

GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

Career Tip
Choose a school and program that will enhance your career aspirations

THINKING ABOUT GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL?

The decision to continue your studies is important and should not be taken lightly—**don't go to graduate school to avoid doing a job search**. Graduate school is a serious commitment and it requires careful thought and planning. The Career and Internship Center can help with the graduate school process.

Some of the "Right" Reasons to Go to Graduate/Professional School

- An advanced degree is needed in order to practice the profession (e.g., law, clinical psychology, medicine)
- You truly enjoy what you're studying and want to explore it further
- You want to make a contribution to the body of knowledge in your field through research
- An advanced degree will advance you professionally

Some of the "Wrong" Reasons to Go to Graduate/Professional School

- You don't want to do a job search
- You haven't figured out what you want to do, so you'll stay in school until you do
- Everybody else is doing it
- You are fulfilling someone else's dreams/desires (parents, professors, friends)
- You don't know what to do with your undergraduate major
- Believing if I don't go now, I never will
- You want to put off "the real world"

Timing, When to Go to Graduate School

Before applying to graduate school, it's important to determine the best time to attend. Graduate school will always be there, so it's up to you to decide when the time is right for you. Some factors to consider are:

- **Type of program**—many "professional" master's degrees may require or prefer some professional experience before being admitted. Other programs, especially academic/research-based programs do not require experience.
- **Your career choice**—if entry-level positions in your chosen field require an advanced degree, then going sooner might be a better choice.
- **Readiness**—only you can know when you are ready to commit yourself to further studies.
- **Financial**—do you have the financial resources to attend? Will your advanced degree help you pay off your student debt? Can you find funding—perhaps through your place of employment?

Making the Decision

You should be able to answer the following questions before deciding to pursue an advanced degree.

1. What are your short and long-term goals and is more education a way to attain them?
2. Are you intellectually curious? Do you have interest and abilities in your field of choice?
3. Will the time and money spent help you gain more mobility and financial possibilities?
4. Do you like to teach or do research?
5. Do you know what degree/program you want and why?
6. Can you honestly and easily answer the personal statement prompt?
7. Can you complete the following statement: "This is the best time for me to attend graduate school because...?"

Choosing a Program

Like undergraduate majors, there are a vast number of graduate/professional school programs and degrees. Your first step is to determine which program is the best one for you. Be sure to understand the differences.

You will need to identify what schools offer the programs of interest. Some degrees/programs have centralized applications and all the information regarding the schools and application procedures are accessible through the one website (such as medical school, law school, physical therapy, etc.). Other degrees there is not a centralized application so you have to research and find the schools that offer the programs of interest. Two websites that are helpful in searching for programs are:

Useful Websites

www.petersons.com

www.gradschool.com

Choosing a Graduate/Professional School

There are more than 1,800 institutions in the United States that offer an advanced degree, and the variety of programs is enormous. Doing a full search, including researching and visiting the schools of interest, will take time and effort. There are many similarities, but also many differences, in choosing a graduate school versus an undergraduate school. One of the most significant differences is that your choice should be based largely on the program.

Things to Consider in Choosing a School:

- Reputation of the **school** and the **program**
- Geography
- Online vs. in-person programs
- Class schedule especially if planning to work too
- Cost/Funding
- Faculty research areas
- Size of institution/program

- Facilities
- Research or internship offerings
- Placement rates
- Competitiveness of admission into the program (GPA, test scores and percent admitted)
- Student services—career center, advising, etc

Ask about remote learning opportunities even if an in person program in case of another pandemic.



For more information about asking for letters of recommendation see page 66

Make certain to apply to a few programs with a range of selectivity in order to ensure you receive an offer of admission

APPLICATION PROCESS FOR GRADUATE/PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

Admissions committees for advanced degree programs are looking for the best candidates. For graduate school the admissions committees usually include faculty. They are making a full review of an applicant's file and taking the following factors into consideration:

- **Transcripts/Previous education** – a bachelor's degree is necessary for gaining admission. Oftentimes, a particular undergraduate major is not required (some specific coursework may be required though). They are looking at your transcripts for GPA, grades, and coursework

Be sure to understand the changes to standardized testing due to the pandemic



- **Standardized test score** – most programs require at least one entrance test. You will need to find out which test you should take: GRE, GMAT, MCAT, LSAT are the most common

- **Application** – a well-written application is important

- **Statement of Purpose/Personal Statement/Essays** – most applications ask for one or more essays. This is your opportunity to tell the committee why you are interested in that particular program and sell yourself to them

For sample CV see page 69

- **Resume/Curriculum Vitae (CV)** – depending on the type of program to which you are applying will determine whether you submit a resume or a CV. The committee wants to see what experience you have in the field

For more on resume writing see page 17.

