

Graduate School Preparation Packet



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Not for distribution or sales. Information adopted from various sources.

Drafted: 2.23.2018

OVERVIEW

Dear Undergraduate Student,

While have enjoyed being a part of your educational, professional, and personal development, the Department of Psychology hopes this informational packet serves you well as you plan your next steps – onward and upward into graduate school. Our program, here at Florida A&M University, has been developed to offer you a unique multicultural programmatic framework – distinguished in its own right. The emphasis of this thrust primarily, although not exclusively, has been on the reconceptualization and application of psychology to the experiences of people of African descent.

Upon having completed our undergraduate program, you should be equipped with the knowledge base to define African psychological experiences from an African-centered perspective. You should possess a higher level of self-knowledge and self-acceptance through the examination of our collective past, present and future. You should be equipped with the materials an skillset allowing you to pursue and complete a Master's/Ph.D. Program. Most importantly, you should be prepared to graduate and live your life as one of the many capable FAMU graduates - demonstrating self-acceptance which extends to the acceptance others and to the uplifting of our community.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have carved out a unique niche in the nation: serving the needs of low-income students of color who are underrepresented in colleges and universities. HBCUs offer diverse faculties and staffs, provide environments that significantly enhance student learning and cultivate leadership skills, offer same-race role models, provide challenging programs of study for students, address deficiencies resulting from poor preparation in primary and secondary school, and prepare students to succeed in the workforce and in graduate and professional education. The continuous development and success of peoples of color is critical for realizing our nation's higher education and workforce goals as we move towards the advancements of people of color within the American society.

This guide provides undergraduate students with meaningful insights about the process of applying to, attending and succeeding in graduate school. It is meant to help FAMU undergraduate students decide if graduate school is in their future. Though this guide will not walk you through every step of the graduate school experience, it will lay a foundation for aspiring FAMU students interested in attending graduate school.

While we encourage students to continue advancing their education here at Florida A&M University (<http://www.famu.edu/index.cfm?graduatestudies&DegreePrograms>) We also encourage students to apply to alternative institutions.

The Department of Psychology
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Grad School Decisions & Prep: Start early!				
	First Year	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
Lay the Foundation	_____			
Decisions: Career & Degree		_____		
Career-Focused Preparation		_____		
Select Graduate Programs			_____	
Entrance Exams			_____	
Prepare Applications				_____



Step 1: Deciding to Apply to a Master's Degree Program

While master's degrees are becoming increasingly necessary to enter or advance one's career, the decision to pursue a master's degree should ultimately be up to you. After all, earning a graduate degree is a major commitment of time, money, and other precious resources—a decision you should not take lightly. Before deciding, take some time to consider your options.

There are several reasons why students enter master's degree programs, which include:

- Starting a new career in a professional field
- Preparing for further study at the doctoral level
- Improving relative standing in a competitive field
- Changing careers

Behind this decision is the understanding that a master's degree can expand your knowledge, skills, professional connections, and even recognition in a specific field. The sections below outline some of the major benefits and costs of pursuing a master's degree.

BENEFITS OF A MASTER'S DEGREE

Ultimately, a master's degree should assist you in achieving your career goals in order for it to be a sound investment. This section of the guidebook explores how a master's degree can assist in your personal, intellectual, and professional development.

Personal Development. A master's degree program can help shape your personal goals. It can offer you the time and necessary resources to think deeply about—or completely rethink—your aspirations and commitments, both inside and outside of the classroom. Immersion in an academic-professional community can expand your perspectives through the influence of your classmates, many that bring years of valuable professional experience and can serve as mentors. Graduate school can also be an opportunity for you to become part of a long-lasting network of engaged and successful alumni from your new institution. The effort put forth to complete your studies can serve as a memorable life experience.

Intellectual Development. As “lifelong learners,” some people have a strong desire to add to their knowledge reservoir and challenge themselves academically. For these individuals, a master's degree can certainly offer the opportunity to develop the mind in a structured way that delivers great personal satisfaction. These returns of a master's-level education, however, are not exclusive to lifelong learners. The intellectual stimulation and the overall cognitive development yielded by advanced education cannot go understated. After all, just as extended years of exercise can improve one's

physical condition, additional years spent in school can yield a more intellectually engaged person. A master's degree program presents an opportunity to refine your academic interests and hone your research abilities in a rigorous setting. For this particular reason, a master's degree can also make you a stronger candidate for doctoral study. Ultimately, your academic work at the master's level requires collaboration with faculty and close interdisciplinary engagement among peers.

Professional Development. A master's degree may sometimes be the only choice for those interested in entering or changing careers. In some career sectors (such as public affairs and social services), a master's degree is replacing a bachelor's as the minimum requirement for employment. For example, with a bachelor's degree in the 1980s, one could secure an entry-level position as an admissions counselor or student services coordinator. By the mid-2000s, applicants for these same entry-level positions were not even considered unless a master's degree was held. While holding a graduate degree alone is not a guarantor of success, it does open many doors for employment. Similarly, for students interested in making a career change, a master's degree is a great opportunity to earn an expedited education in a field that may only recently have piqued their interest. Since master's degree programs combine discipline-specific coursework with skills such as critical thinking, analytic ability, and time management, these programs can facilitate a career change.

Regardless of where you are in your professional career, a master's degree can also assist you in your career advancement. In an increasingly competitive global marketplace, a master's degree can set you apart from other job candidates. After all, earning a master's degree can be evidence of determination, intellectual ability, and persistence in handling challenging environments—all of which are highly sought after qualities. When it comes to financial benefits, a master's degree also often commands more money than a bachelor's degree alone. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, workers between the ages of 21 and 64 with a master's degree or higher earn an average annual salary of \$55,242 as opposed to those with a bachelor's degree whose average annual salary is \$42,877—a difference of nearly 30 percent. Over the course of one's lifetime, a person with a master's degree typically earns \$400,000 more than someone who only holds a bachelor's degree. Similarly, among individuals 25 years of age and older, those with a master's degree face lower rates of unemployment than their counterparts with bachelor's and associate's degrees. On average, completing a master's degree can make a positive impact on your financial circumstances.

COSTS OF A MASTER'S DEGREE

The Question of When

Before you learn about the financial costs of pursuing a master's degree, it is important to consider whether or not right now is the best time for you to do so. One of the questions most often debated in higher education is: When is the best time to pursue a master's degree? Is it better to do so right after you complete your bachelor's degree? Or should you wait a few years and gain work experience first?

Some of the reasons why you may want to pursue your master's degree immediately after earning your bachelor's degree include:

- Some occupations require an advanced degree
- You are accustomed to being a student
- It may be more convenient to stay in school
- You have fewer obligations that impede your continuing education

On the other hand, you may want to work for a few years before pursuing a master's degree for the following reasons:

- Some master's programs require work experience
- You can improve your chances for acceptance
- You can gain solid financial footing before investing in a master's degree
- You can obtain a better understanding of your career goals by working for a few years
- In certain instances, employers might pay some or all of your graduate school expenses

The Question of How Much

Much like undergraduate education, the cost of a master's degree can greatly vary depending on the institution, the specialty, and the length of the program. For example, if you are looking at a public university, in-state tuition is lower than paying out-of-state tuition or attending a private university. Other costs to consider when deciding to go to graduate school include books, supplies, transportation, and expenses essential to quality of life—such as housing, health insurance, and social activities.(see [STEP 2: becoming a graduate feeder candidate](#)).

Finding the Right Fit: Other Considerations

After having examined the general benefits and costs associated with pursuing a master's degree, you should take some time to explore other factors before officially selecting a particular program. Below we list a few of the things we find most important when it comes to finding the right program fit.

