Understanding the Master’s Admission Landscape

Robert M. Augustine, Council of Graduate Schools
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Master’s Admissions
Transparency, Guidance, and Training

1. What is **success** in a master’s program?
2. What **attributes** predict success?
3. What **evidence** evaluates the attributes?
   - What are the “**missing pieces**”?
   - What are the implications for **admission practices and future research**?
Key Finding #1: Potential for completing the degree is the most important milestone that master’s programs look for in their applicants during master’s admission.

Key Finding #2: Critical thinking and analytical thinking are the most important attributes and qualities of applicants that master’s programs associate with applicants’ potential to meet key milestones for master’s education.

Key Finding #3: Letters of recommendations and personal statements are used to weigh a wide range of cognitive and non-cognitive attributes in application processes.

Key Finding #4: There are predictive limitations between admission criteria and student success, especially linkages between non-cognitive attributes and student success are lacking.

Key Finding #5: Yet, few graduate schools offer guidelines/rubrics for reviewing LoR or PS, and 30% master’s programs have no formal guideline.

Transparency

• At the Time of Admission Identify:
  • The Program’s Definition
  • The attributes Associated with that Definition

• Promising Practices
  • Web Pages
  • Applicant Profiles
  • Standardization & Rubrics
  • Data for Admission Committees
Guidance

• Biasing Effects: Knowing the Applicant’s
  • Program
  • Institution
  • Author of Letters
  • Scores/GPAs Prior to Other Evidence

• Promising Practices
  • Interviews
  • Panels
  • Advisory Boards
  • Order of Review
Training for All Participants

- Training
  - Key Recommendation Holistic Review (Kent & McCarthy, 2016)
- Promising Practices
  - Leverage Faculty Leaders
  - Leverage Disciplinary Societies
Admissions Reimagined

- Artificial Intelligent & Big Data
- Cohort Admission = “Posse Initiative”
  - Admit Cohort vs. Admit Individuals
- Evidence Centered Design
  - Continuous Review & Adjustment
- Future Research
  - Predictive Potential of Non-Cognitive Attributes
  - Effectiveness of Standardization
  - Admissions Aligned with Models
James E. Marshall
Dean of Research and Graduate Studies
California State University Fresno
Origin: 1911 as a Normal School, now one of 23 CSU campuses (largest university in US)
Carnegie Classification: Doctoral, moderate research activity (R3) + Community Engagement
Students: 25,168 with 2,953 post-bacc (12% of total); 67% 1st gen; 80% non-white
Faculty: 699 Tenure/Tenure Track
Degrees: 66 Bachelor’s, 44 Master’s, and 3 Doctoral
Rankings: nationally ranked for Social Mobility and Graduation Rate Performance
Non-Cognitive Admissions Attributes Organized by the Big Five Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conscientiousness</th>
<th>Agreeableness</th>
<th>Emotional Stability</th>
<th>Openness</th>
<th>Extraversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grit</td>
<td>Collegiality</td>
<td>Coping with Stress</td>
<td>Curiosity</td>
<td>Cheerfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Generosity</td>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>Global Awareness</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Growth Mindset</td>
<td>Friendliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Self-Consciousness</td>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuality</td>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Liveliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>Self-Regulation</td>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>Sociability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Dear Professor Leeschetz:

This is to recommend Mr. John F. Nash, Jr. who has applied for entrance to the graduate college at Princeton.

Mr. Nash is nineteen years old and is graduating from Carnegie Tech in June. He is a mathematical genius.

Yours sincerely,

Richard J. Duffin
Personal Statements

APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL — and Writing Those Pesky Personal Statements

Presented by: Drs. Emily Pentzer and Ina Martin with a group panel

Friday, February 16, 2018
12:45 - 2:00pm
Sears 480
Admissions Web sites: Do they indicate what the applicant should submit, or how to demonstrate applicant qualities?

- Videos specifying competencies of successful applicants
- Applicant Profiles highlighting successful applicants and graduates (include degree completion rates and post-graduation job placements)
- Rubrics for standardization of letters and personal statements
Countering Admission Bias
Practices for programs large and small:

• Interviews - in conjunction with letters and personal statements, assess listening and oral communication.

• Panels – teams develop consensus around attributes presented in letters and personal statement then distribute applications among the panelist

• Advisory Boards – pre-screen applicants using rubrics prior to review by faculty

• Order of Review – review letters and personal statements before other forms of evidence.
Sheryl Tucker
Vice Provost & Dean of the Graduate College
Oklahoma State University
Oklahoma State University

University
- Public, land-grant
- High-research activity
- Community engaged
- 25,000 students

Graduate College
- 4,000 graduate students
- 1,200 graduate faculty
- 3 campuses
- 45 doctoral, 75 master’s, 20 certificate programs
- 230 doctoral, 1,200 master’s, 100 certificate degrees earned/year
Best Practice Initiatives

– Collaboration w/Graduate Council

Timely guidance documents beyond policy

• Rights and responsibilities
• Graduate education and graduate program organizational structures and functions
• Advisory committees and defenses
• Criminal background checks – GRA/GTA positions
• Academic integrity in theses and dissertations
Best Practices Initiatives
– Graduate College projects

Graduate Program Handbooks
• Discuss with various constituent groups
• Provide service to programs
  • Handbook reviews
  • Posting to internal community
• Provide incentive to programs
  • Preference for all college award programs
Admissions Practices

– current status

“Fit” with Program

Accredited programs

• Transparency in admission criteria
  • “What” (e.g., aptitude for graduate-level studies)
  • “Evidence”

• Test scores and GPA
• Letters tied to specific desired attributes
• Program outcome data

• On-site visits
  • Interviews and panels

• Cohort admissions
Admission Practices
— best practices implementation plan

Post CGS publication release

• Tie to new application system launch
• Share CGS resources to constituent groups
• Have discussions
  • Sharing by faculty via panels
  • Use our lunch ‘n learn format
• Incentivize programs to adopt
• Launch “Best Practices” graduate programs
Another Best Practice
– how many institutions already use?

• Use of plagiarism detection software for application essays