- o **Work experience** – for professional programs demonstrating that you have experience in the field is a positive attribute
- o **Research** – for research programs they want to see what research skills you have already developed
- o **Activities/Leadership** – showing involvement outside of academics can demonstrate other important skills

- **Prerequisite Coursework** – programs are open to, even prefer a wide variety of undergraduate majors; however, there often are some necessary courses to gain admission. Make certain you have taken those courses and send the transcripts to document your coursework

- **Letters of Recommendation** – most applications require 2–3 letters of recommendation. Choose professors and/or employers who can speak well of your skills. Submit the number of letters requested, more is not better

- **Interviews** – some programs (medical school, MBA specifically) require an interview as a part of the application process. If it's a required element, then notes shared by the interviewer will be taken into consideration by the admissions committee

- **Additional Requirements** – understand and document any other requirements expected of applicants such as contact/observation hours, prior work experience, etc

Writing the Personal Statement

Also called the statement of intent or purpose, this is the most difficult part of the graduate/professional school application. Make sure to start drafting it early to give yourself plenty of time to revise and edit the statement. This statement not only expresses your interest in the field, but also serves as a writing sample to the committee to evaluate your writing.

Career Tip
The essay is where you get to show them who you are! Take advantage of this and tell the committee something impactful.

When writing the statement, be certain to read the directions and conform to the page length or word count. If no guidelines are given, 500 words is usually the norm. Also read the question/prompt closely and fully address all aspects mentioned.

The admissions committee is reading your statement to understand your specific career goals and academic interests. Your statement should include a BRIEF history of how you became interested in the field, but the majority of your statement should focus on the future. The committee wants to know how/why you are interested in pursuing the degree and how you will use it in the future.

For non-centralized applications, it is also important to include why a particular school is the right fit for you. Admissions committees want to see a unique essay that demonstrates your knowledge of their program specifically. Thus, you will need to write a unique statement for each school. What has you excited about that school? Is it research currently being conducted? Particular faculty? Internship opportunities? Be sure to include your specific area of interest in your essay.

Above all, this must be a well-written, error-free document. Mistakes in grammar and spelling are interpreted as a lack of effort on your part and are not favorable to the committee. Have your statement critiqued by a Career Counselor, edited by the Writing Center and reviewed by a faculty member.

For a sample essay see page 65.

SAMPLE ESSAY

I can remember sitting in General Biology II and getting lost in thought as my professor discussed the details of flagella. As I pondered about the bigger picture of healthcare, I began to list as many health professionals I could imagine...doctors, physician assistants, nurses, administrators, and wondered how they all worked together to create the bigger picture of healthcare. At that moment, I realized that I needed to pursue a different area of study and a completely different career track. I am not only interested in learning about how flagella allow cells to move, but also in learning about what makes health structures move and impact the masses.

An introduction that is unique will pique the reader's attention.

Following this self-realization, I switched my major to health administration. I also became determined to find the career path that will satiate my burning desire to learn about health at a structural level and at the same time, give me the chance to help others. Amidst my search, I came across the healthcare management field and recounted several experiences that drew me closer to the idea of pursuing a career in healthcare management.

A brief overview of how and why you became interested in the field is necessary, but it should not be too lengthy.

In highschool, I conducted a research project on BPA and its health risks. The science of the project was invigorating, but the most profound part was when I shared my findings with others. I remembered presenting at the Bronx Scifest and having the underserved *tias* and *tios*¹ of my largely Hispanic and African American community, come up to me with light in their eyes and beaming smiles. I remembered hearing them say how "*feliz*"² they were to have another "*morena*"³ explain to them an important health risk in their native tongue, Spanish. As my memories faded, I knew that I had to look no further, a career in healthcare administration would help me achieve my mission to elevate those who are marginalized in society.