Academic Focus, Faculty, and Reputation. Master's programs tend to focus within a specific discipline. Research each program you are considering to avoid applying to a program that does not match your personal or career interests. Moreover, it is crucial for you to know about the faculty with which you will be working. Find out whether they are respected in your field. You may want to look at the number of their scholarly publications, their national or regional acclaim, and their previous professional experiences. Lastly, consider how your program options rank. While rankings are an important measure of quality, they are not the only one that matters. Other factors that influence quality include: work-life balance, diversity of students and faculty, ambiance of the university, social and networking opportunities, student-faculty ratio, and financial considerations—to name a few.

Career Services. Given that one of your main goals for pursuing a master's degree likely revolves around career advancement, you should examine existing professional development programs and job placement assistance that are offered to students. You may also want to research where program's graduates are working along with their salaries. Keep in mind, these figures might be difficult to ascertain, but most colleges and universities have career services centers that are devoted to helping you prepare for life after the program.

Culture and Diversity. All colleges and universities have an institutional culture—the norms, values and beliefs that influence “how things are done.” Take the time to research and identify programs with cultures that fit your style and comfort level so that you can excel academically. For example, would you prefer a competitive or nurturing learning environment? How important is it for the program to have diverse faculty and students? Stronger programs tend to be more diverse. Diversity, in this context, does not solely refer to race, class or gender. Rather, diversity is a much more inclusive term that also refers to religion, nationality, ideas and languages. Increased diversity often leads to broader, nuanced and more empathetic worldviews. You should examine the mission, values, and philosophy of your program, its faculty and student composition, and its opportunities for learning.

Facilities, Resources, and Size. Make sure the programs you are considering have the types of facilities and resources you need to succeed academically. This might sound obvious, but confirm that you are able to access and take advantage of the amenities advertised by the university. For example, find out whether programs that stress “state-of-the-art” facilities actually have state-of-the-art buildings and tools. Also, consider library resources (such as number of periodicals and volumes in your field) and just about any other resources that support the programs you are considering, including endowments and foundations that support student research and publications. Lastly, remember that the size of the program matters. Much like your undergraduate institution, you need to find a size that feels right for you. To do this, examine faculty-

student ratios and total student enrollment population. After all, the size of the graduate program can influence your experience in the classroom, how much or little faculty interaction you can anticipate, and how much attention you might receive during your studies.

Location and Surrounding Community. Location can be an extremely important factor in your decision. Depending on the master's degree you are pursuing, you might have to live in a specific geographic area for several years. As such, you should enjoy the surrounding areas of the programs you are considering. Ask yourself: do I prefer living in an urban, rural, or a suburban setting? Additionally, with the exception of top-tier programs, the value of a master's degree can sometimes be strongest in the region where the school is located. This means that if you want to eventually live on the East Coast, it may make more sense to attend a school in that region.

Residency Requirements. If you are looking at master's programs at public universities, you may want to examine admission requirements and costs for in-state residents compared to all other applicants. If you have decided on a specific public university but do not currently live in that state, you may want to consider relocating to that state and establishing residency there before applying. Keep in mind, however, that establishing residency takes years. Check with the university to ascertain how to establish residency.

Step 2: The Graduate Feeder Scholars Program (GFSP)

Statement of Purpose

The Graduate Feeder Scholars Program (GFSP) in the School of Graduate Studies and Research is an official partnership agreement arranged by FAMU with more than 40 participating universities located throughout the United States. The GFSP affords FAMU students the opportunity to receive advanced study in graduate programs not available at FAMU. The feeder arrangement was conceptualized and created in response to the national need to increase the number of African Americans participating in advanced graduate education. The GFSP was designed with FAMU as the lead university in this consortium. As the lead institution, FAMU acts as the hub of the consortium with a committed role of providing a pool of qualified underrepresented minorities motivated to pursue the Master's or Doctoral degrees.

Participation in the GFSP is voluntary and is targeted primarily for any current student of FAMU in any academic discipline, with the exception of the professional schools. FAMU and the Feeder Institutions have established a partnership agreement or Memorandum of Understanding. This partnership agreement spells out the Feeder Institution's level of participation in the program. The Feeder Representative is usually associated with the Graduate School and may serve as a liaison to the student and FAMU. The Feeder Representative may also serve as a mentor/advisor to the student upon admission to the Feeder Institution.

Mission and Goals

The mission of the School of Graduate Studies & Research via the Graduate Feeder Scholars Program is to: (1) Promote graduate education, scholarship and research; (2) Equip our students with the knowledge and tools to become successful, highly motivated graduate students; (3) Provide students with a mechanism to pursue graduate study in areas not available at Florida A&M University; and (4) Act as liaison between the Feeder Institutions and the students to advocate a quality graduate experience.

The Graduate Feeder Program objectives are to:

- Enroll 75-100 FAMU graduates annually in the Feeder Institutions;
- Monitor the admission, financial offers, academic progression, and graduation of the scholars;
- Maintain regular and continual contact and direct communication with the scholars;
- Monitor scholars compliance with GPA requirements to remain active in the program;
- Notify scholars of their program status as changes occur;
- Ensure effective human relations and assessment of the climate of receptivity by visiting the Feeder Institutions; and

- Maintain information on the scholars for future research

Criteria for Participation in the Feeder Program

1. Students interested in applying to the Graduate Feeder Scholars Program should meet the following requirements:

- a. Complete 30 credit hours with a minimum GPA of 3.0;
- b. Submit a typed and fully completed Graduate Feeder Participation Application;
- c. Submit an unofficial transcript;
- d. Attend at least five (5) Graduate Feeder educational and professional development seminars and workshops; and
- e. Maintain a 3.0 GPA

Graduate Feeder Scholars Development Workshops

All Graduate Feeder Scholars Program participants are required to complete a series of developmental workshops that will prepare them for the rigors of graduate study. The workshops will be offered each semester and include such topics as: “The Graduate Application Process”; “How to Write a Personal Statement”; “How to Write a Theses or Dissertation”; “Strategies & Techniques for taking Standardized Examinations”; and “What to Expect in Graduate School”.

Participants are required to complete at least five workshops to be qualified and considered as a Graduate Feeder Scholar. Upon completion of the requirements, participants will be mailed a "**Certificate of Completion**" to be officially considered a Graduate Feeder Scholar.

Participation Agreement

The Participation Agreement is a partnership or memorandum of understanding between Florida A&M University and the Feeder Institutions. It stipulates the basic benefits each Institution will provide to qualified FAMU scholars upon application and acceptance into a graduate program of study. Some participation agreements include the following: admission application fee waivers, campus visitation opportunities at no charge to students, and summer research internships.

The agreements are initially instituted to cover a five-year period. However, they are monitored annually to ensure active participation in the program. Feeder Institutions are invited to the campus of Florida A&M University annually for the purpose of providing institutional information and recruitment.

ALL FAMU students with a GPA 3.0 and above are encouraged to apply!

Step 3: Applying to Master's Degree Programs

If you are reading this guide, then you are already one step ahead of most people interested in pursuing a master's degree. You have learned about some of the benefits and costs associated with a master's degree, as well as other factors you should consider when selecting a program. This section of our guidebook will walk you through the application process itself and how you should prepare for it.

CREATING A TIMELINE

Most master's degree programs have similar requirements and deadlines, which makes the application process more manageable. Most programs across disciplines will require you to:

- Send copies of your official undergraduate transcripts
- Send your official test scores
- Obtain letters of recommendation
- Submit one or a few essays

Remember, it is important that you supply the materials that each program requests. A good practice is to collect all of this information and put it into one document. With this document in hand, you can begin to create a timeline to keep yourself accountable. Below is a sample timeline you can use.

