

Graduate School Guide

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Thinking About Graduate or Professional School?

IS GRADUATE SCHOOL THE RIGHT CHOICE?

Graduate school means an extensive commitment in terms of time, money, and hard work. Some programs can take anywhere from two to seven years or more to complete. Remember, graduate school in itself is not a plan; it is a step to get you where you want to ultimately go. Therefore, you must decide how graduate school fits into your plans and examine where you want to be in the long run, both professionally and personally.

The Princeton Review: Graduate School Advice
<http://www.princetonreview.com/grad/research/articleIndex.asp>

WHERE TO BEGIN

Begin your consideration of graduate school by talking to people. Speaking with parents, alumni/ae, friends, and siblings is a valid and valuable source of information; the more people you speak with, the better! Conduct informational interviews with current graduate students at different stages of their graduate education. Talk to both graduate and doctoral candidates who have been working on their degree for some time, and also those who have been working on their degree for only a semester.

Make sure that you speak with faculty members. Faculty often keep up with current industry trends in their specific fields, and are a wonderful resource with their expertise and knowledge of that field. Choose individuals who have different perspectives and backgrounds: those who have just started their careers, those who have just received tenure, and those who have been working for years.

Consider asking the following:

- ❖ What were your career options once you completed this degree?
- ❖ What made you decide to become an educator?
- ❖ Do you know anyone who obtained this degree and pursued other job areas of the field?
- ❖ Can you recommend other faculty members at Hobart and William Smith or other institutions who might be willing to speak with me?

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Deciding to attend graduate school should not be a hasty decision based on limited information. Making an informed decision about pursuing a graduate degree requires in-depth self-assessment and long-term goal setting. Before applying for further study, become aware of the working conditions, employment prospects, and physical and mental requirements of continuing your education. Also consider the more immediate demands of graduate school life such as research, coursework, papers, and teaching.

The following questions will help you assess how your needs, interests, values, skills, and goals compare with the demands of graduate education:

- ❖ What are my long-range and short-range career goals?
- ❖ Is graduate study necessary for me to achieve these goals?
- ❖ Do I have the interest and abilities to be successful in a graduate program?
- ❖ What type of value, if any, do I place on attaining a graduate degree?
- ❖ Am I mentally and physically prepared to undertake such a long-term academic commitment?
- ❖ At the present time, do I have other needs that conflict with pursuing a graduate degree?
- ❖ Can I realistically invest the time and money required to pursue another academic degree?

Program Selection

DEGREES

Some graduate degrees are academic while others are professional in orientation. *Academic degrees* focus on original research, whereas *professional degrees* stress the practical application of knowledge and skills required for practicing in the profession. For many fields, a Master's degree may be the only professional degree needed for employment. Some examples are the Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.), the Master of Social Work (M.S.W.), the Master of Arts (M.A.), and the Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.). For other careers, the doctorate is necessary for practicing in the field; such degrees are the Doctor of Medicine (M.D.), the Juris Doctor (J.D.), and for teaching college in a specific discipline, the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.).

RESOURCES

Career Services library is an excellent place to begin gathering information on graduate programs. Consider our collection of *Peterson's Guides* as a starting point. *Peterson's* is also available on the web at <http://www.petersons.com>.

Other online resources include:

- ❖ USNews: <http://www.usnews.com>
- ❖ CollegeNet: <http://www.collegenet.com>
- ❖ Graduate School Guide Online: <http://www.schoolguides.com>
- ❖ Graduate School Ranking 2005:
http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/grad/rankings/rankindex_brief.php
- ❖ Graduate School Tips: <http://gradschooltips.com>
- ❖ Graduate School Search Guide: <http://www.gradschools.com>
- ❖ Kaplan Test Prep: <http://www.kaplan.com>
- ❖ GRE Guide: <http://www.gre.org>
- ❖ LSAC (Law School Admission Council): <http://www.lsac.org>

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Remember, a program should meet your individual needs, interests and goals. When reviewing graduate program, you should consider:

- ❖ Prominence and/or accreditation of the program.
- ❖ Flexibility of the curriculum.
- ❖ Departmental courses and offerings.
- ❖ Theoretical or pragmatic approach to the subject matter.
- ❖ Philosophical and professional attitudes of the faculty members and the department.
- ❖ Current research, publications, and professional involvement of the faculty.
- ❖ Specific specialties and interests of the faculty.
- ❖ Application requirements (test scores, essays, interview, etc.) and required background and credentials of students.
- ❖ Availability of career services and academic support services.
- ❖ Financial aid opportunities, cost, and residency requirements.
- ❖ Size, geographic location, type and availability of housing, and community environment.
- ❖ Resources for research information and assistance.

