Master’s Admissions: Transparency, Guidance, and Training

Tuesday, March 26, 2019

Robert Augustine
Senior Vice President, Council of Graduate Schools

James E. Marshall
Dean of Research and Graduate Studies
California State University at Fresno

M. Scott Herness
Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
Montclair State University
Plan for today

• **Three speakers** will speak for approximately **45 minutes** total, followed by Q & A

  • **Robert Augustine** of the Council of Graduate Schools will speak for approximately 15 minutes about the CGS report, *Master’s Admissions: Transparency, Guidance, and Training*.

  • **James E. Marshall** and **M. Scott Herness** will speak for approximately 30 minutes on how the report’s findings have shaped their thinking about master’s admissions on their campuses.
Technical Support

- Webinar **recording and slides** will be **emailed** to participants and **posted** on the CGS website.
- Please **submit questions** through the GoToWebinar **control panel**.
Audio Troubleshooting

• Having trouble hearing us? Try switching to a different audio connection. You can change from Telephone to Mic & Speakers or vice versa without leaving the session.

• If you experience trouble with a telephone connection, click “Problem dialing in?” for an alternate phone number to dial.
Master’s Admissions: Transparency, Guidance, and Training

Robert M. Augustine, Council of Graduate Schools
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.

![Graph showing the importance of applicants' potentials to meet key milestones & outcomes of master's education in admission processes by program focus.](https://example.com/graph.png)

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.

![Figure. Importance of Applicants’ Attributes & Qualities in Determining Their Potentials in Completing Degree Requirements by Program Focus. Source: Okahana, H., Augustine, R.M., & Zhou, E. (forthcoming). Master’s Admission Attributes Connecting Admission Success with Student Success. Washington, DC: Council of Graduate Schools.](image)
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 Intelligence & 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/Professional University (D/PU) + 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
Graduate Admissions Tradition

Test Scores

GPA

GRE books stack

### 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 [Name],

I am writing to recommend [Student's Name], who has been a student in my Advanced Mathematics course at Princeton University. [Student's Name] has consistently demonstrated exceptional ability and passion for mathematics, with a particular interest in [specific area of interest].

In [course name], [Student's Name] not only achieved high grades but also showed a deep understanding of complex mathematical concepts. He/She is a dedicated learner and is always willing to go the extra mile to grasp difficult topics. [Student's Name] has also shown leadership qualities, actively participating in group projects and helping his/her peers.

[Student's Name] is graduating this [current year] and I am confident that he/she will make a significant contribution to the field of mathematics. He/She is a promising candidate for your Master's Program and I strongly recommend [Student's Name] for admission.

Please feel free to contact me if you require further information.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
Personal Statements

How to Write the Perfect Personal Statement

Write powerful essays for law, business, medical, or graduate school application

Learn the essentials of style, concept, format, and theme, with 30 successful sample essays
Find out what should (and shouldn't) make it into your final draft
Review information on the GRE Personal Potential Index (PPI), an alternative to traditional letters of recommendation

Exclusive Tips from Admissions Officers at the Nation's Top Law, Business, Medical, and Graduate Schools

How to Write a Winning Personal Statement for Graduate and Professional School

Over 50,000 copies sold
Transparency
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.
M. Scott Herness
Vice Provost for Research and Dean of the Graduate School
Montclair State University
Montclair State University

- Founded 1908; Normal School
- 21,000 Students
- 4,100 Graduate Students
- >100 Masters, 7 PhD, 1 Prof Doct
- 2016 NJ Public Research Inst.
- 2015 Hispanic Serving Institution
- 2015 Carnegie R3 doctoral
- 2018 Carnegie R2 doctoral
Admission: Landscape

- Partnership: Centralized and De-centralized Admission Practices
- Focused Admission Unit within Graduate School
  - Compile applications
  - Send for Review
  - Work in close collaboration with GPCs
  - First round filtering
- Program
  - Quick review time (esp. in Summer)
- Coordinated Communication Plan
Admission: Practices

- Advise undergraduate students on the benefits of a Master’s career
  - Videos; Promotional materials
  - Programmatic Recruitment Events
  - Open Houses (incentive: waive $60 app fee)

- Working with Employers
  - MA Computational Linguistics; MA Social Research and Analysis
  - External Advisory Boards
  - Two PSM programs
Admission: Practices

- Core Competencies
  - Well developed Assessment Plans
  - Regular reporting

- Cohort Admission
  - 18 month programs

- Career Exploration
  - New Marketing plans on selected Master’s programs
Admission: Challenges

- The Numbers: ###
  - Programs with hard cut-offs
    - Large programs with large # applications
    - Fixed GRE / GPA criteria
    - Loss of good Candidates (non-cog; potential, grit, lack of diversity)

- Implicit Bias
  - Non-cognitive factors
  - LOR

- Professional Development

- Retention Practices
Questions?

Webinar **recording and slides** will be **emailed** to participants and **posted** on the CGS website.

Type them into the Questions box on the GoToWebinar control panel.
Thank You for Participating!

• CGS 2019 Summer Workshop & New Deans Institute
  • July 13-17 | Westin San Diego Gaslamp Quarter

• Upcoming CGS Webinars:
  • Preparing Future Faculty to Assess Student Learning
  • Date TBD | 2:00 - 3:00pm EDT

This conference seeks to engage graduate deans and other senior university leaders about strategies, resources and tools for promoting research integrity for current and future scholars.