Include specific examples/stories to demonstrate your experience and true interest in the field

Another one of my experiences included shadowing a surgeon, translating for his Spanish-speaking patients, and assisting in administrative work at Wilson Orthopaedics. Here, I was able to observe discrimination and injustice within healthcare first-hand, when a frustrated physician cut off an unaccompanied and anxious eighty year old "*señora*"⁴ mid-sentence when she was just trying to provide more information regarding her condition. If healthcare professionals won't treat each and every patient with the professionalism, respect, and compassion necessary to deliver quality health care services, who will?

Demonstrating your unique skill set is also crucial.

These experiences propelled me to pursue a career in healthcare management, so that I can make a difference. Clarkson's Masters of Business Administration in Healthcare Management, is ideal because it would grant me the opportunity to learn business theory from experienced healthcare professionals and internship opportunities. I envision myself as a healthcare administrator working in the planning, directing, and coordination of medical and health services to ensure that all patients, regardless of background receive the care they deserve. Clarkson's courses, such as the Strategic Issues for Healthcare Organizations capstone, would help me propose innovative models of management that reduce mistreatment of patients, such as the *Señora*⁵ that was in dire need of my assistance.

Include your knowledge of the program. Give some specific examples of what you like about the program and/or school. A grad school essay should be written for EACH school and NOT a one size fits all essay

A concluding sentence which ties the whole essay together is a solid ending.

Mention your future goals. Where you want to go and what you want to do with this degree. DO NOT spend time repeating information they can gain from elsewhere in your application

¹ Aunts and uncles

² Happy

³ Person of Color; Feminine Form

⁴ A Spanish term of address equivalent to Mrs. used alone or capitalized and prefixed to the name of a married or older woman.

⁵ A Spanish term of address equivalent to Mrs. used alone or capitalized and prefixed to the name of a married or older woman.

Be sure to keep to the length parameters suggested.

GRADUATE SCHOOL CHECKLIST

- Research programs online
- Create a final list of schools with a variety of competitiveness
- Complete all necessary application steps well in advance of deadlines
- Take necessary standardized tests
- Send test scores to each school
- Request letters of recommendation
- Submit complete applications to each school. A complete application includes:
 - o Application
 - o Fee
 - o Personal Statement(s)
 - o Standardized test scores
 - o Required number of recommendations
 - o Transcripts
 - o Resume/Curriculum Vitae
 - o Interview (?)
 - o Additional specific requirements (i.e. contact/observation hours)
- Promptly schedule and prepare for interviews if required or invited
- Research financial aid
- Complete the FAFSA federal student aid application
- Evaluate each acceptance offer and financial aid package
- Visit schools
- Choose and **commit to one school**
- Send final transcripts
- Attend!

The Career and Internship Center can help with your grad school search or essay writing. Schedule an appointment with a Career Counselor.

Requesting Letters of Recommendation

Letters of Recommendation (LORs) are an important part of your application as the admission committee wants to hear about your strengths from people who **know you well**. Choose your recommenders wisely.

- Ask professors, supervisors, mentors who know you well
 - o A professor you met with regularly during office hours is going to have more to say about you than a professor with whom you never got to know personally
 - o Someone you have worked with recently, don't ask a professor/supervisor with whom you only worked with years ago
- Always try to ask recommenders in person. If not in person, video conference or phone are acceptable. Email only if you have no way to meet in real time.
- Ask recommenders by saying:
 - o "I'm applying to graduate school, do you feel you know me well enough to be able to write a **positive** letter of recommendation on my behalf?"
- If they seem reluctant or say something like "perhaps you should ask someone else", thank them for their time and choose someone else.
- If they agree, follow up with an email and supply recommenders with the following to assist them in writing your letter:
 - o Your resume/CV
 - o Copy of your essay (if it's not done, provide an outline of why you are applying for graduate school and future plans)
 - o Reminder list of the classes you took (or when you worked), significant projects/papers you completed, grades or awards received
 - o Details about yourself such as skills and strengths you would like them to highlight
 - o A list of the schools/programs to which you are applying, instructions on submitting their letters (including any passwords if necessary), any necessary waiver forms and **deadlines** for submission
- Provide polite reminders if deadlines are approaching and LORs have not been submitted
- Have a back up plan if a recommender is unable to complete a letter for you in a timely fashion
- Submit only the number requested; more is not better

