Career Services can help you clarify interests, goals, and options for pursuing a graduate degree as well as assist you in the application process.
###SAMPLE APPLICATION TIMELINE

This sample application timeline is designed for a May graduate. Deadlines and requirements vary; develop your timeline based on your research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spring of Junior Year</th>
<th>Summer of Junior Year</th>
<th>Fall of Senior Year</th>
<th>Spring of Senior Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research programs and institutions.</td>
<td>Take required admissions tests.</td>
<td>Re-take admissions tests if needed.</td>
<td>Accept or decline offers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review application processes.</td>
<td>Meet with advisors to discuss your essay and academic résumé.</td>
<td>Ask references for letters of recommendation.</td>
<td>Write thank-you notes to references and others who helped you throughout the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrange a visit if possible.</td>
<td>Order official transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended.</td>
<td>Provide all forms and information to letter writers a month ahead of the deadline.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write an academic résumé.</td>
<td>Research test preparation resources.</td>
<td>Submit application forms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

###CONSIDER GRADUATE SCHOOL

####1 Contemplate Graduate School

Before beginning the research and application process, consider the following:

- Your long-term career goals.
- Whether you need a degree to contribute to those goals.
- Preparation for the academic challenges.
- Financial resources necessary to complete the degree.
- Commitment to your intended field of study and career plans.

####2 Prepare for Admission

Develop your competencies for graduate school admission. Connect with your academic department early for specific guidance.

- Get involved in research.
- Get to know faculty.
- Gain experience related to your field.
- Make sure your transcript is rigorous.

####3 Decide When to Attend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages of Going Straight to Grad School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professors will have more recent knowledge of your skills and abilities when writing letters of recommendation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can enter your desired profession sooner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can live on a student budget and can continue that in graduate school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mind is still on school and you can more easily write papers and read long articles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You will just have to make one transition from school to work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages of Working First</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You will have more time to decide on a program, explore career options, and gain experience and perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can establish financial stability and save for graduate school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can have a break from school and be excited to learn again when you start a program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You may gain employers, organizations, and others who can write recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You may be able to get into a more competitive graduate program if you have work experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

####4 Develop a Parallel Plan

Getting into a graduate program is challenging even for highly qualified candidates. Before applying, realistically assess your level of competitiveness by researching past admissions data for each program of interest. Meet with an advisor to develop an alternative plan in case you do not gain admission.
RESEARCH PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS

- Clarify the specific area in which you hope to earn your advanced degree.
- Research faculty, including areas of specialization, research interests, and projects.
- Contact admissions representatives to learn about procedures, requirements, length of the program, costs, and aid.
- Consider location, population, housing, cost of living, and cultural and social opportunities.
- Talk to current students and faculty in that program to gain their perspective.
- Determine which program delivery method is best for you. Options may include campus/in-person, online, hybrid, and accelerated programs.

FUND GRADUATE SCHOOL

Evaluate your financial situation, then research institution and program costs as well as financial support. You will have to determine whether or not you will pursue a graduate degree if you do not receive funding.

Assistantships may cover tuition, fees, books and/or a stipend for living expenses. Departments determine the number and type of assistantships:
- Teaching Assistants (TA). Support and instruct undergraduate courses.
- Research Assistants (RA). Assist professors with research projects.
- Graduate Assistants (GA). Work in a role and department which may or may not be related to your area of study.

Student loan programs offer long-term, low-interest loans which typically require repayment after completion of your program. Before receiving loans, you must be admitted to your graduate program.

Fellowship applications, selection process, requirements, and activities vary. While some provide funding for studies, others may fund research or overseas experience. The Office of Fellowships at unl.edu/fellowships has more information.

COMMON APPLICATION ELEMENTS

Academic Résumé/Curriculum Vitae (CV)
An effective résumé for application to graduate school differs from one used to apply for a job or internship. It should highlight your academic achievements, campus involvement, leadership, and relevant experience.

Application Essay / Personal Statement
Most programs require an essay or answers to specific questions as part of the application. The purpose is to evaluate your written communication skills and commitment as well as your ability to succeed academically and professionally.

Admissions Test
Consult each institution and program to determine which admission tests you must take. Information about the format, dates, costs, and registration process are available at specific test websites. It is recommended that you take practice tests in their entirety prior to taking the official/formal exam.

Recommendation Letters
Graduate schools usually require letters of recommendation from faculty, advisors, and/or employers. Choose references who can accurately assess your abilities for the graduate program you plan to pursue. Make your request professionally and give time to meet deadlines. Provide your résumé and instructions on how, where, and when to submit the letter.

Admission Interview
Some graduate programs require an admissions interview. In general, interviewers are evaluating communication skills, knowledge of the field, academic preparedness, and career goals.

Online Application Form
This form lists your contact information, desired program, etc.

Application Fee
Program fees vary; consider how many programs to which to apply.

Official Transcripts
Request official transcripts from each post-secondary institution you have attended. Check programs to determine whether to send an electronic or paper copy.
While some programs may specify the topic or prompts to which you must respond, others may leave the content up to you. In general, the following topics are of interest to graduate programs:

- Your reasons for pursuing a graduate or professional degree.
- Areas of study in which you plan to specialize.
- Career goals and plans for the future.
- Reasons for interest in the specific institution and program.
- Preparation and fitness for study in the field which may include academics, involvement, and work experience.

**Academic Résumé, Curriculum Vitae (CV), and Résumé**

An academic résumé is used when applying for scholarships/fellowships, research programs, honor societies, academic awards, and graduate programs. A CV is more detailed and is most often used when applying for academic, scientific, and research career positions. A job/internship résumé is one or a two-page summary of education, skills, and experience. Use section headings that best highlight your qualifications. Possible headings include:

- Academic Honors/Awards
- Study Abroad
- Publications/Presentations
- Shadowing/Clinical Experience
- Professional Affiliations
- Leadership and Involvement
- Scholarships
- Research
- Internships
- Language Skills
- Volunteer/Service
- Work Experience

**Basic Guidelines**

- Adhere to length, organization, and content instructions.
- Identify and focus your main message throughout the essay.
- Support your main message using specific examples.
- Tailor each essay for its intended institution and program.
- Seek feedback from faculty, advisors, and Career Services.

**GET IN TOUCH**

University Career Services  careers.unl.edu  402.472.3145

Think of us as the Career Services hub. Centrally located in 225 Nebraska Union, all students are welcome to utilize our services. College-specific services are available in the six UNL colleges listed below.

**UNL does not discriminate based upon any protected status. Please see go.unl.edu/nondiscrimination.**