Application requirements:

- + Take (and retake) GRE/MCAT/LSAT/GMAT test (if required) — May-Nov 201X – before applying
- + Complete online application forms — Sep-Nov 201X
- + Request letters of recommendation — Sep-Nov 201X
 - + Set earlier deadline: Dec 15, 201X
- + Send official test scores (if required) — Personal deadline: Dec 1, 201X
- + Send official transcripts (if required) — Personal deadline: Dec 1, 201X
- + Write essay(s) — Sep-Dec 201X
 - + Deadline for first draft: Nov 1, 201X
 - + Deadline for second draft: Nov 15, 201X
 - + Deadline for final draft: Dec 1, 201X

Personal deadline: Jan 1, 201X (for applying)

- + Program 1 deadline: Jan 5, 201X
- + Program 2 deadline: Jan 10, 201X
- + Program 3 deadline: Jan 15, 201X

OBTAINING TRANSCRIPTS AND TEST SCORES

We recommend that you set a personal deadline well before your application is due to send your official transcripts and test scores. It is a good idea to take the required test as early as possible in your application process. This gives you enough time to retake the test if you do not think your scores are competitive enough. Also, keep in mind that some schools will publish the last possible day for you to take the required test.

SECURING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Similar to obtaining required test scores, it is important to solicit letters of recommendation early in the application process. Early contact with letter writers gives them enough time to work on your letter. Under no circumstances should you approach someone late in the process. This will only reflect negatively upon you. Give your recommenders materials that will help them write a strong letter; materials might include: a copy of your resume and a draft of your statement of purpose. It is your job to help craft a letter that speaks to a particular aspect of your application, intellectual strengths, and overall candidacy. Do not be hesitant to ask your letter writers what kind of recommendation they will provide. In our experience, potential recommenders are very honest about the kind of letter they will submit. If someone cannot positively confirm that they are “in your corner,” you need to find someone else. Do not assume that every letter of recommendation will be good—you must confirm. You cannot afford to have a lukewarm or negative letter.

Lastly, to make sure that all materials are submitted on time, provide the letter writer with an early application deadline. It is no secret that your letter writers have busy lives and, sometimes, unintentionally forget or confuse deadlines. It might also be necessary to send a brief reminder to ensure that your materials do not get lost in the shuffle.

WRITING YOUR ESSAY(S)

Most programs will require a statement of purpose and short essays. Your statement of purpose should speak directly to your interest in the field, how previous intellectual or professional experiences have prepared you for master’s level work, your ability to take on the rigors of graduate school, and potential contributions to the program and field. To capture all of these things, telling personal stories can set you apart. Be specific and dynamic while using vivid language and, if possible, field-specific lingo. Describe your qualifications honestly, talk about the work that you have done, and do not keep the successes you have accomplished to yourself. Enjoy the writing process. Edit, edit, edit, and then edit some more.

Demystifying the Doctoral Application and Selection Process

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The application typically consists of Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores, a personal statement, transcripts from all institutions attended, and letters of reference. All components of the application are important. As you prepare your application, you should be asking yourself the following questions: Whom do I want to write my letters of recommendation? How will these letters speak to my ability to do doctoral work? Have I taken the GRE? Do my GRE scores meet minimum requirements? How much feedback has my personal statement received? How do I plan to gather the appropriate application materials? Do the institutions have differing application submission processes? If so, how will that affect me?

There are two overarching considerations that should guide how you approach the application process. First, the application process is very time consuming. You must painstakingly prepare materials that, when submitted, will be evaluated by many people within and beyond the department. This takes time. Even if your application is submitted in October, it will not be until February that you will be notified of a decision. Patience is a virtue. Second, the application itself is meant to serve as a holistic picture of your scholarly abilities, personal experiences, and potential “fit” within the department. To be sure, there is a certain amount of subjectivity built into the process. Good grades, a high GRE score or a phenomenal personal statement does not guarantee admission. Remember, you, as an applicant, must tailor your materials in such a way that makes you an attractive candidate. From the perspective of the admissions committee, for a variety of reasons, there are only so many spots that can be offered. Do not take an offer of acceptance or letter of rejection personally. Candidates are often admitted, deferred or rejected for reasons they will never know. A decision—regardless of outcome—is not a reflection of you as a person.

Take Care of Your Grades and Test Scores. Nothing will disqualify your application faster than not having solid grades and test scores. Though there are many factors that go into the decision-making process, your grades and test scores will be the first thing that the admissions committee evaluates. From their perspective, grades and test scores offer some indication of your strengths and weaknesses as a scholar. For example, if you are applying to an Anthropology or Sociology program, they will place emphasis on your grades in social science related courses at prior institutions. Therefore, a C in Chemistry, for example, might not be held against you. Grades serve as the objective basis from which all applicants are evaluated against one another. Even though you might be a brilliant scholar in the making, a poor GRE score or failure in a discipline related course could prevent you from gaining admission. Take care of your grades.

In terms of preparing your application, you should request either a paper or electronic copy of your undergraduate or, if applicable, master's level transcript. The form of the transcript will depend on how your application is to be submitted—paper or electronically. It can take up to two weeks for a transcript request to be fulfilled. Depending on your undergraduate or graduate institution, the request may entail a modest cost. Additionally, GRE scores are valid for five years. If more than five years have passed, take the exam again. Once you have completed the exam, send your score to the particular institution that you are applying to.

Deciding Which Program to Attend. Deciding which program to attend is important and often littered with difficult questions. Whom do I want to work with? What are my personal and professional motivations and what role might they play in my doctoral experience? How much financial support will I receive? These questions—among many others—should be at the forefront of your decision-making process. This section offers practical advice that will help you make sense of and weigh the various considerations that go into deciding which doctoral program to attend.

Select a program that matches your goals, abilities and interests. Keep in mind that some of the most renowned programs in the country might be at universities with lesser-known reputations, while more prestigious colleges may have weaker departments. In other words, there might be a mismatch between a prestigious university and a renowned program. Know the difference! As an applicant, factor in your own criteria (such as geographic location) while also considering additional features, such as:

Faculty: What is the faculty-student ratio? How diverse are faculty viewpoints within the discipline? Do faculty research topics interest you? How open are faculty to collaborating with students? Are there diverse faculty members, administrators, and staff associated with the program?

Facilities: What opportunities are there to collaborate across the department, college or university? What kind of academic support programs are in place (e.g., faculty advisors and peer advisors)? Are there opportunities for experiential learning (through internships and assistantships, for example)? Is on-campus housing available to graduate students? What kinds of social outlets are available to students?

Students: What is the composition of the graduate class? What are the retention, attrition and graduation rates [for students of color]? How competitive are graduate students for external or internal funding? Are students exposed to professional associations and/or given the opportunity to become active members? Are students required or encouraged to attend and present their research at professional conferences?

Employment: Are there resources that assist graduating students with finding a job? What kind of jobs do graduates obtain?

How Do I Apply? Plan ahead! The application process is long and will require a tremendous amount of preparation, coordination and patience. There are four main elements of a typical doctoral program application.

Personal Statement. Your personal statement is your opportunity to articulate how your experiences, interests, goals and enthusiasm speak to your proposed graduate research. Highlight your academic preparation and professional experiences, why you want an advanced degree and how it will influence your career path, and why you have selected this particular program and institution. This is the best opportunity you will have to speak about yourself. Make sure your essay is clear, concise, and answers any outlined questions. Lastly, remember not to restate your resume. Instead, highlight your interests and emphasize how your skills, knowledge, and training can contribute to the department and greater academic community.

Grade Point Average. Your grade point average is an important measure of comparison against other candidates. If you had a particular concern that influenced your grades, you may need to make a brief reference in your statement. If so, explain concisely—do not, under any circumstances, be defensive.