Timeline

It is your responsibility to make sure your applications and all the supporting documents are delivered before the deadlines. Thus, it is important to start thinking about the process early and be very organized. Each program's timeline and deadline dates are very different; thus, you need to do research and gather the information for your specific program and schools.

It is vastly important to keep your graduate school application materials organized. Be sure to utilize an organizational tool of your choice (i.e. a spreadsheet or notebook) listing all important information such as: school, degree, program, admission type/

Career Tip

Be aware of both admission deadlines AND financial aid/fellowship deadlines. Sometimes there are different deadlines.

DEADLINE VS. ROLLING ADMISSION

- **Deadline** — some schools/programs have a set deadline and you must have your application fully complete by that deadline. The school will notify all applicants of their admission decision at the same time.
- **Rolling** — other schools offer rolling admission which means there is no set deadline and they will review and offer admission until their class is full. The school will notify applicants of their admission decision on a rolling basis (typically a few weeks after receipt of completed application). That means admission gets more competitive later in the cycle; thus, it's best to apply in a reasonable timeframe.

deadline, test scores, number of LORs, LOR asks, essay(s), additional materials, etc Then note dates you visited, submitted materials, etc

Assuming you plan to enter graduate school for the fall semester:

One year before

- Determine your program of choice and begin researching schools
- Review the deadlines and plan accordingly
- Plan your testing strategy, choosing appropriate test dates
- Study for the standardized test necessary for your program
- Set up your individualized calendar based on the deadlines for your program
- Visit the schools of interest

Early–Mid Fall Semester

- Meet with faculty members/advisors to learn more about your programs of interest
- Finalize your list of schools and note all important deadlines
- Open your online application accounts
- Schedule and take any required standardized tests Be sure to leave adequate time for scores to be sent to schools; this can require up to four weeks
- Politely request letters of recommendation (LORs) from references
- Fill out the online applications
- Begin drafting personal statements Have statements critiqued by a Career Counselor, faculty and the Writing Center
- Order transcripts from each college you have attended Find out if the application requires official transcripts to be mailed, or if you will be uploading unofficial transcripts into the online application

End Fall Semester

- Send test scores to all colleges
- Complete applications and submit ALL necessary documents
- Make certain all recommendations have been submitted; if not, remind writers

Career Tip
Don't procrastinate on your applications. Start planning in junior year and write essays over the summer.

- Investigate funding resources
- Confirm that your applications have been filed and are complete

Winter

- Schedule any required interviews
- Submit the FAFSA Federal financial aid application (www.fafsa.gov)
- Apply for other funding sources

Spring

- Review each acceptance letter and financial aid package
- Visit campuses where you were accepted

May 1

- Choose ONE school, sign the commitment letter and submit deposit (non-refundable) You may commit to only ONE school
- Decline offers from other schools

Summer

- Send your final, official Siena transcript that verifies graduation

Financing Graduate/Professional Education

How to pay for advanced education is a major question for most people Do some research to find out whether there are funding resources available to you and how much your degree will cost Also, be certain to know what funding is available based on whether you are attending full or part time

- **Fellowships/Scholarships** – are grants that don't need to be repaid They are usually awarded to some of the strongest candidates based on academic merit Typically the only requirement is to maintain a minimum GPA for ongoing awards Some outside scholarships may be available (but they are not as prevalent as undergraduate scholarships) Often they are only available to students attending full time
- **Research/Teaching/Graduate Assistantships** – are stipends or tuition waivers in exchange for work such as conducting research, teaching classes or working in an office Make certain to understand the parameters of the assistantship such as total amount, hourly commitment and payment structure
- **Loans** – similar to undergraduate studies, there are student loans available to graduate students Completing the federal student financial aid application, FAFSA, is necessary Loan amounts are limited and are based on full time or part time student status
- **Employer Contributions** – some companies/organizations offer tuition assistance to employees who are attending graduate school Check with your employer to see if this is a benefit they provide and understand the requirements for receiving (i.e. some employers require you to work for a certain amount of time after the degree or will expect the money to be repaid)
- **Personal Contributions** – the money you will contribute towards your education