HELPFUL POINTERS

We also recommend that you consult school catalogs and graduate bulletins from each institution. Most graduate school catalogs include a summary statement along with admissions information which outlines a profile of accepted candidates from the previous year. The summary should include average GPA and GRE scores, average age and gender, minority status, and undergraduate institution. If the information is not included in the packet you receive, you may request it from the admissions office. Also, consult professional journals and association publications to find out which professors are conducting research and publishing in your area of interest; you may want to write them for advice on the best programs to consider given your stated interests.

It is also wise to ask for an employment report for the graduate school you are considering. Many schools produce such documents as a matter of routine and will be happy to share them with you. The report will tell you where their graduates have been placed and what salaries they are earning. The information is usually broken down by discipline and sometimes by geographic area.

GRADUATE EXAMS

Most graduate schools require that you take an exam and submit the results with your application. Which test you will need is dependent upon the degree area you plan on pursuing. Those students going on to law school will need to take the LSAT, those headed to medical school will take the MCAT, dental school, the DAT, more business-oriented schooling will require that you take the GMAT, and most other fields require the GRE.

For practice test questions visit <http://www.kaplan.com>

You will find explanations and examples of the types of questions and, in some cases, a practice test. Career Services also has information on Kaplan test preparation courses. It is usually a good idea to register and take these tests early so that you may retake them for a better score if necessary (With the exception of the LSAT, which should only be taken once, if possible.).

The Application Process

Applying to graduate school can become complex, time consuming, and difficult if you are not well organized and prepared. In general, the procedure for applying to graduate school is similar to the procedure that you followed in applying to your undergraduate college. The primary differences are the emphasis on strong recommendations and clearly articulated goals on the part of the applicant.

Application requirements differ substantially among institutions and programs, so read each school's materials conscientiously to make sure you file a complete and timely application. Application deadlines can range from August before senior year (for graduate study in medical school) to July before matriculation in the fall (for schools with rolling admissions). Keep in mind the following requirements when applying:

APPLICATION FORMS

- ❖ Follow instructions carefully and provide accurate information.
- ❖ Tailor your communication to specific aspects of the graduate program.
- ❖ Complete the forms online, or by using a typewriter or pen - in blue or black ink only.
- ❖ Include all requested documents and materials: résumé, fees, autobiography, etc.
- ❖ Check all deadline dates for early admissions, financial aid, and notification of acceptance. These dates are published in university catalogs and should also appear on the application.
- ❖ Always make copies for your records before sending in the application.

REFERENCE LETTERS

- ❖ Usually, two or three reference letters, also called letters of recommendation, are needed from professors and/or employers to complete your application. Schools often specify who should write the letters and what issues should be addressed.
- ❖ The best reference writer is one who has high regard for your work, knows you well, has credibility, and is a good writer.
- ❖ Approach your references in the summer before or early in the fall of your senior year to give them time to write before other academic pressures mount.
- ❖ Give your reference writers the school's recommendation forms with stamped, addressed envelopes (unless you have a recommendation file with Career Services), and enough supporting material to enable them to write a good, detailed letter on your behalf. This material may include a cover sheet reminding them of classes taken with them and projects you have done for them, a transcript, a résumé, a research paper, a copy of your application essay, and/or other documents that will assist them.
- ❖ If you have a recommendation file at Career Services, have your reference writer send your reference letters directly there. You must have a signed "**Registration Agreement**" on file.
- ❖ To then have your reference letters sent out from Career Services, first check to make sure that all your reference letters have been received by calling X3514.
- ❖ Then submit a **written request**, (email or phone requests not accepted), including the following information:
 1. Your complete name, address, phone number and class year
 2. Specify which letters from your file need to be sent
 3. Indicate the complete name(s) and mailing address(es) of where the letters should be sent
 4. Include a fee of \$3.00 per address
 5. Make sure that you submit your written request well in advance of any deadlines