Letters of Reference. In most applications, you will need between two and five references. Letter writers are people (such as professors or employers) who can write about your skills, abilities, and interests. Be strategic in terms of who writes your letters. When asking a professor to write your letter of recommendation, offer them the following information so that all materials are properly submitted and on time: application deadlines, a transcript and resume, statement describing where you are applying and why, the grades you received in the professor's course, your contact information, instructions about how to submit the letter of recommendation, and, if necessary, a stamped and addressed envelope so that the recommender may send their letter directly to the department you are applying to. Remember, it is in your best interest to make the writing and submission process easier on them. The more information you provide, the stronger and more nuanced their letter will be.

Standardized Test Scores. Your standardized test scores are an important way to distinguish yourself from other candidates. Many programs require specific standardized tests for admissions (e.g., GRE, MCAT, LSAT). While planning your application process, identify specific test dates and how long it will take to adequately prepare for the exam.

Campus Interviews. If you are invited to a campus interview—congratulations! This is a big deal and a prime opportunity for you to elaborate upon the materials you have

submitted. As a finalist for entrance into a doctoral program, campus interviews are an invaluable occasion for you to meet with faculty and students, as well as an opportunity to get a sense of the environment in which you may potentially enter. Remember, at this point in the admission process, a campus interview is as much about the faculty impressing you as it is about you impressing them. The program wants you to attend. You are there for a reason. In preparation for a campus interview, do your homework. The time you put into preparing for the interview is an investment—make it wisely.

There are five practical steps that you can take in terms of your own preparation.

1. **Review your itinerary.** If you have the names and positions of those interviewing you, invest the time to study which area of the department (or campus) each person or group of people belongs, and begin to tailor your responses to potential questions they may ask. These might include: so tell me about yourself? Describe your scholarly interests? Where do your research strengths lie (e.g., qualitative, quantitative or mixed-methods)? What are your research weaknesses and how will you improve upon them? Can you explain the value of your work to an educated person? Can you tell us more about how your personal and professional experiences relate to your research?
2. **Study the institution's mission, values and vision.** Be sure that you are able to discuss how your personal values and beliefs resonate with those of the institution. Though this might seem a bit over the top, your ability to communicate how the institution fits with your career aspirations will speak directly to your interest in being a professional (remember, you are not a student!) on that campus.
3. **Ask mentors of their interview experiences.** This might seem obvious but asking mentors what to expect from the various departments or people interviewing you is essential. Everyone knows everyone in academia. Your scholarly mentor probably knows—either personally or professionally—someone working in the department you wish enter. Take advantage of their knowledge and insight. Yes, selection committees are interested in your work. That's why you were invited for a campus interview. However, they are also interested in you as a person and how well you get along with other members of the community.
4. **Write down questions you would like to ask during your interview.** Almost every interview ends with the phrase, "do you have any questions?" The answer is always yes. You should always have questions ready. Always. Not having a prepared question is analogous to saying, "I am not a serious candidate and not ready to be here." The questions you ask signal to the interviewer how much you know of the department, how serious you are in terms of your scholarship and engaging others, and will give insight into your potential future trajectory. Spend

some time thinking about what you would like to know about each person you are conversing with.

Sample questions include:

- a) Can you tell me more about how competitive doctoral students are in receiving external fellowships or grants?
- b) Are there campus programs available that can assist with grant applications?
- c) Are students encouraged to attend professional conferences?
- d) Can you tell me more about collaborating and publishing with faculty?

These are only a handful of questions. However, they signal to the listener that you are serious about your doctoral studies and want to make an impact.

5. **Remember to always be yourself.** At this stage of the process, the campus interview is about “fit.” Keep in mind, there is no consensus about what it means to be a good “fit.” Everyone who has been invited for an interview is there because they have something to offer. Navigating a doctoral program takes years. From the perspective of the admissions committee, how well (or poorly) you get along with other people can be a deciding factor.

The Doctoral Experience

Congratulations! You are now in a doctoral program. Now what? The doctoral experience is a marathon and rite of passage. The first several years are devoted to learning the prevailing literatures, methodologies, and theories that comprise your field. In order for you to make a meaningful contribution to your intellectual growth and the broader scholarly community, you must know what has come before you as well as what people are currently talking about. During coursework, you will undoubtedly read and write more than you have in your entire life. The rationale behind this process is to help you learn from, engage with and apply theoretical insights and empirical revelations to your research project. Once you are able to demonstrate your mastery of this process through the successful completion of comprehensive exams, you will progress to the more demanding aspects of the doctoral experience—conducting fieldwork and writing a dissertation. This section engages three important aspects of the doctoral experience: coursework, networking, and the dissertation. To be clear, this section is not meant to serve as a comprehensive guide to the entire doctoral experience. Rather, this is meant to serve as a general overview. The particulars of the experience differ according to program, field and department.

Opportunity Costs of Attending. A doctoral program is an all-encompassing experience. Most of your waking hours will be devoted to it. Before deciding whether or not to apply, ask yourself: Are all of the years of delayed financial gain worth the pursuit? Is there anything else that you want to be doing? Be very clear about the potential implications of these questions. If you are in school, you are not making a full-time equivalent salary.

Funding. There are three means by which doctoral experiences are funded: grants, fellowships and assistantships. Each source of funding typically covers the cost of tuition, room and board, books, and health insurance. To be clear, grants are sources of funds that do not have to be re-paid. In order to receive a grant, you must submit an application to an organization or the program requesting funds. Much like applying to college, most grant applications normally consist of an essay, application form, letters of recommendation, and, in some instances, a face-to-face interview. Fellowships, much like grants, are sources of monies that do not have to be re-paid. Fellowships are traditionally offered to incoming students by individual schools or programs. It is important to note that not all incoming students receive a fellowship.

Doctoral programs should be free. Do not take out loans to pay for a doctoral program. Even if you have been offered admission, it is not worth taking out loans. The financial impact of doing so will be felt for a long time.

Who do you want to study with? One of the most important questions you have to consider when applying to a doctoral program is whom do you want to study with. Is there a particular scholar that can guide your research? Why, in your opinion, does this scholar speak to the research questions you are interested in pursuing? Prior to completing your doctoral application, you should reach out to that person to see if they would be willing to serve as your advisor. If they are willing to serve as your advisor, you should mention this person by name in your application.

What is the Purpose of Coursework? The purpose of coursework is to teach you how to think, write and express yourself as a scholar. Though this might sound obvious, it can seem like you are learning another language. Words like problematic, r-squared, and positionality will become your new best friends. This might first become noticeable when you try to explain what you are learning in class to family members without using academic jargon. It's tough, we've tried. Taking between two and three years, coursework is a necessary component of the doctoral process. Though it can sometimes feel a bit burdensome—writing under tight deadlines, reading copious amounts of articles and trying to keep track of who said what—coursework is ultimately about learning to intellectually challenge yourself. In other words, become comfortable with being uncomfortable. Embrace it. Being uncomfortable means that you are learning and grappling with issues that scholars are debating. This process is idiosyncratic and does not look the same for everyone.

One common strategy for navigating the rigors of coursework is to cultivate meaningful personal relationships with classmates. Your classmates are a reservoir of knowledge and experiences that can, for example, translate the readings and writing assignments as well as describe how they apply to you personally. Your peers are invaluable. They are in a unique position to understand the ups and downs of coursework. Their emotional support can play a significant role in how you experience graduate school. Camaraderie or social isolation can make all the difference in the world.

