on their plate too and you don't want them to forget!



## Service Opportunities

Brought to you by Denise Hernandez

The following information was collected from the *Volunteering Guidebook for Psychology/Sociology Students*, which can be found at [www.csupomona.edu/~psichi/volunteer\\_packet\\_small.pdf](http://www.csupomona.edu/~psichi/volunteer_packet_small.pdf), and the respective websites for each volunteering and/or internship opportunity.

## **American Red Cross**

Website: <http://redcrossla.org/volunteers/4-lets-get-started>

By volunteering with the American Red Cross, you will make a difference. There is satisfaction one gains when serving the community. Some of the skills learned include strengthening your network. By volunteering with the American Red Cross, you'll join a worldwide movement dedicated to providing relief to victims of disaster. Whether you're in career transition, a student looking for experience, work full-time, retired, or have a few extra hours, you too can make a difference and save lives. The biggest reward for volunteering is the satisfaction of serving your community and providing a critical need. In addition, volunteering can help you learn new skills, strengthen your network, and fill in employment gaps.

For more information please contact: [volunteer@arcla.org](mailto:volunteer@arcla.org)

### Requirements:

Background check

No experienced need.

## **City of Hope**

1500 E. Duarte Rd.

Duarte, CA 91010

Website: <http://www.cityofhope.org>

The City of Hope volunteers serve the program by helping the staff in providing the top quality medical care. Some of the forms of service in this program include assisting patients and staff to drive trams. Positions available are meant to match individuals' interests and schedules.

For more information please visit: <http://www.cityofhope.org/GIVING/HOW-TO-HELP/Pages/default.aspx>

### Contact Information:

(626) 526-4673

### Requirements:

Background Check

Supply medical records confirming current measles, mumps, and Rubella immunization

Tuberculosis test

## **Downtown Women Center in Los Angeles**

442 S. San Pedro St.,

Los Angeles, CA, 90013

Website: <http://www.dwcweb.org/>

The Downtown Women's Center provides permanent supportive housing and a safe and healthy community for women. The volunteer program helps provide a healthy community fostering dignity, respect, and personal stability, and advocates ending homelessness for women. Our volunteer programs are a key component of DWC and allow us to offer a wide range of services, so your commitment is very important! With your help, we can continue to further our mission of providing a safe and supportive community for women.

2011-2012 ACCESS Peer Mentors, California State Polytechnic University of Pomona

For more information please visit, <http://www.dwcweb.org/volunteer.html>

Requirements:

Must apply online

Send your application to Allison Bamber by email [volunteer@DWCwed.org](mailto:volunteer@DWCwed.org)

or faxing 213-680-0844

Attending Volunteer or more in-depth Volunteering Training

**Ability First**

Claremont Center

480 South Indian Hill Boulevard

Claremont, California 91711

Phone: (909) 621-4727

Website: <http://www.abilityfirst.org/programs/volunteer.aspx>

This organization has services for children and adults ages 3 to 22 with disabilities. The main volunteering opportunities take place during their after school program which meets from 2-6 M-F. Volunteers are welcome to come and help out staff for as much or as little time as they choose. Additionally, one can volunteer in the various weekend recreation activities that take place on Friday nights and Saturdays.

Volunteers work in the programs under the supervision of AbilityFirst staff. They may provide one-on-one assistance to children or adults, encouraging participation, keeping activities going, and having fun! Volunteers are also essential to staging the many events and fundraising activities that take place at the centers. And, they help keep the facilities running smoothly by performing a variety of important office tasks.

Requirements:

TB clearance (within last 12 months)

Commitment to AbilityFirst Mission

Willingness to commit to hours assigned and follow staff directions.

Adherence to all AbilityFirst policies and procedures, including but not limited to, infection control, illness and injury prevention, sexual harassment, safety, and dress code.

Experience working with children or adults with special need preferred.