TRANSCRIPTS

- ❖ Official transcripts of your undergraduate work must also be sent to the graduate schools; contact the registrar to have your transcripts sent. Career Services will not accept transcripts to be placed in your recommendation file!
- ❖ Allow the Registrar's Office at least 3-4 working days to process your transcripts for graduate school referral. Your request must be made in writing and signed by the individual requesting the transcript. Official transcripts are required and cost \$5.00 each.
- ❖ Admissions committees will review your transcripts with regard to the rigor and types of courses taken, the course load per semester, and your grades. The reputation of the undergraduate institution will also be taken into consideration.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Perhaps the most important of all your application essays is the Statement of Purpose. A Statement of Purpose should not be confused with a personal or autobiographical essay, nor is it a prose version of your transcript. Most graduate schools will ask you to explain to them why you are seeking acceptance to their program. Your Statement of Purpose should prove to the admissions committee your interest in and dedication to the subject of study. This is an important and time-consuming aspect of the application because it is your opportunity to put a face or personality with impersonal test scores and GPA.

- ❖ This serves as a measure of your ability to write, so be meticulous about spelling, grammar, and writing style.
- ❖ Since a graduate program means extensive work with one or two faculty members, it would be wise to research the faculty in your area of interest. Know who they are, and research and read what they have written. Committee members will see that you have done your homework if you show your interest in studying a specific topic, explain why, and elaborate on your familiarity with the work done by faculty members.
- ❖ Ask your professors, Career Services counselor, and/or references to critique your essay for content. They often will be able to tell you what to stress and what to delete. Your essay will take time to develop, so begin working on it the summer before you apply.
- ❖ Organize your statement to be clear, specific, detailed, and concise. Think of how your background, skills, abilities and goals match the characteristics and opportunities of the graduate program/school.

Your Statement of Purpose is a way to distinguish yourself from other applicants-**Be CREATIVE**. Admissions committees will be evaluating the following: motivation and commitment to the field of study; expectations regarding the program and career opportunities; major areas of interest; research and/or work experience; educational background; immediate and long-term goals; reasons for pursuing graduate education in a certain field at that institution; maturity; and what you would add to the diversity of the entering class.

TIPS ON WRITING A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- Be Organized:** Your statement should be well thought out and structured; develop your major ideas in an orderly fashion, using examples where needed.
- Be Positive:** Sell yourself using positive attributes; explain any weaknesses in your academic record and emphasize your strengths.
- Be Concise:** Say what you have to as efficiently as possible (use words economically, no long sentences) in about one and one-half pages typed in single spaced format.
- Be Clear:** It should say exactly what you want it to say – avoid ambiguity.
- Be Honest:** Do not inflate your achievements and do not underestimate your potential.
- Be Personal:** Remember, it's your "Statement of Purpose," don't philosophize, talk about you.
- Be Creative:** You want your Statement of Purpose to stand out from the applicant pool.

Financing Your Graduate Education

A major concern and obstacle to pursuing an advanced degree is the monetary obligation. If you are willing to pursue a variety of financial aid avenues, you should be able to finance the cost of your graduate education. Be aware that financial aid deadlines are usually earlier than the comprehensive application deadlines. Many programs will not communicate these deadlines unless you ask. Financial aid information can be found in most graduate/professional school catalogs and/or specific departmental brochures.

Some areas to explore:

FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

- ❖ Grants and scholarships are outright awards usually requiring no service to the institution in return. Awarded on a competitive basis, grants vary in terms of amount and length of funding.
- ❖ Explore institutional, private, and governmental fellowship opportunities. Do not limit your application to one type of award, as it may take several combined awards to fund your graduate education.
- ❖ Consult faculty and Career Services resources for information about national fellowship and grants.

With both grants and fellowships, the applications need to be complete and turned in on time. Do your homework, use Career Services resources to find out which grants or fellowships you might be eligible for well in advance so that you are ready to send the application out before the deadline.