To apply for funding you will need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Visit FAFSA.gov for application procedures

CURRICULUM VITAE (CVs)

Similar but different from a standard resume, a curriculum vitae (CV or vitae) is a document used to outline your education, research, experience, publications, presentations, honors, etc

It is typically used when applying to graduate school or for positions in academia One of the major differences between a resume and a CV is the length A CV is **unlimited** in pages, and should chronicle all of your experiences Also CVs are the accepted practice internationally

A CV should be separated into sections Items within each section should be presented in a reverse chronological order—starting with the most recent and ending with oldest This is a living document and should be updated regularly See page 23 for the resume rubric as most of the guidelines (except for document length) are the same

For a sample CV see page 69.

SECTIONS TO INCLUDE ON A CV

- Full name*
- Contact Information*
- Education*
- Honors and Awards
- Teaching Experience
- Research Experience
- Statistical of Computer Experience
- Professional Experience
- Grant awards
- Publications
- Presentations/Poster Presentations
- Conference Attendance
- Professional affiliations/memberships
- Work Experience
- Research/Teaching Interests

**indicates information which must be included
Sections should be listed in order of importance*



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SAMPLE CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

Ima Saint

115 Bernard Way Loudonville, NY 12211
(518) 000-2222 isaint@gmail.com

Include only one email and phone number

EDUCATION

Siena College, Loudonville, NY—Standish Honors Program
Bachelor of Arts, History and American Studies, *Summa Cum Laude*—May 2017
GPA: 4.0/4.0

Areas of Concentration: 20th Century American History, Urban History, Public History
Honors Thesis: “‘O’Malley’s Pleasure Dome:’ The Ballpark in the Postwar City”

University of Malaga, Malaga, Spain
Study Abroad, Fall 2015

Include study abroad programs under education

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Honors Fellow, Standish Honors Program, Siena College—Sep 2013-May 2017

- Analyzed and researched the numerous schools of academic history towards identifying a primary perspective from which to approach individual scholarship.
- Acquired significant research experience in major areas of urban history.
- Participated in numerous major-specific and general academic seminars towards becoming well versed in larger tenets of scholarly research.

Sections should be in order of importance for purpose of CV

Researcher, Public History Colloquium, Siena College—Jan 2016-May 2016

- Worked with numerous public history professionals to study the best practices in the area of museum studies.
- Prepared several presentations on key areas in the broader research and theory of public history, museum studies, and digital history to present before history classes.
- Studied the development of public history as field centered on the larger consideration of the many different ways people understand the past.
- Designed museum exhibit on local businesses for use by local historic site.

Interviewer & Researcher, Vietnam War Oral History Colloquium, Siena College—Sep 2013-Dec 2014

- Conducted and transcribed interviews with Vietnam War veterans for use by the Library of Congress’ Testimonies of War Oral History Project.
- Led three-person research team in design of oral history project on the Albany County Historical Association and its larger role in the community.
- Examined oral history as area of public history and its uses in furthering people’s understanding of the past through alternative channels.
- Acquired certification through National Institute of Health for conducting research with at-risk populations as training for work with Vietnam veterans.

For presentations, list the title of the project and name and date of the conference where it was presented

PROJECTS AND PAPERS

Honors Thesis: “‘O’Malley’s Pleasure Dome:’ The Ballpark in the Postwar American City”—Standish Honors Program, Siena College—Jan 2016-May 2017

My honors thesis studies the ideological origins of the use of public funding in the construction of privately owned sports stadia during the post-World War II period and what these changes reflected about the nature of the American city. This project has involved extensive scholarship in areas of urban history and urban renewal, as well as a broader articulation of how these dynamics relate to larger trends in cultural history. I am looking to submit my research for publication in the *Baseball Research Journal*.

