

Foreword



By Eric L. Walters, PhD

The decision to attend graduate school should be a no-brainer. Why? Graduate school enriches both the mind and the pocketbook. Many studies have shown that individuals who have attended graduate school are, on average, happier and wealthier because of the experience. *How To Get Into the Top Graduate Schools* provides a plethora of information on the process of applying to and attending graduate school. If you are considering postgraduate academics, you owe it to yourself to fully understand the commitment you are making to the next two to seven years of your life. David Wilkening's pointers and insider information open a door to a world of opportunity.

When I think back to my decision to enter graduate school, I remember the frustration I experienced without having any resources to consult on how to go about applying to schools. Even with the advent of the Internet and the myriad increase in publishing means, there remains a paucity of sources for

instruction on finding, applying to, and entering graduate schools. Compounding the problem is the misconception by many that methods used when applying to undergraduate institutions can be used for postgraduate programs. Applicants who assume the undergraduate method will work when applying to graduate schools are doomed before they even begin. The information in this book comes 17 years too late for me but presents itself as a gift to those currently mulling over the decision of whether to attend graduate school in the future.

Getting into graduate school requires a tremendous amount of preparation and organization. But, being accepted to an Ivy League or top graduate school requires even more effort. The good news is that most applicants are rather naïve and, therefore, it is relatively easy to stand out among the pool of applicants if you have done your homework. Having served on several graduate selection committees, I know from experience that there are certain tricks to getting the attention of a selection committee. This book identifies all facets of the application procedure and gives the reader unique information on what, and what not, to include when preparing a winning application.

How To Get Into the Top Graduate Schools includes varied topics ranging from how to fill out the application forms themselves to knowing yourself to using the proper etiquette in requesting letters of recommendation. Real-world examples and quotes from authorities in their respective fields provide the foundation for successful application strategies. Wilkening even provides a section on what to do if you fail at getting accepted the first time around. His advice on creating a schedule is particularly novel and allows the reader to fully appreciate the scope and timing of the application process. The sooner one starts thinking about the application procedure, the better equipped they will be when the time comes to finalize the submission. The beauty of this book is that it can be used at any stage of the application process.

As someone who has been a member of the academic community at both an Ivy League and a top 10 school, I know that implementing the advice given in *How To Get Into the Top Graduate Schools* will certainly increase your chances over those who are ill-prepared. In the end, there are no guarantees that you will be accepted but you certainly owe it to yourself to arm yourself with the best possible tools for success. If you are serious about graduate school and ready to take the academic plunge then this book should be on your desk.

Graduate life is in itself something you will always treasure. You may have thought that your undergraduate experience was tough but “you ain’t seen nothin’ yet”. It will definitely feel overwhelming at times, challenging you every day. But, in the end, you will be a richer person, having made lifelong friendships among your academic peers, and having had the opportunity to pursue your scholarly passions. Put on your seat belt, turn the page, and get ready for one of life’s greatest rides.

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Eric received both his BS and MS degrees from the University of Victoria (British Columbia, Canada), where he served on several graduate school selection committees. He obtained his PhD from Florida State University (Tallahassee, FL) and, upon graduating, he accepted a position as a research associate at Dartmouth College (Hanover, NH). Currently, he is employed as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of California Berkeley and has spent the past 14 years helping naïve undergraduates understand how to beat the odds and get accepted to graduate schools.