LOANS

- ❖ Remember that any undergraduate loan can be deferred while you are a full-time graduate student.
- ❖ Most institutions have loan programs for graduate students including private, state, and federally sponsored opportunities. Visit <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/> or <http://www.finaid.org/loans> for more loan information.
- ❖ Make sure to submit your income tax information as early as possible.

With loans, the application process is lengthy; be sure to get your materials in early to allow for resolution of any discrepancies the government may find between your tax return and the application. The government will require verification forms if your data does not match and it can cause significant delays. To save yourself hassles, make sure you do not knowingly or unknowingly falsify any information on your application: if you are married, be sure your social security number matches your married name; if your parents are divorced, be sure to ask which parent's income taxes you need to turn in with your application. Attention to these matters will save you hassles later!!

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

- ❖ Teaching and/or research assistantships are common opportunities for financing your advanced degree. These awards usually carry full or partial tuition remuneration plus a stipend.
- ❖ Your commitment normally involves a 10 to 20-hour per week workload dealing with teaching, tutoring, proctoring exams, developing lesson plans, and/or performing a variety of research activities.
- ❖ Assistantships typically are available through the specific department to which you are applying; however, many related areas of study might also have opportunities available.
- ❖ Competition for these awards can be intense. Apply early and always submit a résumé with your inquiry. If possible, visit the department and arrange a personal interview.

RESIDENT ASSISTANTSHIPS

- ❖ Graduate programs also may offer financial assistance in the form of resident assignments involving room, board, and stipend by working as managers in undergraduate residence halls.
- ❖ These comprehensive opportunities many times also include tuition remuneration with the assignment.
- ❖ Competitively based, obtaining a resident assistantship will involve utilizing your job search skills. Always include your résumé and a cover letter, requesting an interview for available jobs.
- ❖ Inquire about these opportunities at the institution's residence life office or student affairs office.

COLLEGE WORK-STUDY PROGRAMS

- ❖ Eligible students are provided part-time jobs on campus. These federally funded programs are usually administered by the institution's financial aid office.

ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT

- ❖ Several college communities offer a wide variety of employment opportunities and welcome graduate students to apply. Local businesses and industries may have agreements with the institution for part-time placement groups.
- ❖ Explore temporary employment for local part-time jobs.

Finding employments at graduate schools is a daunting task. These jobs and opportunities will not always be openly advertised or presented to you. You **MUST** take the initiative (and your résumé) and go to the different departments and offices that might have employment opportunities. Talk to people around campus; classmates who are closer to graduation, professors and other office staff as they may know of opportunities!

Timeline

Researching and applying to graduate schools is very time-consuming. In order to facilitate the process, an ideal timeline has been provided to give you a quick overview of necessary steps and an appropriate time frame for completion.

JUNIOR YEAR, FALL & SPRING

- ✓ Get to know your professors and consult their expertise.
- ✓ Talk to advisors about application requirements.
- ✓ Use the Career Services library, and the web links provided in this packet to identify programs.
- ✓ Research areas of interest, institutions and programs.
- ✓ Speak with alumni/alumnae, faculty, parents and friends about their graduate experiences.
- ✓ Narrow your list of schools.
- ✓ Research the graduate school testing websites provided in this booklet.
- ✓ Register and prepare for appropriate graduate admissions test(s).
- ✓ Investigate national fellowships and scholarships.

SUMMER BEFORE SENIOR YEAR

- ✓ Identify reference writers and request letters of recommendation.
- ✓ Open your recommendation file with the Career Services office.
- ✓ Request application materials, school catalogs and financial aid information from the selected schools, if you haven't already done so.
- ✓ Check on application deadlines and rolling admissions policies.
- ✓ For medical, dental, osteopathy, podiatry, or law school, you may need to register for the national application or data assembly service most programs use.
- ✓ Visit institutions of interest if possible.
- ✓ Register for fall graduate admissions tests, if you haven't done so already.
- ✓ Study sample test questions. Enroll in a test prep course if needed.
- ✓ Begin applying for fellowships and scholarships.
- ✓ Begin writing application essays and your Statement of Purpose.