Networking Matters. Networking is perhaps the most understated aspect of the doctoral experience. Remember, what you have accomplished is just as important as who you know. At this level, everyone is smart, accomplished, and has something to offer. One aspect of your job as a doctoral student is to network. What are other students learning? What projects are they working on? What fellowships are they applying for? What conferences and workshops are they attending? Can you see yourself collaborating with them? These questions should guide your thinking when it comes to networking with other graduate students. Interacting and building relationships with like-minded peers will serve as the basis of social networks that could help advance your career. Take the time to interact with and learn from students from other departments, programs and universities.

What is a Dissertation? The dissertation is an opportunity to demonstrate that you can apply the skills, knowledge and training you have acquired on an original research project. A traditional dissertation has five chapters—Introduction, Literature Review, Methods and Theory, Data Chapter, and Conclusion.

The best dissertation is a finished dissertation. This is the most important rule to remember when writing a dissertation! Your dissertation will not be a magnum opus. Very few people beyond your dissertation committee will even bother to read it, and that's okay. Dissertations are a messy business. It is the first time most doctoral candidates are putting together a manuscript length text. Through the process of writing you will discover that there are various tangential issues related to your project that you would like to address but are unable to for various reasons. If this happens, remember, the best dissertation is a finished dissertation. Resist expanding the scope of your questions and analysis. Be as focused as possible. It is very easy to overcomplicate what you are trying to say and lose sight of the core argument you are trying to make. Simplicity is your best friend.

Be consistent with writing. Consistent writing habits are what drive the everyday reality of the dissertation. Regardless of how many hours you decide to write per day, be consistent! Turn off your phone, stay off Facebook and Twitter, and block out the outside world. Your writing time is precious and an investment in your scholarship. Protect that time. Consistent writing means that you are making progress. There is no way to tell how long it will take for you to successfully complete your dissertation—there are too many variables to consider here. However, the easiest way to not finish is to compromise your relationship with writing.

Perfection does not exist. There is no such thing as perfection. Let it go. This might seem scary to some but the idea of perfection in writing is a myth. Writing is a subjective process. There are limitless possibilities in terms of how to structure an argument, frame a question or respond to a particular debate. Additionally, your understanding and insight of a particular topic, method or theory will change over time. What seems insightful now might appear obvious or naïve later. The most important thing to remember is that perfection does not exist. What you have written down is fine. Keep writing

As a Graduate Student

1 Always Show Up On Time. It sounds very patronizing, but we cannot stress the importance of showing up on time. If you tell someone that you are going to be somewhere at a particular time, be there. Do what you have to do to be on time. Buy a planner or set an alarm clock. Not showing up on time signals two things to others. First, you do not respect their time. Time is a scarce resource. It should be protected and provided accordingly. If someone takes time out of their busy day to meet with you (trust us, they are much busier than you are), show up on time. Nothing squashes potential opportunity faster than showing up late or missing a meeting. Second, tardiness signals to others that you are unprepared for a doctoral program. If you can't show up on time for a meeting, how well (or poorly) are you going to handle the rigors of trying to publish, apply for grants, finish coursework, prepare for conferences, network, take comprehensive exams, and complete a dissertation? Show up on time.

2 Gratitude is Powerful. The academic community is a small community, where everyone is familiar with each other in some way. How you carry yourself and interact with others is important. There are two things that you must always remember to say: "please" and "thank you." Using these two phrases, particularly if you are asking someone for a favor, can place you in someone's good grace. That someone may open doors or help with a project or proposal. Gratitude is powerful.

3 Being in a Doctoral Program is a Privilege. Not everyone is in a doctoral program. Don't forget that. It is competitive to get in and difficult to complete. Approximately 1% of the entire U.S. population has a doctoral degree. Roughly 50% of those who enter your program will eventually defend their dissertation. You are in a doctoral program because you are talented and have worked very hard to get to this point. However, being talented and actually doing the work required of a doctoral program are two separate things. Being talented simply means that you have gained access to the opportunity to complete a doctoral program. Talent means you have potential. The selection committee recognizes your potential and, consequently, has extended an offer of admission. However; the amount of work you have will consume most of your waking hours. Remember, the intellectual work you are doing is a privilege. You do not have to worry about meeting the basic necessities of living. That is taken care of through fellowships or grants. Your job is to read and write. It is a privilege.

4 Make the Most of Opportunities. You have no idea which person or opportunity will jump start your career. A doctoral program offers you the opportunity to work with renowned experts on a variety of projects. Make the most of every opportunity to learn, work, and interact. These opportunities will help give you a better idea of the type of work you would like to do in the future. Your professors and colleagues are interested in mentoring, training, and interacting with you. They want to help. Don't be shy about

asking for their opinion or advice. As a student, you do not know how or in what ways other people can assist you. Make the most of every opportunity.

5 Don't be Afraid to Ask Questions. Asking questions is the only way that you will learn. If you have a particular question about an article, a book you read, or project, speak up. Always ask questions. Questions are the lifeblood of the research and professional formation process. You should be asking questions every step of the way. As a young scholar, the questions you ask will define how you decide to conduct your research. Is your project qualitative or quantitative in nature? What epistemological assumptions are embedded within your research approach? Do you have enough data to “answer” the question you are posing? Having the ability to ask a well-articulated question is one of the primary ways that you will be able to navigate the doctoral experience. The questions you ask will inform the answers you find.

6 Admit What You Don't Know. This seems simple enough. Admit what you don't know. It's okay to not know everything. In fact, you can't possibly know everything. If you did, you wouldn't need a PhD. You would already know what you're asking and going to find. Admitting what you don't know is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of maturity, strength, and confidence. Colleagues will respect this. Admitting what you don't know in the form of a well-articulated question is a powerful mechanism to start a meaningful conversation. “I don't know much about the Guarani people of southern Bolivia, can you tell me more about your research with them?” This type of question extends an invitation to the listener that allows them to tell you more about their research interests and allows you the opportunity to productively interact and learn. Admitting what you don't know is meaningful.

7 You Are Not an Imposter. You are in a doctoral program for a reason. You are smart, talented, and work hard. Imposter syndrome is just the perception that you are somehow not “good enough.” This is deficit thinking. Get this out of your head. There is no space for it. Instead, you should be focusing on where your professional trajectory is headed. The materials you are engaging are difficult. Your assumptions will be questioned. The doctoral experience will transform how you see and have come to understand the world. You are good enough to be in a doctoral program. You are strong enough to thrive in a doctoral program. Repeat this statement: I am not an imposter.

8 Push Yourself Beyond Your Comfort Zone. It is very easy to be complacent. Graduate school is hard and daily routines make life easier. Don't let your routine make you complacent. You should be pushing your intellect beyond its current limit. Life beyond your comfort zone is where learning happens. Approaching your particular research interest from the perspective of another will help transform you into an interdisciplinary scholar. Peer interaction and cross-disciplinary collaboration will push your limits to a new level.

Resume/Curriculum Vitae (CV)

For graduate school, professional school, or academic positions the résumé is referred to as a CV. The CV must concisely convey key information. Keep in mind that the first task of a search committee is to reduce the applicant pool to a more manageable list of the most qualified candidates. At this stage in the process, a thirty to sixty second scan of your CV is probably all you can expect. In order to make it to the short list of candidates, your CV must be attractive, easy to read (establish a consistent form), and should succinctly present the qualifications and experience that qualify you for the position. Do not send a lengthy document that details everything you have ever done. Five pages is an adequate length for a concise CV at the junior level. For senior academic positions, CVs will be longer.

