

The Guilfordian's guide to graduate school: choosing right and getting in

BY ADITYA GARG
STAFF WRITER

What image comes to mind when you think of graduate school? Long hours, laboratory research, scientists in long, white lab coats?

While such images can certainly be true, not all graduate programs are similar.

"Graduate programs, especially Ph.D. programs, can be very different depending on the discipline," said Rachel Riskind, assistant professor of psychology. "Oftentimes students don't recognize the variety of experiences and tasks that distinguish graduate programs."

Certainly, there are many misconceptions surrounding graduate school and rarely does one know how to go about applying. After much research, The Guilfordian has created its own Guide to Graduate School.

Prepare

"It is tough to get in," said Professor of Physics Steve Shapiro. "Prepare throughout your undergraduate experience. Pursue internships, National Science Foundation sponsored research experience for undergraduate programs, etc."

Certainly, preparation is key. While you do not have to spend every minute fretting over graduate school, you should be trying to take advantage of every opportunity to get involved around campus and learn new things.

"When you apply to graduate school, you must convince (and explain to) the admissions committee why you are applying to graduate school, what you plan to do after graduate school and why you would be a good fit in their particular program," according to the staff of the Princeton Review in an email interview with The Guilfordian.

To convince, you must demonstrate legitimate interest in your field and provide evidence that you have the skills needed to succeed. One of the best ways to demonstrate ability is through academic research.

"Get involved with research early on," said former Harvard University political science professor and current Google software engineer Matt Welsh in a phone interview with The Guilfordian. "It can be a daunting thing to go and talk to professors but everything starts with having that first conversation."

"Go to and utilize office hours," said Application Boot Camp Director and Former Admissions and Financial Aid Officer for the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University Kristen Willmott to The Guilfordian in a phone interview. "Use the time to try to connect with professors and really get to know them. Have them get to know you. This will go a long way in not only procuring good recommendation letters but also in helping you secure research opportunities."

Apply

Many times students assume that the graduate school application process is the same as the college application process. While certain aspects are the same, there are distinct differences.

"The biggest difference is that you actually have to know what you want to do with your life," according to the staff of the Princeton Review. "When you're applying to college, you are asked to declare a major, but most people switch once they get there. You cannot switch so easily once you're in graduate school."

There are essentially two parts to the application process: the Graduate Record Examination and the application itself.

The application is very similar to college applications.

The GRE, much like the SAT, is designed to measure the skills and abilities that you should have honed during your undergraduate experience. However, while some programs require the GRE, others require different tests such as the LSAT, MCAT or GMAT. Make sure you know which one you need and prepare thoroughly.

"I advise people to invest in a good test prep course and to start planning their test prep strategy and timeline about nine months before they plan to take the test," said Anna Ivey, founder of Ivey Consulting, an admissions consulting firm based in Cambridge, Mass., in a phone interview with The Guilfordian. "That gives you enough wiggle room to regroup and retake the test if the first attempt isn't to your liking."

General Advice

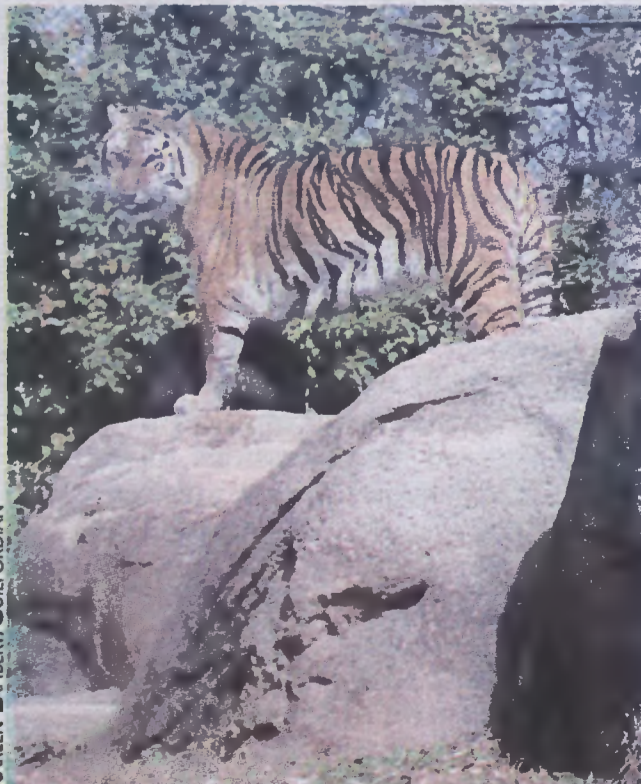
Certainly applying and being accepted to graduate school is a daunting task requiring many years of consistent efforts. While good grades and stellar extracurricular activities help, most importantly, you must know how to distinguish yourself.