Junior year is a good time to explore your options. Take a look at your interests and how they match with different graduate programs, talk with alumni/alumnae, and professors in your field of interest, and research graduate schools carefully to find the right fit for your needs!

SENIOR YEAR, FALL

- ✓ Take graduate admissions test(s), if you have not already done so.
- ✓ Request that reference writers send letters to Career Services if you have a Recommendations file there. If you don't have one, and would like to set one up, stop in and sign up as soon as possible.
- ✓ Apply for assistantships, fellowships, grants, etc.
- ✓ Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) if needed, and Financial Aid PROFILE, if required.
- ✓ Mail completed applications.
- ✓ Request that transcripts and letters of recommendation be mailed, if you have not already obtained them to include in your packet.
- ✓ Make plans to visit select institutions during winter break.

SENIOR YEAR, SPRING

- ✓ Check with institutions **before** the deadline to ensure that your file is complete.
- ✓ Keep track of acceptances, wait lists, and rejections.
- ✓ Visit institutions that have accepted you that you may not have visited already.
- ✓ Evaluate offers of admission and make your decision.
- ✓ Send a deposit to the institution of your choice.
- ✓ Be sure to notify the schools that you have declined so that they can go to their wait lists.
- ✓ Send thank you letters to people who wrote your recommendation letters, informing them of your success.
- ✓ Upon graduation, forward an updated transcript to the institution you will be attending in the fall.

You may not be able to adhere to this timetable if your application deadlines are early, as is the case with medical schools, or if you decide to attend graduate school later. Keep these application requirements in mind and be sure to meet all deadlines. If deadlines are impossible to meet, call the institution to see if a late application will be considered.

TAKING TIME OFF BEFORE GRADUATE SCHOOL

If you are planning on taking time off before graduate school, you may still benefit by taking several steps before graduation.

- ✓ Ask your reference writers to write your letters and send them to you or Career Services. Generally, professors will be able to write a more effective letter while you are still fresh in their minds than if they are trying to remember you several years after you have graduated. Career Services maintains recommendation files for a minimum of ten years after graduation. You can ask for updated letters from reference writers later on, if necessary.
- ✓ Take required admissions tests. Usually, candidates achieve higher test scores while still in school rather than after being away from the student role for an extended period. Schools will accept test scores up to three years later, sometimes even longer.
- ✓ Gather information. You have the easiest access to information about graduate school while you are still a student. Take advantage of the resources at Career Services and talk to faculty for suggestions about strong programs in your field of interest.

***Taken from Essay Edge**
www.essayedge.com

I must have raised a few eyebrows back in sixth grade when I chose Peter Jennings as my subject for a portrait. A few of my elementary school classmates certainly found it strange that my favorite television program was "20/20." Ever since I was a young child, I have had a passion for current events and world politics. As a college undergraduate, I chose to major in political science. While at school, I also discovered a powerful love of foreign languages and cultures. The desire to incorporate all of my academic interests has convinced me to pursue a graduate degree in international relations.

My undergraduate education included a semester working as an intern at the French Embassy in Washington, D.C. At first, the experience was nerve-racking. Everybody spoke very quickly, and I began to doubt my French skills. I was constantly wondering whether I had heard somebody correctly or said what I had meant to. Worst of all, it seemed that all of the other interns spoke in perfect, fluent French. I remember leaving at the end of my first day, relieved that I had survived and unsure about what I had gotten myself into. Despite a few difficult days at the outset, however, I now consider my internship to be one of my most valuable educational experiences.

When I first started my internship, I was not sure exactly why I had taken the job. Certainly, it would look nice on a resume and make a good reference, but I didn't think that I would ever need to know that much about France. Yet although I did learn a great deal about the role of the diplomatic community and the national interests of France, I learned even more about myself. The experience gave me a solid link between my academic interests and my professional future. I managed to set long-term goals for the internship and succeeded in achieving them.

Within the first week, I knew that I wanted to do more than just answer the telephones and reply to mail -- the usual duties of an intern. Gradually I began to take on more responsibilities, and I eventually became a regular contributor to News From France, the embassy's newsletter. Also, I worked with the director of the press and the communication office on special projects. Through these experiences I learned much about the professionalism and dedication it takes to work in a place where everyone has different views and opinions but all work towards a common goal. At the end of my internship, I had a better understanding of the opportunities available to me and a greater enthusiasm for a career in international relations.