**Academic Community Committed to Excellence and Student Success, A.C.C.E.S.S.**

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

Psychology & Sociology Department Peer Mentors

We envision mentorship as a learning community where first-year Freshmen and Transfer students are immediately directed to the vast resources and opportunities available in the Psychology and Sociology Department and at Cal Poly Pomona University. We see Peer Mentors and Faculty advisors working together to give their Mentorship group a unique perspective of living, learning, and being engaged in the Cal Poly Pomona community through shared experiences.

Contact: Dr. Erika DeJonghe, Psychology Professor at Cal Poly Pomona  
Email: peermentorcpepp@hotmail or esdejonghe@csupomona.edu

Requirements:

Psychology or Sociology Major with more than 90 units after Winter Quarter  
Minimum of 2.8 G.P.A

Commitment:

3 quarters commitments starting in Spring Quarter and few days during the summers.  
Interviews are held in the Winter Quarter.

## **A.R.C.H.E.S.**

Location: Building 1 room 214

Website: <http://dsa.csupomona.edu/drc/arches/peeradvising.asp?setactive=page>

ARCHES is an academic retention program for students with disabilities at Cal Poly Pomona. The internship provide students in the Psychology and Sociology Department an understanding of disabilities and how they affect students on campus. Skill developments include but are not limited to counseling skills, listening skills, organization and time management, and learning strategies.

Requirements:

Junior or Senior Standing  
Psychology or Sociology Major  
Background Check and/or TB test is required

Commitment:

Two quarters (must be enrolled in classes during the internship).

## **House of Ruth**

P.O. Box 459

Claremont, CA 91711

Website: <http://houseofruthinc.org/volunteer>

House of Ruth assists families victimized by domestic violence through intensive family intervention and education. Volunteers perform a wide variety of services to support our clients, such as answering our 24-hour hotline, assisting clients in our Temporary Restraining Order Clinic, helping in the Shelter's children's program, providing childcare or supervising children on outings, providing transportation for Shelter clients, and making community education presentations and advocating for domestic violence victims within the greater community at public events.

For more information please contact, Natalie Rojano-Jenkins by email at [nrojanojenkins@houseofruthinc.org](mailto:nrojanojenkins@houseofruthinc.org) or phone at 909-868-8019

Requirements:

Live Scan required, due by the end of training  
40 hours of training required



## Research Opportunities

Brought to you by Denise Hernandez

Doing research with a professor you are comfortable with or one that has similar interests to you can be very beneficial for undergraduates hoping to pursue a graduate degree. Get to know professors in their office hours and ask them if you can learn more about their current projects or read any recent publications they've worked on. You might become excited about their work and decide to get involved in their research. Here is a list of Psychology and Sociology Department Faculty and their respective areas of interest, all information collected from the Psychology & Sociology Department website, <http://www.class.csupomona.edu/bhs/faculty.html>:

### Psychology Faculty

**Dr. Nancy Alvarado**, Associate Professor.  
(Cognitive, Experimental)

Cognition and emotion; facial expression; categorization and naming; human-computer interaction and affective computing.  
Email: [nalvarado@csupomona.edu](mailto:nalvarado@csupomona.edu)

**Dr. Bettina Casad**, Associate Professor (Social, Experimental, Applied Psychology)

Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination; race and gender stereotype violation; social norms; implicit attitudes; psychology of women/gender; work and family issues; and human sexuality  
Email: [bjcasad@csupomona.edu](mailto:bjcasad@csupomona.edu)

**Dr. Erika DeJonghe**, Assistant Professor.  
(Clinical Psychology)

Child psychology; intimate partner violence; violent and aggressive behavior; psychotherapy with children and families.  
Email: [esdejonghe@csupomona.edu](mailto:esdejonghe@csupomona.edu)