The general order of information on a CV is:

1. Contact Information. Provide you full name, address, telephone fax, and email.
2. Education. List in chronological order your educational history, starting from your undergraduate degree through to your current position.
3. Professional Experience. List in chronological order any professional experience you have had. If you have not had any, do not include this section. State any professional qualifications that you have.
4. Honors and Awards. List and honors and awards you have received, including fellowships. Do not include this section if you have nothing to place here.
5. Society Memberships. List any professional or student societies that you are a member of and any leadership roles that you have played in these societies.
6. Publications. List all of your research publications in a consistent style. One style is to follow chronological order –starting with your first publication and ending with publications that are currently under review. You can chose to include publications that are in preparation – however these will generally be discarded by the selection committee. Strictly speaking, you should only include publications that are refereed – meaning only refereed journal and conference papers. However, if this section looks a little lean you could include poster presentations or reports to research sponsors, etc.
7. Presentations. If you have given any “invited” presentations of your work, list these together with the talk title, talk date and location.
8. Teaching Experience. List all of your teaching experience in chronological order. Include course evaluations if they are good. Also include any outreach/ teaching that has involved youth groups, citizens groups or K-12 education.
9. Other Information: Some people chose to list their interests and hobbies. If you are fluent in another language or have a special skill that you think is relevant to the position this can also be included.

Research Statement

This should be about 2 to 3 pages in length. Do not provide an exhaustive essay as it will not be read. The statement should consist of:

Opening Paragraph. State the broad problem domain of your research and emphasize why it is important. Tie the importance of this domain to the specific job description of the faculty position.

Main Body. The main body of the statement should be about 3 paragraphs long. Provide an initial paragraph that specifically states how your research is contributing to the problem domain you have identified in the opening paragraph. Try to emphasize how your research is moving the field forward. Follow with a paragraph that summarizes your research approach, the important contributions that you have made to date and those that you expect to make. Refer to papers that achieve these contributions. In the next paragraph state your ideas for future research directions. Identify why these directions have promise and, if you can, mention potential funding sources for these areas. If you have any experience with proposal writing mention it.

Collaborations

If you can identify faculty/ research groups at the institution you are applying to with whom you could collaborate, or facilities that you could make use of, highlight these facts in a closing paragraph. Your aim is to convince the search committee that you will both strengthen existing research at the institution and nucleate new exciting research directions.

Research and Teaching

If you can, finish with a paragraph that identifies ways to tie your research into teaching. Emphasize the importance of bringing your research into the classroom and providing students with research opportunities. If you can identify specific educational initiatives at the institute where you are applying, state your willingness to contribute to these initiatives.

List of Referees

Contact all referees before including them on a list. If possible, meet with them (or talk to them on the phone) so you can inform them about the specific position and highlight the reasons why you are an excellent candidate. Do not give the names of people who do not know your work, or who have not agreed to be named.

It is helpful if your referees do not come from the same institution. If you can't avoid this, try to at least include people from different departments. Senior people will carry much more weight than junior people.

Speak to your advisor about your choice of referees. He/She may be able to suggest colleagues to include, or suggest people who will write supportive letters.

Personal Statement(s)

Personal statements are sometimes also called "application essays" or "statements of purpose." Whatever they are called, they are essentially essays written in response to a question or questions on a graduate school, scholarship or study abroad application form which asks for some sort of sustained response. Some applications ask more specific questions than others. There is no set formula to follow in shaping your response, only choices for you to make, such as whether you should write an essay that is more autobiographically focused or one that is more professionally focused. From application to application, requested personal statements also vary widely in length, ranging from a couple of paragraphs to a series of essays of a page or so each. Personal statements are most important when you are applying to an extremely competitive program, where all the applicants have high test scores and GPA's, and when you are a marginal candidate and need the essay to compensate for low test scores or a low GPA.

The personal statement, your opportunity to sell yourself in the application process, generally falls into one of two categories:

1. The general, comprehensive personal statement:

This allows you maximum freedom in terms of what you write and is the type of statement often prepared for standard medical or law school application forms.

2. The response to very specific questions:

Often, graduate school applications ask specific questions, and your statement should respond specifically to the question being asked. Some business school applications favor multiple essays, typically asking for responses to three or more questions.

Questions to ask yourself before you write:

- What's special, unique, distinctive, and/or impressive about you or your life story?
- What details of your life (personal or family problems, history, people or events that have shaped you or influenced your goals) might help the committee better understand you or help set you apart from other applicants?
- When did you become interested in this field and what have you learned about it (and about yourself) that has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to this field? What insights have you gained?
- How have you learned about this field—through classes, readings, seminars, work or other experiences, or conversations with people already in the field?
- If you have worked a lot during your college years, what have you learned (leadership or managerial skills, for example), and how have you grown?
- What are your career goals?
- Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that you should explain (great grades but mediocre LSAT or GRE scores, for example, or a distinct upward pattern to your GPA if it was only average in the beginning)?

- Have you had to overcome any unusual obstacles or hardships (for example, economic, familial, or physical) in your life?
- What personal characteristics (for example, integrity, compassion, and/or persistence) do you possess that would improve your prospects for success in the field or profession? Is there a way to demonstrate or document that you have these characteristics?
- What skills (for example, leadership, communicative, analytical) do you possess?
- Why might you be a stronger candidate for graduate school—and more successful and effective in the profession or field than other applicants?
- What are the most compelling reasons you can give for the admissions committee to be interested in you?

Answer the questions that are asked

- If you are applying to several schools, you may find questions in each application that are somewhat similar.
- Don't be tempted to use the same statement for all applications. It is important to answer each question being asked, and if slightly different answers are needed, you should write separate statements. In every case, be sure your answer fits the question being asked.

Tell a story

- Think in terms of demonstrating through concrete experience. One of the worst things you can do is to bore the admissions committee. If your statement is fresh, lively, and different, you'll be putting yourself ahead of the pack. If you distinguish yourself through your story, you will make yourself memorable.

Be specific

- Don't, for example, state that you would make an excellent doctor unless you can back it up with specific reasons. Your desire to become a psychologist should be logical, the result of specific experience that is described in your statement. Your application should emerge as the logical conclusion to your story.

Find an angle

- If you're like most people, your life story lacks drama, so figuring out a way to make it interesting becomes the challenge. Finding an angle or a "hook" is vital.

Concentrate on your opening paragraph

- The lead or opening paragraph is generally the most important. It is here that you grab the reader's attention or lose it. This paragraph becomes the framework for the rest of the statement.

Tell what you know

- The middle section of your essay might detail your interest and experience in your particular field, as well as some of your knowledge of the field. Too many people graduate with little or no knowledge of the nuts and bolts of the profession or field they hope to enter. Be as specific as you can in relating what you know about the field and use the language professionals use in conveying this information. Refer to experiences (work, research, etc.), classes, conversations with people in the field, books you've read, seminars you've attended, or any other source of specific information about the career you want and why you're

suited to it. Since you will have to select what you include in your statement, the choices you make are often an indication of your judgment.

Don't include some subjects

- There are certain things best left out of personal statements. For example, references to experiences or accomplishments in high school or earlier are generally not a good idea. Don't mention potentially controversial subjects (for example, controversial religious or political issues).

Do some research, if needed

- If a school wants to know why you're applying to it rather than another school, do some research to find out what sets your choice apart from other universities or programs. If the school setting would provide an important geographical or cultural change for you, this might be a factor to mention.

Write well and correctly

- Be meticulous. Type and proofread your essay very carefully. Many admissions officers say that good written skills and command of correct use of language are important to them as they read these statements. Express yourself clearly and concisely. Adhere to stated word limits.

Avoid clichés

- Stay away from often-repeated or tired statements.

Timeline Preparation:

http://www.bizvision.com/webcast/prod/79967?group_stream_idx=6690

Junior Year

1st semester

- Begin researching potential careers in psychology.
- Read about faculty interests at your college or university that may be a good fit with your own interests. Read over recent publications and look carefully at faculty web pages to determine the faculty members' most current research projects.
- Reach out to the faculty members who may have availability in research labs with whom you have taken at least one class with and did exceptionally well in (preferably an "A" grade in class).
- Find out about field work opportunities in the area of psychology that you would like to pursue to gain valuable hands on experience.