The time that I spent at the French embassy shaped my academic and professional goals. I now believe that a career in international relations will place me in a field that is both challenging and exciting. There are no easy answers to many of the problems that arise between nations, but it will be fulfilling to work towards new solutions. Combined with my interests and experiences, I believe that a graduate degree in international relations will prepare me extremely well to pursue my professional goals. I hope to achieve a better understanding of the problems facing the United States and of potential foreign policy solutions. Studying these issues further will be a significant step in the journey that I began when I first flipped on the news as a child.

***Taken from Essay Edge**

www.essayedge.com

"If I do not know a language, can I still think about the world?"

When I first asked my mother this question in the fourth grade, she did not have an answer for me. Disconcerted that such a seemingly straightforward question did not have an equally straightforward answer, I soon began asking many more questions like it: questions about truth, reality, and even the nature of existence. As I have gotten older, those general inquiries have evolved, becoming for me an academic passion and a lifelong calling to philosophy.

I began to study philosophy in earnest when I was still a teenager. Back then, my questions were more closely tied to concerns generated by my religious upbringing, and I was drawn, in turn, to the study of theology. Nevertheless, during my first year in college, I discovered that underlying these theological problems were more fundamental questions about truth and reality. This discovery led me to the study of philosophy, inaugurating both a troubling and exciting time in my life. Indeed, while I went about painfully dismantling the personal religious framework I had constructed as a teenager, I saw the awesome beauty of philosophy and soon began to pursue a path toward a life in academics.

The results of this shift are evident in my academic record. As a sophomore in Colorado College's honors program, I coupled my theological studies with an initial inquiry into philosophy. Later, I brought this dual focus to my studies at the Graduate Theological Union, where I have combined research in theology with studies in philosophy at UC -- Berkeley. My work has allowed me to explore questions that are strictly theological, those that are strictly philosophical, as well as those that arise when both disciplines converge. Indeed, my M.A. thesis is an example of just such a convergence, as it applies Donald Davidson's philosophy of action to perennial theological questions concerning divine causation.

I would like to bring this unique background to the PhD program in philosophy at UCSD. My goal is to explore a fundamental issue in the philosophy of the social sciences: namely, how do we define a social institution? John Searle has argued that the philosophy of social science needs, first of all, an ontology of social reality, and that any such ontology must begin with the question of how the mind relates to the world. Although I disagree with Searle when he further claims that this relationship ought to be construed solely in terms of intentionality, I agree with his basic strategy. Too often, philosophies of social science fall back on issues of politics, ethics, or epistemology without progressing toward a basic theory of how the minds create social objects. At UCSD, I would hope to investigate possibilities for a fundamental model of social ontology by drawing upon contemporary theories in the philosophy of mind and by gaining a deeper acquaintance with related issues of the late modern period. I have chosen the philosophy program at UCSD because of the faculty's strong interest in the philosophy of science and its innovative work in the study of mind, both of which lie at the center of my research goals.

As I look back, the questions that I began asking in my youth have led me through a diverse intellectual landscape, yet they have also directed me toward a career in philosophy. As a philosopher, I hope not only to become part of the ongoing philosophical conversation, but also to contribute to organized solutions for social change, especially those aimed at reducing global poverty and violence. This aim arises from my conviction that current strategies for solving global problems could benefit from fresh ideas about the underlying structure of social change and conflict, ideas that philosophy and its pursuit are in a unique position to offer.

*Taken from Essay Edge
www.essayedge.com

From the minor courtesies uttered in a supermarket checkout line to the deep emotional complexities of an interfaith marriage, psychology offers a privileged view into people's inner thoughts and drives. The study of intelligence, emotion, and other psychological phenomena has awakened me to the vast importance of psychology in our daily lives. Before my family had to deal with the traumatizing effects of drug addiction, we had been able to brush aside minor inconvenient incidents, discounting them as normal aberrations characteristic of any family's trials and tribulations. This situation, however, was very different.