**Dr. Juliana Fuqua**, Assistant Professor.  
(Developmental, Health, Social Psychology)

Adolescent risk behavior (e.g., substance use, adolescent pregnancy, identification with at-risk peer groups); evaluation of teams (e.g., adolescent health teams); evaluation of teams (e.g., adolescent health teams); Secondary interests: prenatal development and pregnancy (e.g., substance exposed babies); older adulthood; research methods.  
Email: [jfuqua@csupomona.edu](mailto:jfuqua@csupomona.edu)

**Dr. Larry Goldman**, Professor (Physiological, Experimental Psychology)

Developmental psychobiology; play behavior; animal intelligence.  
Email: [lgoldman@csupomona.edu](mailto:lgoldman@csupomona.edu)

**Dr. Lori Barker Hackett**, Professor (Clinical, Multicultural Psychology)

Child & Adolescent

psychology/psychotherapy; multicultural issues; community psychology.  
Email: labarker@csupomona.edu

**Dr. David Horner**, Acting Chair and Professor (Cognitive, Experimental Psychology)  
Cognition and attention, perception and physiology, experimental methods and statistics, sensory systems  
Email: dhorner@csupomona.edu

**Dr. Jeffery S. Mio**, Professor, Director of Graduate Studies (Clinical, Multicultural, Applied Psychology)  
Metaphor usage, particularly in politics; cross-cultural issues; developmental of allies across demographic groups.  
Email: jsmio@csupomona.edu

**Dr. Jill Nemiro**, Professor. (Organizational Psychology)  
Organizational and team creativity; high-performance teams; virtual teams; program evaluation; qualitative research methodology.  
Email: jenemiro@csupomona.edu

**Dr. Laurie Rodes**, Interim Associate Dean and Professor (Clinical and Multicultural Psychology)  
Psychology of Women, Gender and Diversity, and Allies Across Demographic Groups.  
Email: laroades@csupomona.edu

**Dr. Susan Siaw**, Professor (Developmental Psychology)

Cognitive development during childhood; memory and mnemonic strategies; intelligence; academic dishonesty  
Email: snsiaw@csupomona.edu

**Dr. James Sturges**, Associate Professor (Clinical Psychology)

Clinical child psychology; pediatric psychology; health promotion; smoking prevention; HIV prevention; painful medical procedures.  
Email: jwsturges@csupomona.edu

**Dr. Felicia Thomas**, Professor (Clinical, Multicultural Psychology)

Post-traumatic stress disorder; child psychopathology; ethnic identity; Black psychology; school-based interventions; social perceptions and racism; complicated bereavement.  
Email: ffthomas@csupomona.edu

**Dr. Nicholas Von Glahn**, Assistant Professor (Cognitive, Behavioral, Experimental Psychology)

Memory, memory judgments, false memory, cognitive aging, courtroom psychology as well as human and animal learning.  
Email: nrvonglahn@csupomona.edu



## **Sociology Faculty**

**Dr. Mary Danico**, Professor and Vice-Chair of Psychology and Sociology Department (Sociology)

Race relations; Asian American Studies, Korean American family and community; ethnic identity, 1.5 and second generation issues; immigration; diaspora.  
Email: mkydanico@csupomona.edu

**Dr. Jack Fong**, Assistant Professor. (Sociology/Ethnicity-Race)

Ethnopolitics; Sociology of Development; nationalism; social movement; southeast asian geopolitics  
Email: jackfong@csupomona.edu

**Dr. Dennis Loo**, Professor (Sociology/Criminology)

Media and Crime; Social Movement; Social Problems; Social Theory.  
Email: ddloo@csupomona.edu

**Dr. Stacy McGoldrick**, Associate Professor (Sociology/Criminology)

Criminology, stratification, urban sociology, social theory, policing, Homeland Security, political culture, political violence.  
Email: skmcgoldrick@csupomona.edu

**Dr. Anjana Narayan**, Assistant Professor (Sociology/Social Work)

Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Immigration and transnationalism  
Email: anarayan@csupomona.edu

