



Secrets of a Successful Applicant

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Overview

- Ideal Candidate
- Admissions Committee
- Application Package
- Final Thoughts and Advice

PhD Degree

- Not a “Super” MBA
- Terminal
- Master a specific subject or research topic
- Highly Individualized
- Extend the body of knowledge about that subject
- Establish reputation as a scholar; an inquirer, an expert
- Enhance reputation of the academic institution

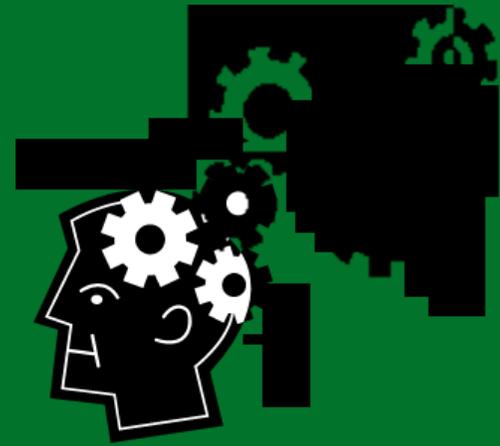
Ideal Candidate

- Strong academic credentials
 - good quantitative skills
 - good oratory and writing skills

Ideal Candidate

- Ability to
 - work independently
 - examine a topic in detail
 - communicate your findings to others
 - persistence / long term career focus
- Self directed
- Self motivated
- Highly disciplined
- Work Ethic

Ideal Candidate



- Intrigued by
 - ideas
 - knowledge
 - understanding how things work and why
- Interested in a research-oriented career at a university
- Curiosity is the Key!



Admissions Committees

What will they think?



Admissions Committees

- Department faculty (research focused faculty)
 - PhD Committee
- Questions
 - Do we want this individual to be one of 2, 3 or 4 students?
 - Do we want to spend >\$150,000?
 - Do we want to work closely with this individual for the next 5+ years?
 - Do we want to see this individual on a regular basis for the next 35 years?
 - Does this individual (and their interests) align with our brand and priorities?

The Application Package

- Objective components
 - GMAT®
 - Academic performance (transcripts)
 - Work experience
 - Research experience (e.g., RA for a professor, research role at a firm)

Academic Performance

- *Where did this applicant go to school?*
 - *Subtext*
 - *Who do we know on that faculty?*
 - *What type of institution is it?*
- *What courses did this applicant take?*
 - *Subtext*
 - *Was it a challenging schedule?*
 - *Quantitative courses?*

Academic Performance

- *What were this applicant's grades?*
 - Subtext*
 - *Is this an acceptable GPA?*
 - *Does this applicant know enough to perform well in doctoral seminars and as a research assistant?*
 - *Cues about Work Ethic, Persistence, Consistency*

Academic Performance

- Advice
 - Review your transcript(s) for potential problems
 - Acknowledge and explain them
 - Take courses NOW - especially calculus, matrix algebra, basic statistics
 - Read an academic article to familiarize yourself with the expected work output.

The GMAT

- OH NO! NOT THE GMAT
 - The GMAT is an opportunity
- What is a good score? (it depends)
- What happens if I don't get the score I was hoping for?
- How does the admissions committee evaluate my score?
 - What is my score signaling to the committee?
 - Bottom line thresholds.

The GMAT

- **Advice**
 - ***Prepare, prepare, prepare!***
 - ***Consider a professional prep course a high ROI endeavor***
 - ***Don't take it cold!***
 - ***Retest***
- ***If this is what you really want, don't leave anything on the table.***

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Bentley University

Work Experience

- Relevance of professional experience
 - Research:
 - Use professional experience to develop research questions
 - Teaching:
 - Credibility in the classroom
 - An asset, but not a necessity
- Academic experience
 - Teaching
 - Research
 - References

The Application Package

- Subjective components
 - Statement(s): research/scholarly interests, career goals
 - Convey that you understand the focus of this department.
 - References and recommendation letters
 - Meetings/interviews with faculty
- Objective components
 - Transcripts
 - Resume