My sister was addicted to heroin -- a situation my mother, father, and I had to face each day, constantly carrying it at the forefront of our minds. If my sister was going to recognize that she was a bright, beautiful girl with lots of promise, my parents and I would have to understand the issues that contributed to her addiction. I managed to remain upbeat and confident that, through our help, my sister would get better. My parents, however, when confronted with clear evidence of her addiction, continually chose to deny that a problem even existed. This vulnerability that I never before witnessed as a potential character trait of my usually sedate, rational parents showed me that the human mind is more complex than I had thought, and that complex emotions can lie behind even the most rational and logical minds.

As I watched my sister grapple with her problem for three years, I wondered why familial love and external counseling were not enough to jolt her back into reality. Realizing that I was approaching a watershed period in my life, I began research on the characteristics and prevalence of heroin, trying to find out why it was so addictive and why my sister preferred it to a normal, daily existence. Focusing on my role as the major strut of support for my nuclear family, I was able to remain emotionally stable and sensible. My relentlessness pursuits convinced my parents that there was an issue to face and prompted their involvement in my sister's treatment. Through our combined efforts, we were able to face the addiction head-on and help my sister realize how better her life would be were she not addicted to such a powerful drug.

Considering how well I had survived this situation, I surmised that I had the skills and drive to succeed in a professional career that involved helping others recognize and deal with their own personal conflicts. To keep my sister's condition from preoccupying my entire existence, I immersed myself in my studies, especially psychology, and found college a fulfilling and fascinating experience. Maintaining a 3.9 GPA while working over 30 hours each week at a restaurant and a gym was quite difficult, but keeping busy helped me focus my thoughts. In retrospect, college was one of the most stimulating periods in my life, and I found tremendous determination to achieve my goal of helping others through the study of psychology.

Yearning to gain practical experience in clinical psychology, I attained a field placement position through my school at the Lennox Hospital Psychiatric Unit. Under the supervision of Thomas Carter, I co-led therapeutic activities with the recreational staff, organized patient participation in these activities, and provided additional emotional support for the patients. I worked with individuals who suffered from a variety of mental conditions, including mood, schizophrenic, personality disorders, and I took advantage of the opportunity to observe their treatments. With this firsthand look into the effectiveness of clinical psychopharmacology and psychotherapy, I realized that, beyond the textbook, psychology becomes more fascinating when viewed in the context of actual human disease. Even though I did not play a major role in my patients' recovery process, I experienced the rewarding feeling of making an appreciable,

positive difference in people's lives.

During my senior year of college, a fellow undergraduate and I collaborated with Dr. Jason Young on an independent honors research project studying the supposed agenda-setting functions of the American news media. During this study, we examined the effect of negative and frightening images depicted in the news on people's perceptions of which news stories were most important. To help us explore our research questions, I conducted an extensive literature review, developed research materials, created an experimental videotape, and utilized extensive psychological questionnaires. By collaborating with a professional researcher, I refined my research skills in data analysis using SPSS, as well as my ability to present my findings in the manner of an accepted professional research paper. I enjoyed conducting the literature review most, approaching it as a scavenger hunt and considering the quantity and quality of information found as my reward. This project, along with my other undergraduate studies, has prepared me for the rigors of graduate study and the parameters of successful, professional research.

With my primary focus on the practice of clinical psychology, I plan to attend a doctoral program committed to the Vail model. Yeshiva University offers a superb course of study, because the program stresses the importance of understanding and employing different modalities of treatment. I became interested in cognitive-behavioral therapy while taking a health psychology class and hope to apply this type of therapy one day, especially in the treatment of depression and anxiety. Although I plan to specialize in cognitive-behavioral therapy, I recognize the value of exploring a variety of theoretical psychological orientations.

Yeshiva also allows students to begin clinical practice in their first year of study, offering a variety of clinical opportunities from which to choose. Attending Yeshiva would enable me to stay close to my family; after completing my doctorate, I plan to work in a public psychiatric hospital or community mental health center nearby. The ability to work well with diverse populations in a variety of clinical settings is critical to becoming an excellent student and successful psychologist, something I hope to achieve through Yeshiva's doctoral program in clinical psychology.