**Dr. Anthony Ocampo**, Assistant Professor (Sociology)

Race and Ethnicity, immigration, gender and sexuality, cultural sociology, sociology of education, Filipino/Filipino American Studies, Asian American Studies, and Latino Studies.  
Email: acocampo@csupomona.edu

**Dr. Fernando Parra**, Professor (Sociology/Social Works)

Ethnic, racial, and religious communities; criminal justice; social work practice; border studies.  
Email: fparra@csupomona.edu

**Dr. Faye Wachs**, Associate Professor. (Sociology/General)

Social inequality, sport and the body, sexuality, gender, consumption and globalization.  
Email: flwachs@csupomona.edu

## **Forming a Curriculum Vitae (CV)**

Brought to you by Nikki Li

A CV is at least 2 pages long and contains more details on your educational background than a resume would. It includes a summary of education and academic background (teaching, research experience, publications, presentations, awards, honors, affiliations). You use a CV when you are applying for academic, educational, scientific, or research positions. You may also use a CV when applying for fellowships and grants. There are many different formats for the CV and variations depending on the application's requirements. The online website <http://www.Cvformat.org> contains templates you may use to create your own CV (Doyle, 2011). Please reference "Outline for the VITA" and "Sample VITA" in the Appendix of this handbook for further information on the CV (Buskist & Burke, 2007).



## Interviewing Skills

Brought to you by Daixi Cui and Tracy Lamas

Some schools request an interview once you have passed their initial cut off. Interviews are used to help Admissions evaluate some of your personal attributes. An interview is also a good opportunity for you to leave a good impression and get all your questions answered (Oudekerk & Bottoms, 2007). Usually a phone interview, or conference call with graduate faculty and the applicant, is used as a preliminary interview and screening method for the on-site interview (Buskist & Burke, 2007). Once you have been accepted to have an on-site interview, there are a couple of things you should prepare in order to boost your interview skills. Here is a check list with some tips to help you organize your interview. Note that the majority of the information refers to the on-site interview but the skills should still be applied to the phone interview.

### Before the interview

1. Research each school to see what kind of candidate they are looking for.
  - Good communication skills, motivation, maturity, intellect, emotions are some of the attributes interviewers look for (Wartburg).
  - Make sure you also do your research about the school. Get to know their programs and their professors. You can do this by contacting the program directly or looking up previous works of the faculty.
2. Research common questions and write down your answers so you're prepared for what they will ask.
  - Brush up on your area of interest. Many times interviewers would ask you to expand more on your area of interest by asking for more information or your motivation, therefore it is important to keep updated with current area of interest (Oudekerk & Bottoms, 2007).

The following websites are a place to start on your search for practice questions:

- <http://www.wartburg.edu/pathways/gradprep/interview.html>
- [http://www.gradschooltips.com/interview\\_questions.htm](http://www.gradschooltips.com/interview_questions.htm)
- <http://www.uwgb.edu/careers/skills/interviewing-graduate-school.asp>

3. Practice your answers in front of the mirror. Try to relax; you have been preparing for this your entire undergraduate career (Buskist & Burke, 2007).

4. Write down questions you would like to ask the school.

- Make a list of all the questions you may want to ask your interviewers and pick out a couple of questions that are most important to you. Remember although you are trying to sell yourself during the interviews, you should still ask questions to see whether the program is right for you (Oudekerk and Bottoms, 2007).
- Questions to ask during the interview include the following (Buskist & Burke, 2007):
  - How soon will I be able to become involved in faculty projects or research?
  - What forms of financial assistance does your program offer?
  - How long does it take the average student to complete their degree?
  - What kinds of jobs have recent graduates obtained?

5. Have a mock interview with a friend, family member, or advisor.

6. Prepare some exercises to use when you feel nervous. Sometimes you can be fully prepared but your nerves still get the best of you. Therefore, you should always prepare some things that can relax you.