2nd semester (or sooner)

- Begin to explore graduate programs in psychology that you may be interested in. Evaluate overall program requirements of a strong applicant. Most programs look for high GPA, GRE scores above the minimum criteria for the specific program, solid letters of recommendation (best if obtained by a faculty with whom you have worked closely) and research experience. A good resource to find out overall requirements for acceptance into psychology programs is the most current printing of a copy of *Graduate Study in Psychology* (this book can be found in most libraries as a reference). **BE SURE TO MAKE NOTE OF APPLICATION DEADLINES FOR EACH PROGRAM.**
- Begin studying for the GRE. Obtain study materials, price out local courses offered and take as many practice exams as possible to assess your strengths and weaknesses.
- Review your transcripts to determine whether there are any courses that you are required to take to fulfill your major, and evaluate your GPA. (Most Ph.D. programs look for a GPA of 3.5 or higher in an applicant).
- Determine whether or not you are eligible for membership to Psi Chi International Honors Society. , If you do not meet the GPA requirements, you may still have enough time to strengthen your GPA.
- Find out about state, regional and national psychology conferences that you may wish to attend. Attendance is an excellent way to learn about what research is being done in the field of psychology, and to network with professors and graduate students from colleges or universities that you may wish to apply.

Senior Year

Summer prior (or sooner)

- Design a "Program Application Plan." Make note of specific requirements of programs to which you wish to apply: type of programs offered, minimum GPA/GRE scores, application fees, and deadlines for applications.
- Review psychology department web pages of potential graduate programs to which you wish to apply. Request more information specific to the program. Attend open house events, graduate school fairs, and schedule visits, if possible.
- Schedule the GRE for no later than October, if your plan is to start graduate school the year after you graduate with your bachelor's degree.

1st semester

September

- Identify potential advisors that you would be interested in working with in each program that you are planning to apply. Read over each professor's Curriculum Vitae (C.V.) with whom

you would like to work and obtain recent publications to educate yourself on whether or not the faculty member would be a good fit with your interests.

- Get copies of your undergraduate transcript(s).
- Determine which professors you would like to ask to write you letters of recommendation.
- Prepare your resume/CV with experience that you already have acquired.
- Begin writing your personal statement. This will take many revisions, so start early and ask others for feedback prior to each revision!

October

- Take the GRE!!! Request all scores be sent directly from ETS to the schools to which you are applying
- Begin filling out applications.
- Complete financial aid forms.
- Obtain letters of recommendation packet checklist and complete required materials for each professor from whom you wish to request a letter . Keep in mind that it usually takes at least 3 weeks for a professor to write a letter of recommendation from the time that you provide them with your letter of recommendation packet. Be aware of application deadlines! Few professors will put their own priorities on hold to write you a last minute letter request. Providing them with ample time to write one is only a benefit to you.
- Contact professors with whom you have a great rapport, in person, to request a strong letter of recommendation from each. Graduate programs generally ask for 3 letters, so you will want to ask at least 3 different professors. (If you are applying to multiple programs with different areas of concentration – e.g., cognitive vs developmental – it is acceptable to ask different faculty members to write letters that are in line with a specific psychology program.)

November

- **Immediately (preferably 1st week) provide professors who have agreed to write you letters of recommendation with a completed packet.** Be sure to provide due dates for each letter of recommendation, and most importantly, WAIVE your right to see the letter that each writes. If you choose not to waive your right, the professor may not feel comfortable writing a letter on your behalf. In addition, graduate committees generally do not apply as much weight to letters written on your behalf that you have readFully complete applications.
- Finalize financial aid forms.
- Prepare the final draft of your personal statement and C.V.
- Request official undergraduate transcripts be sent to each school to which you are applying.
- **BE AWARE OF APPLICATION DEADLINES & SUBMIT ON TIME!!!**

REQUESTING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

FOR UNDERGRADUATE/GRADUATE STUDENTS

We at FAMU are pleased that you plan to pursue jobs, scholarships, and/or graduate school admission; most faculty members are delighted to assist in student development. However, recommendation letter request may not be granted if they are not provided in a timely fashion (most faculty will not provide a response to requests made during the last week of classes for the fall, spring, or summer terms.) Please see instructions below.

Some of the information most faculty members will request from you is relevant for those seeking acceptance to graduate school only (e.g., graduate GPA, GRE score). Please submit the information below in one packet and not piecemeal (e.g., some electronic and others hard copy). Keeping other students' information separate from yours and having your information easily accessible will aid in the faculty member efficiently providing a quality letter when they sit down to compose letters of recommendation.

Submit this sheet with responses for 1-12 inserted and highlighted in yellow. For example, for question number 5 (honors you have received) cut and paste the answer into this document rather than referring me to your CV. Then highlight the answer in yellow.

For letters of recommendation, please submit the following in a big brown envelop with your name on the outside or electronically via email to professor email:

firstname.lastname@famuedu

1. A resume with relevant experience and coursework. I want you to include your resume but I also want you to cut and paste relevant work experience and course work from your resume (psychology courses and the grade) placing them here and highlighted in yellow. [Place here].
2. Relevant volunteer work (things that would be related to your chosen field or that provided an opportunity for you to demonstrate skills needed for your chosen field, i.e., research, volunteering, shadowing, or internship(s)).
3. Names of courses you have taken under me and your grade/s. [i.e., Jane Doe; Spring 2016; Abnormal Psychology; B+].
4. Other relationship to me and time frame (e.g., you were/are my graduate assistant; you presented with me at a conference or workshop; you are on my research team, etc.)
5. Honors you have received:
6. Organizations of which you are a part: description of leadership role in these organizations if relevant
7. Research/research presentations you've done: Present Student Research at Imhotep Spring 2017 Research Conference; Topic: Evaluating Student Dedication to Academic Success
8. Undergrad. GPA and current grad. GPA if you are in a graduate program : 3.0

9. If you are a graduate student, term you interned under me, name and description of placement

10. GRE scores (wait for return of your GRE scores if you are applying to graduate school.) Provide current scores you receive but also provide your scores converted to the old scoring system (the old scores make more sense to me). You can go on line and google new GRE scores to old GRE scores or something similar to get the conversion.

11. Career goals (What kind of degree do you want and ultimately what do you want to do with it?)

12. **A single sheet that contains the following in the format below (list in order of deadline):**

Names of school	degree program	address	full name of person to whom letter is to be addressed (if this is known)	deadline for letter

Provide information in this format so that professors may see the information at a glance. This will allow faculty members to quickly respond to your request. Thus, make sure the information is not buried within documents. To summarize, you are going to use this document and cut and paste the responses to numbers 1 through 12 above, highlighting each response. Then email this document to the professor(s) you are requesting letters from.

Another Approach

Sample Request (Letter Form)

Dr. Doe,

A few years ago, I had you as a professor for Developmental Psychology and Psychology of African Americans at FAMU. I graduated in May of last year, and am currently applying to multiple Master of Social Work programs. My goal is to enter a program with a concentration in mental health so that upon graduation, I can become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Ultimately, I plan to receive my PhD in Psychology to become a child psychologist.

Receiving letters of recommendation from you would benefit me tremendously, specifically because you can attest to my academic competence and can vouch for me as a student prepared to take on graduate level work. Both of your classes challenged me to complete additional reading and research, beyond the typical, so that I could have a deeper understanding of the subject matter. I loved writing papers for your class because they allowed me to complete more thorough analyses on subjects that meant a lot to me.