“Triple Play: Baseball at the Albany Institute”—Albany Institute of History and Art—Albany, NY—Sep 2017-Apr 2018

Triple Play is a three-part exhibit on baseball history, consisting of *Baseball: America’s Game*, a traveling exhibit from the Bank of America, *Play Ball!*, a history of baseball in New York’s Capital Region, and *The Clubhouse*, an exhibit dedicated to memorabilia.

- Served as chief researcher and exhibit developer.
- Wrote main exhibition narrative.

“Capital in the Capital: A History of Albany’s Small Businesses”—Albany County Historical Association—Albany, NY—Jan 2016-May 2017

Museum exhibition crafted as class project of Siena College Public History Colloquium on the history of local businesses in Albany, which served as the summer exhibition of the Albany County Historical Association.

- Met with local businesses to devise narratives of their history.
- Designed museum panels for exhibit.

Within a section, put experiences in reverse chronological order—newest to oldest

Ima Saint Page 2 of 2

Be sure to put your full name at the top of any additional pages

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Curatorial Intern, Albany Institute of History and Art—Albany, NY—Aug 2016-Apr 2017

- Oversaw primary research and development for major spring exhibitions on history of baseball in New York’s Capital Region: *Play Ball!* and *The Clubhouse*.
 - Wrote all interpretative labels for the exhibit and decided with executive director all artifacts to be included as part of exhibit.
 - Participated in all major meetings related to exhibit, involving areas such as educational programming, fundraising, and publicity and media outreach.
 - Served as consultant for curatorial, education, and development departments on all programs and written materials related to exhibit.
 - Wrote press materials on exhibit for local media outlets.
- Wrote finding aids for manuscript and archival collections in Institute’s holdings.
- Performed object inventory of permanent collections, data entry of catalog information, and overall maintenance and updates to Institute filing system.
- Assisted in the installation and de-installation of select exhibits for the fall season.

Museum Docent, Albany County Historical Association—Albany, NY—Jun 2016-Aug 2017

- Gave guided tours of the Ten Broeck Mansion historic site.
- Conducted visitor research and surveys to improve tour experience.
- Wrote new tour narrative for use by future docents.
- Supervised operation of Ten Broeck Mansion on designated tour days.

A brief description to explain the award is acceptable, but keep it to one line

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Phi Alpha Theta, the National History Honor Society—Apr 2015-present

- Nationwide honor society for most select history students.

Pi Gamma Mu, International Honor Society in Social Sciences—Apr 2015-present

- Honor society for most select students in the field of Social Sciences.

The McCarthy Scholarship—Jan 2013-present

- Scholarship given to select students from Rensselaer County.

Don’t forget to include activities and community service

ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

President, Siena College Political Science Society—Sep 2015-Apr 2017

- Chief organizer of Siena College Student Roundtable on Current Issues, Voter Identification Survey, and Social Media and Politics Discussion.
- Working with Siena College Center for Academic Community Engagement to plan Youth Political Forum on study of policy issues and their impact on youth.
- Organize Siena College’s Voter Registration Drive.

Student Liaison, Siena College Center for the Study of Government and Politics—Sep 2015-Apr 2017

- Serve as student representative on Siena’s primary academic center for study of politics and current events.
- Responsible for helping to plan programs, presentations, and events to increase student political engagement.
- Organize research work and public events with the Siena Research Institute.
- Work closely with Siena College Student Senate in planning of college events exploring areas of politics.

Admissions Ambassador, Siena College Departments of History and American Studies—Sep 2015-present

- Meet with prospective students during admissions events to educate them on History and American Studies programs, departments, and majors.

Volunteer, Brunswick Cares Community Food Pantry—Brunswick, NY—May 2014-present

- Arrange and supply orders for pantry recipients.
- Educate recipients on aspects of the pantry and the Food Stamps program.

Treasurer, Siena College History Club—Sep 2015-Dec 2015

- Managed club finances and expenditures for Day of Living History event.

Volunteer, Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region—Albany, NY—July 2015

- Digitized Harriet Tubman Lecture Series videos for use in future organizational activities

Write bullets to describe work accomplished and skills gained (see resume writing section)

A CV can be as many pages as needed so include ALL accomplishments but put most important accomplishments first