“How To Prepare For Graduate School”
TULANE LAMP 2010

Dereck J. Rovaris, Sr., Ph.D.
Associate Vice Chancellor
LSU Health Sciences Center
ACE Fellow 2008-09
How Will Graduate School Help?

- Graduate school training is fast becoming an entry level requirement
- A masters or doctoral degree can increase opportunities and provide career flexibility
- “Open doors” with which we are familiar
- It can help identify doors that prior to the journey were never imagined
- Address the critical shortage of persons with advanced degrees
How Do I Prepare?

- Make good grades
- Talk with faculty and others in your field of interest
- Search your heart and make sure of your choice
- Explore graduate options (via websites, Petersons,...)
- Conduct research (SROP, REUs, MARC,...)
When Do I Prepare?

- It’s never too early to start thinking about graduate school
- As freshmen and sophomores take courses that lead to graduate study
- Conduct research as soon as you can
- Talk with people who do what it is you want to do
- Take the GRE at the end of your junior year
- Complete applications at the start of your senior year
How Do I Apply?

1. create a list of potential schools
2. visit graduate programs
3. register, practice, and then take the GRE;
4. ask faculty members for letters of recommendation;
5. write a statement of purpose and have it critiqued;
6. complete and submit applications for admission and financial support
Funding Options

Fellowships
- Stipend awarded based on academic merit; does not have a work requirement; apply early in senior year
  Types:  (external) NSF, Fulbright, Mellon, …
  (internal) Offered by Graduate Program

Assistantships
- Stipend awarded based on need/merit; work required;
  Types:  Research, Teaching, and Graduate

Tuition waivers
- awarded based on need/merit; usually accompanies internal fellowships and assistantships
The Graduate School Process

- Coursework (1-3 years) (major area, stats, methods)
- Qualifying Exams (tested over major coursework)
- Research (can be conducted throughout program)
- Thesis/Dissertation (original research presentation)
  - committee formed of faculty who guide your research
  - preliminary exam - first couple of chapters of dissertation presented for approval to continue work on dissertation
  - final defense - dissertation presented to committee and defended
How to Write a Good Statement of Purpose

A good statement will be:

• **concise** - say what you have to as efficiently as possible; most are limited to 1 - 1 1/2 pages

• **organized** - your essay should be well thought out and structured; work from an outline;

• **clear** - it should say exactly what you want it to say; no ambiguity; no grammatical errors; no contractions

• **honest** - do not pretend to be who you are not; but, do not sell yourself short, either

• **personal** - this is uniquely yours, it is a statement about you; write about you; avoid using too many personal pronouns “I”s

• **positive** - sell yourself using positive attributes; do not dwell on negatives like low grades
How to Write a Good Statement of Purpose (cont.)

A good statement will include:

• What you have done to prepare for graduate school (i.e. research, work in the field, publications)
• With whom do you want to study and why (identify faculty who are conducting research in your area of interest)
• How you plan to utilize your graduate degree upon completion of graduate school
Graduate School Is More Than Just A Good Idea...

...It’s A Chance To Determine Your Future!
Thank You!
May God Bless Your Future!

Dereck J. Rovaris, Sr., Ph.D.