The Ideal Reference

- Long and strong
- Full of praise
- Addresses your readiness for academic pursuits
 - intellectual abilities (academic performance)
 - self motivation
 - interest in learning
 - creativity
 - research experience
 - persistence and timeliness

References

- **Who?**

Individuals who are familiar with your:

- **intellectual abilities**
- **academic performance**
- **personal character**
- **capacity to pursue a successful career as a researcher (and teacher)**

References

- Who?
 - Academic (best reference)
 - Current or former professors
 - The PhD Project network
 - Professional
 - Managers
 - Significant professional colleagues
 - Highly familiar with your skill set
 - Better to have a professional reference who knows your work well, than some who does not with a prestigious title.

References

- Advice
 - Ask potential references if they will provide very, very strong recommendations
 - Tell them the deadlines
 - Provide them:
 - transcripts
 - resume
 - personal statement
 - sample reference
- Get more references than required

Excerpts from Good Recommendations

“I paid particular attention to her because she was always eager to accept a task or meet a challenge. She had the innate ability to solve problems and see a task through to completion. She consistently demonstrated constructive influential leadership qualities. She was an industrious person, addicted to thoroughness. All of these traits and strengths have carried over into her career. I can make this statement because I have kept in close contact with her over the years.”

Excerpts from Good Recommendations

“In addition to technical skills, this project required planning and communication skills to coordinate the activities between the _____ department of another major customer and several groups within our organization. All of her assignments were executed with far less guidance than I would normally have expected to provide to an engineer who was new to the product line, let alone someone who was also new to the company.”

The Statement(s)

- **You have 100% control (tell your story)**
- **Focused**
 - **clear and concise**
- **Forceful and compelling**
- **Illustrate understanding of**
 - **doctoral study (PhD is research degree)**
 - **your academic discipline**
 - **institution**
 - **faculty**
 - **yourself**

The Statement(s)

- Should demonstrate
 - intellectual curiosity
 - creativity and originality
 - passion for learning
 - little mention of teaching ***
 - choose 1 discipline
- Should explain any issues that need explanation (be open, honest, & upfront)
 - Academic
 - Personal
 - Professional

The Statement(s)

- Advice
 - know the academic discipline
 - read business press for evidence of trends to explore and research questions
 - read academic journals to get a sense of what academics are studying and how they talk to one another
 - be familiar with the work of faculty
 - be introspective
 - **WRITE, REWRITE AND REWRITE AGAIN!**
 - get feedback and **REWRITE** again



Excerpts from Poor Statements

“About the statement of purpose I don’t have any particular subject. I am interested in any practical subject in the area of _____, that is a subject on a real problem, not a theoretical subject.”

“I am keen to enroll in your Ph.D. program for Fall 2022 but if it is already late could you please consider my application for 2023?”

Excerpts from Good Statements

“My experiences managing technology and human resource functions in the public education environment have given me many questions for future research. I am especially interested in the impact of technology and change on organizations, after playing key roles in three major computer systems implementations.”

Excerpts from Good Statements

“My interest in pursuing a doctoral degree in strategic management from... centers around adding to my breadth of knowledge on international development and improving my research and quantitative skills. I also hope to gain a clear insight into firm/state interaction, entry mode strategies, and the impact of political and economic change in emerging markets as firms attempt to sustain a presence in host states.”

Applying to PhD Programs

More Advice:

- **Talk to the faculty**
 - Review their backgrounds and research areas before you talk with them
 - Ideal to have already taken the GMAT
- **Visit the campus**
 - Meet current PhD students (possible red flags)
- **Application package should be internally consistent**

Applying to PhD Programs

More Advice:

- No typographical, spelling, or grammatical errors
- Read it, leave it, reread it, make changes if needed
- This is a business of written communication: Definitely have multiple people read your work.
- Get feedback from faculty, including PhD Project faculty ***
- Pay attention to deadlines-----Be on time!

Successful Outcome



QUESTIONS?

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