Talk to people who have succeeded in your field and learn from them. Establish relationships. Experiment a bit.

As Shapiro and Ivey remarked, graduate school is not going anywhere and you don't necessarily have to go directly after college. Take some time to get to know yourself and cultivate your interests.



Baby otters make debut at Greensboro Science Center



BY CHASE CLAUSEN
STAFF WRITER

In a dimly lit room, accompanied by the noises of children screaming and playing, some of the most interestingly diverse animals on the planet thrive.

Sharks, exotic fish, sloths, as well as many other exhibits, have taken up residence at the recently renovated Greensboro Science Center.

This past June, the Greensboro Nature Science Center underwent a renovation, that included the addition of the SciQuarium, an aquarium geared towards the teaching of science.

Along with being North Carolina's first inland aquarium, the SciQuarium is now home to a wide variety of animals that includes the very rare fishing cat, moray eels, African penguins, an anaconda, mata-mata turtles, spotted river rays and many other diversified species from all over the world.

Even more recently on Feb. 16, the SciQuarium finally put its newborn Asian small-clawed otters on display for the public. Asian small-clawed otters are, in fact, the smallest otters in the world, and now they are here for your viewing here in Greensboro.

"The otters have been extremely fun, especially the babies (because) it's a whole blank page," said Carmen Murray, the center's senior keeper of birds and mammals. "It's great to start (the otters') training process and get them interested in us."

This 22,000 square foot SciQuarium also consists of an Amazon river realm, which features an anaconda, golden lion tamarins and other animals and fish, educational sci-pod stations, behind-the-scenes experience viewing areas, an animal commissary and the very popular stingray touch tank.

"Traditionally, we used to be the place to bring your small children," said Erica Brown, the center's marketing manager. "We've seen with the opening of the SciQuarium that it has actually shifted. We have a lot of college students, a lot of young couples and even a couple of cute little wedding proposals."

Another great aspect about the Science Center is that it depends on volunteer labor. Portia McCracken '71 currently volunteers at the SciQuarium.

"(It is) remarkable to have something this sophisticated," said McCracken. "I love being able to handle the animals and love the teaching aspects about the job."

The SciQuarium is just part one of the three-phase renovation plan. In a few years, phase two will consist of the museum's Reinvention and Renewal program.

In this phase, four parts will be created or renovated. The Science Center will expand the dinosaur gallery exhibit, The Anne Preston Adventures in Science exhibit, as well as the animal discovery area.

The Science Center will also add an outside adventure called Skywild, a high ropes survival course geared towards fitness with three different levels of difficulty.

In addition to new and upcoming changes, "A T-Rex Named Sue" will be on display until May 4.

Sue is one of the largest and best-preserved tyrannosaurus rex specimens ever found.

"I'm really looking forward to seeing the new attractions the Science Center has to offer," said junior Thomas Deane. "I think Sue's exhibit will be a fun exhibit to learn about."

The Greensboro Science Center has many new attractions to make for a fun and interesting time with friends and family, so why not give it a try?

Location:
4301 Lawndale Drive,
Greensboro, NC 27455

Phone:
(336) 288-3769

Adult Price:
\$12.50 (\$11.50 w/college ID)

**Museum & SciQuarium
Hours of Operation:**
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

**Animal Discovery Zone
Hours of Operation:**
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

KARLEN LAMBERT/GUILFORDIAN