Graduate Admissions Overview for Associate & Assistant Deans

CGS New Deans Institute
July 2009

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Graduate admissions

From applicant’s perspective

Graduate School’s goal
Admissions overview

- Establish/review admission policy & process
- Collect & evaluate applications
- Select applicants
- Notify applicants about decisions
- Maintain admissions data
- (Re)Assess admission process
Admissions structure

Organizational structure*
- Centralized: ~51% of institutions
- Collaborative: 19%
- Decentralized: 30%

Who makes admission decision?
- 71% Program level
- 12% Administrative staff
- 7% Academic dean
- 10% Other

* 2003 NAGAP Survey
Admissions process

- On-line application
  - Easier for applicants
  - Programs get applications sooner
  - Easier for establishing electronic communication with applicant
  - Supplemental materials can be attached
- Paper application obtained online
- Requires credential matching
Admission process

- Application fee
  - Amount
    - Peers
    - State or system limits
  - Online payment or process manually
  - Waiver policy (e.g., programs such as McNair)
Admission process: documents

- Application
  - Application form
  - Official degree-bearing transcripts of all post-secondary institutions
  - Standardized test scores (e.g., GRE)
  - Proof of English proficiency (e.g., TOEFL)
  - Letters of recommendation
  - Personal essay and/or resume
  - Other (e.g., writing samples, portfolio)

- Minimum standards
Admission process

- Credentials – requires matching to file
  - Hardcopy
  - Applicant scans (and sends hardcopy later)
  - Institution scans (document imaging)
  - Global transcript delivery network (e.g., eSCRIP-SAFE)
  - Electronic delivery of letters of recommendations (e.g., interfolio.com)

- Workflow system to move credentials to evaluators
Admission process: internationals

- **English language proficiency**
  - Tests
    - TOEFL (old version, computerized, new version)
    - IELTS
  - Minimum scores
    - Institution (e.g., generally 550 TOEFL-old version)
    - Graduate program (e.g., \( \geq 600 \))
    - Teaching assistant (e.g., \( \geq 625 \))
Admission process: internationals

- Credentials review
- Your process for review of 3-year baccalaureate degrees (e.g., European Union)?
  - Equivalent to USA 4-year degree?
  - Exceptions on case-by-case basis?
  - Conditional admission requirements?
  - Evaluation done centrally or by program?
- Bologna Process in EU
  - Many graduate programs abroad taught in English
  - Increasing support by governments for graduate students (e.g., Germany’s DAAD)
Admission process: internationals

- Reputation of USA graduate programs still strong around world
- SEVIS (USA Student & Exchange Visitor Information System) & other visa issues less constraining now
- But international applicants need enough notice to complete paperwork
- They must show sufficient funds (e.g., combination of stipend, tuition scholarship, personal funds, etc., summing to about $27,000 for 1st year)
Admission process: Affirmative action

- Does it serve compelling reason?
  - To remedy present effects of institution’s own prior discrimination
  - Achieve educational benefits that arise from racial & ethnic diversity in a program

- Is admissions specifically designed to serve one of these purposes?

- Not permissible to:
  - Set quotas or numerical goals
  - Use race or ethnicity as sole criterion
  - Have different admission requirements
  - Review applications differently

- Admit based on entire application
Admission process

◆ Issues of fraud

- State on application that fraudulent applications will be denied, or student terminated if already admitted
- Applies to all aspects of application (application, transcripts, recommendations, test scores, writing samples, personal essay, criminal background check, etc.)
- State that electronic submission of materials are randomly checked to ensure compliance
- International credentials can be checked by commercial service - see list from American Association of College Registrars & Admissions Officers @ www.AACRAO.org
Admission process: Legal

- Collect only information you want & need
- Do not discriminate based on race, sex, age, disability or citizenship
- Publish admission standards and adhere to them
- Base admission decisions on total application
- Document admission decision
  - Deny
  - Admit
    - Regular
    - Provisional (e.g., waiting for a transcript)
    - Conditional (e.g., must make up course deficiency by set date)
Admission process

- **FERPA** (Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act 1974)
  - Right of ADMITTED STUDENT to admission records, except for confidential recommendations which have a waiver to access signed by student
  - Does NOT apply to unsuccessful applicants or applicants who do not enroll
  - Also means that faculty and staff cannot discuss student record with student’s family
Admission process: Legal

- Screening for prior behavioral issues
  - Can request information about felony convictions and college suspension and expulsion
  - Who will review? Work with university counsel
  - How will data be used? Consideration of nature of activity, time elapsed, rehabilitation efforts
  - Who pays cost of this process?
Admission process

- Rolling versus fixed-date admission
- CGS resolution regarding admission offers with funding*
  - Admittee not obligated to respond prior to April 15
  - Earlier deadlines violate resolution agreed to by CGS member institutions
  - So inform admittee of admission and financial package before April 15

Admission process

- Communication to applicant
  - Application status
  - FAQs
    - Web site
    - Self-service (e.g., Intelliresponse)
  - Admission decision
  - Enrollment encouragement
  - Enrollment deposit

- Customer service – to applicant & graduate program
Admission process

- Standardize policy and procedures
  - Appeal
  - Deferral
  - Re-admission
  - Transfer
    - From another institution
    - Within institution
  - Application to more than one program
  - Special programs (e.g., accelerated degree)
Admission records

- Federal requirements for data on race and ethnicity
- CGS survey on international applicants
- NRC survey on demographic data for enrollees
- Institutional (and program) enrollment management data on applicants to admittees to enrollees to degrees conferred
Admission guidelines

- Develop standard policies & processes in line with “best practices” as outlined in CGS booklets
- Train staff for consistency in practice and accuracy in data management
- Admission decision works best with multiple evaluators and two-tiered system (e.g., program and graduate school)
- If you make exceptions, document why, be prepared to defend that, and apply to all applicants in that category
Useful references

- CGS’ *An Essential Guide to Graduate Admissions: A Policy Statement* [www.cgsnet.org/]


- National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals [www.nagap.org]