The following websites offer tips on how to keep from stressing out:

- <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/tips-to-avoid-stressing-out-in-job-interviews0.html>
- <http://www.jobsite.co.uk/articles/candidate/c1/s12/a602.html>
- <http://www.military.com/opinion/0,15202,141047,00.html>

## **On the day of the interview**

1. Go to sleep early and get up early. You want to be alert during your interview. Do not stay up late the night before to learn more information.

2. Eat a healthy breakfast.

3. Dress appropriately in business attire (i.e. dress pants and blouse).

The following websites explain what is considered appropriate:

- <http://www.collegegrad.com/jobsearch/Competitive-Interview-Prep/Dressing-for-Interview-Success>
- <http://www.career.vt.edu/interviewing/interviewappearance.html>

4. Get to the interview earlier than scheduled. Make sure you plan out your trip the day before. Make sure you know directions and that no roads are closed for repair. Make sure your car has gas or confirm bus route, or other means of transportation, if you will not be driving yourself

## After the interview

1. Write thank you cards to your interviewers.
  - It is always nice and respectful to write a thank you card after the interview. This can also help by keeping you in the minds of the interviewer when they decide who they would like to admit (Oukederk and Bottoms, 2007).

Most importantly, always remember to be yourself. Remind yourself how hard you've worked and how far you've come. Now you just need to show everyone that you are worth it. Always be positive and remain confident.

### Further Reading

- <http://careers.appstate.edu/pagesmith/211>
- [http://www.callutheran.edu/career\\_services/grad\\_school/grad\\_school\\_prep.php](http://www.callutheran.edu/career_services/grad_school/grad_school_prep.php)
- <http://www.salisbury.edu/careerservices/students/GraduateSchool/Interviews.html>

## What to do if you don't get accepted:

Brought to you by Jessica Rojas and Marilyn Martinez

We've just gone over the process of applying for Grad school but what do you do if you don't get in? There might be a chance that the graduate school you wanted to attend does not accept you into their program, what do you do then? Some students decide to wait until the next year in order to reapply so students need to remember that that time should be used wisely. Building your resume and networking are important elements.. Here are a couple of ideas that would benefit someone while they wait possibly another year to apply again:

- Volunteer work
- Internship
- Research Assistant
- Study Abroad
- Take more classes and boost up your GPA
- Network
- Find a job in your field with your current degree

## More Helpful Resources

In case you could possibly want more information on graduate school:

[www.allaboutgradschool.com](http://www.allaboutgradschool.com)

[www.gradadmissions.about.com](http://www.gradadmissions.about.com)

[www.gradschools.com](http://www.gradschools.com)

[www.nagps.org](http://www.nagps.org)

[www.ulinks.com](http://www.ulinks.com)

Recommended Reading for the bookworm in you:

*A Practical Guide to Graduate Research*, Molly Stock

*Financing Graduate School: How to Get Money for your Master's or Ph.D.*, Patricia McWade

*Free Money for Graduate School: A Guide to More than 1,000 Grants for Graduate Study*, Laurie Blum

*Getting What You Came For: The Smart Student's Guide to Earning an M.A. or a Ph.D.*, Robert Peters

*Graduate Study in Psychology*, American Psychology Association

*Guide to Graduate Programs in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, Peterson's

*Life After Graduate School in Psychology*, Robert D. Morgan, Tara L. Kuther and Corey J. Habben

*Preparing for Graduate Study in Psychology*, William Buskist and Caroline Burke

*Succeeding in Graduate School: The Career Guide for Psychology Students*, Steven Walfish and Allen K. Hess

*Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States*, National Research Council

*The Higher Education Moneybook for Women and Minorities: A Directory of Scholarships, Fellowships, Internships, Grants & Loans*, Doris Marie Bruce-Young and William C. Young

*The Real Guide to Grad School: What you better know before you chose Humanities & Social Sciences*, Robert E. Clark and John Palatella

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