If you are interested in writing letters for me, please read the information below about the programs to which you'd be writing as well as some things I've accomplished in the field of social work that you might wish to include.

Programs:

1. University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration- Clinical concentration. UChicago offers an AM degree which is equivalent to an MSW. There is an emphasis here on analytical and critical thinking skills. *The deadline to submit letters is December 1st.*
2. Columbia School of Social Work- Advanced Clinical Social Work Practice/Health, Mental Health, and Disabilities. This program puts an emphasis on leadership and analysis. *The deadline to submit letters is December 1st.*
3. UCLA- The Luskin School of Public Affairs seeks to educate students with leadership potential and focuses on research and social policy. *The deadline to submit letters is December 15th.*

All letters will be submitted online.

A little about ME - Accomplishments:

1. As an undergraduate, I completed research with an FAMU faculty member, Jane DOE, and a few graduate students. We studied behavioral issues in children in the public school system (included surrounding counties).
 1. I input demographic and diagnostic data into SPSS, a computer program, for organization and analysis of data.
 2. I researched various psychology-related topics using the FAMU library databases and constructed summaries of this information to present them to the other students (undergrad and grad) working on the research team.
2. As an undergrad I competed on the FAMU Forensics (speech & debate) team.
 1. I researched and analyzed topics pertaining to technology, history, social issues, etc and constructed speeches and arguments to present to diverse audiences
 2. I traveled nationally to compete against other college students in speech activities
 3. Each year, I qualified multiple events to two national tournaments!
3. Last year (From July 20XX to October 20XX) I was a Guardian ad Litem - This means that I was a volunteer case manager for a child who had been abused, abandoned, or neglected by his family. The child was removed from the home and given a GAL to help discern the best case scenario for the child (i.e. reunification with the family, adoption, foster care, etc)
 1. I visited the child and conducted visitation reports at least once a month
 2. I testified in court to advocate for my child's needs
 3. I submitted written testimony to the court to express my concerns with the child's current placement
4. I currently volunteer as a Hotline Crisis Counselor for 211 Big Bend
 1. I handle calls from distressed callers in need of short-term counseling. I tackle issues from sexual trauma, domestic violence, suicide, homicide, child abuse, psychosis, etc. This involves assessing the safety of the caller, completing lethality assessments, and reflecting the feelings of the caller.
 2. I provide callers with relevant referrals to community resources (i.e. rent assistance, utilities assistance, food/clothing banks, counselors and therapists, etc.
5. My newest job is with the Department of Children and Families! I work as an Abuse Counselor on the Florida Abuse Hotline.

1. I take calls and create reports that highlight all pertinent information related to the alleged maltreatment. I screen calls related to abuse, abandonment, and neglect in children as well as abuse, neglect, and exploitation in adults.
2. I assess information presented to me by reporters/callers and determine the urgency of the report (immediate-4 hour response time or 24 hour response time).
3. I connect callers to community resources that might benefit them (if they are not calling to report abuse).

If you have any additional questions, please let me know. I would love to speak with you in more detail about my plans for graduate school and the impact your classes had on my career goals! You may reach me via phone or email.

Thank you for your time,

Your Name

MASTERS DEGREE PROGRAM IN COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

The graduate programs in community psychology provide students with academic, research and multicultural skills designed to prepare them for professional employment or doctoral level training. Within this context, the program incorporates an emphasis on Black psychology and mental health of populations of African descent and persons of color. Content courses and experiential exposures are provided to implement this multicultural orientation.

Students enrolled in the Community Psychology Track are required to complete a minimum of 46 semester hours, including 34 hours of course work, an internship (one semester) and a research thesis, in order to fulfill graduation requirements.

Community Psychology Curriculum		
Required Courses:		Cr. Hrs.
CLP6166	Psychopathology	03
CLP6445	Individual Personality Testing	04
CYP6936	Seminar in Community Psychology	03
CYP6938	Advanced Seminar in Black Psychology	03
PPE6055	Seminar in Theories of Personality	03
PSY6064	Proseminar in Advanced General Psychology	03
PSY6206	Psychological Statistics & Measurement	03
PSY6216	Research Methods	03
SPS6191	Psycho-educational Assessment I	03
SPS6203	Intervention Techniques	03
Internship and Thesis		
CYP6948	Internship in Community Psychology	06-12
PSY6971	Thesis	06-12
Electives		
DEP6056	Developmental Psychology	03
EAB6766	Advanced Behavior Modification	03

The community psychology graduate program serves both traditional and non-traditional students. Although students are on the average between 22-25 years of age at entry, nontraditional students are welcome and are relatively easily accommodated with some classes being offered in the evenings. *FAMU has a child care facility on campus that can provide support to students with young and school-age children.*

Between 8-15 students are typically admitted into the community psychology program each year. In general, students are expected to fulfill the following admission criteria:

- Major or minor in psychology
- GPA of 3.0 (on a 4.00 scale) or GRE of 1000
- 3 letters of recommendation

At least 10% of each class includes students who do not meet these criteria. These individuals are given support to assist them in completing the program.

Obtaining the Masters of Science degree in community psychology involves completion of all required courses and maintenance of a “B” average. Students must also complete a thesis and an approved community psychology internship. The program is structured so that students may complete it in two years.

COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY MODEL PROGRAM SCHEDULE		
First Semester		
CYP6936	Seminar in Community Psych.	03
PSY6206	Psychological Statistics & Measurement	03
PPE6055	Seminar in Theories of Personality	03
PSY6064	Proseminar in Advanced General Psychology	03
Second Semester		
PSY6216	Research Methods	03
CYP6938	Advanced Seminar in Black Psychology	03
SPS6191	Psychoeducational Assessment I	04
CLP6166	Psychopathology	03
Third Semester		
SPS6206	Intervention Techniques	03
CLP6445	Individual Personality Testing	04
PSY6971	Thesis	06-12
Fourth Semester		
CYP6948	Internship in Community Psychology	(06-12)
PSY6971	Thesis	06-12

Professional Organizations:

The Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi)

The Association of Black Psychologists sees its mission and destiny as the liberation of the African Mind, empowerment of the African Character, and enlivenment and illumination of the African Spirit.

Purpose of the Association

The Association is organized to operate exclusively for charitable and educational purposes, including but not limited to:

- promoting and advancing the profession of African Psychology
- influencing and affecting social change; and
- developing programs whereby psychologists of African descent (hereafter known as Black Psychologists) can assist in solving problems of Black communities and other ethnic groups.

To accomplish these purposes, the Board of Directors (hereafter known as "the board") shall exercise the following specific functions:

- establish a central organization of Black Psychologists;
- develop funding sources for working capital, staff support, and educational programs;
- seek funding for projects involving Black Psychologists, such projects to include, but not be limited to: Scholarly Journals, Training Programs, Recruitment of Students and Faculty and community Mental Health Care Programs; and
- work with such organizations of behavioral scientists as are able to implement the purposes of The Association.

<http://www.abpsi.org/>

The Student Circle of ABPsi

The Student Circle boasts a membership of several hundred students, located on college campuses nationwide. Members of the Student Circle have access to scholarship opportunities, leadership development, professional networks, student support, scholarly writing opportunities, *The Psych Discourse News Journal*, *The Journal of Black Psychology*, and much more!

Student Circle members are undergraduate and graduate students in psychology or a related discipline, and do not pay additional dues or fees (in addition to general membership dues). They enjoy all of the same benefits as professional members, with exception of inclusion on the Psychologist Referral Listing on the website. Student Circle members also have access to specialized programming at the ABPsi Annual Convention and other events such as the Student Circle Western Regional Conference.

http://www.abpsi.org/student_circle.html

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