Graduate School Planning

Striving for a *No Hassle Second Tassel*

Did you know, on average, between 27% - 31% of LVC graduates report continuing their education after obtaining their undergraduate degree? That number represents many fields of study and programs in all different locations.

If you are thinking of continuing your graduate and professional school pursuits, you may feel out of sync with your classmates who are in the midst of their individual job searches. However, while they are busy compiling application materials and participating in informational/job interviews, you should be gathering your own portfolio and connections. Going to graduate school is a big decision that requires advanced planning and thoughtful preparation. Use the following timeline and tips for writing application essays to get you on the right track for pursuing that second tassel!

Additional Graduate School Planning Resources: stop by the Career Services Office to check out our selection of books or go to our webpage: http://www.lvc.edu/career-services/students.aspx

Suggested Timeline for Graduate School Preparation

This timetable represents the ideal for most students.
You must adjust accordingly to meet institutional deadlines.

Junior year (Fall and Spring)

- Research areas of interest, institutions, programs
- Talk to advisers about application requirements
- Register and prepare for appropriate graduate/professional school admission tests
- Investigate national scholarships
- If appropriate, obtain letters of recommendation

Junior year (Summer)

- Take required admission tests
- Write for application materials
- Consider visiting institutions of interest
- Write your application essay

Senior Year (Fall)

- Obtain letters of recommendation
- Take graduate/professional school admission tests
- Send in completed applications
- Register for Graduate and Professional School Financial Aid Service (GAPSFAS), if required

Senior year (Spring)

- Check with all institutions before deadline to be certain your file is complete
- Visit institutions that accept you. Send a deposit to the institution of your choice
- Notify other schools of your decisions to NOT attend
- Send thank you notes to individuals that wrote letters of recommendation for you; notify them of your success.

Did you know?

Kaplan Test Prep & Admissions offers **FREE on-line practice tests** for GRE, LSAT, DAT, GMAT, and MCAT throughout the year. The direct link to register for practice tests is:
http://bit.ly/lebanonvalley

Kaplan also offers a variety of other FREE online events related to admissions and writing personal statements
http://www.kaptest.com/

Office of Career Services **careerservices@lvc.edu** **717-867-6560**

Tackling the Personal Statement

The personal statement (essay) is often one of the most difficult parts of the application. Each school will have its own format, so be certain to follow the directions provided. This essay is an opportunity to demonstrate your qualifications for the program, as well as your commitment to the field of study you have chosen. It should reveal your writing clarity, depth, and focus of thinking.

Our office, as well as your faculty, can help guide you through the process. Writing personal statements is a long process that can take many drafts; get started early!

Tips To Guide your Writing

BEFORE you begin - ask yourself the following questions (offered by the Purdue On-line Writing Lab):

- What's special, unique, distinctive, and/or impressive about you or your life story?
- What details of your life (personal or family problems, history, people or events that have shaped you or influenced your goals) might help the committee better understand you or help set you apart?
- When did you become interested in this field and what have you learned about it (and about yourself) that has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to this field? What insights have you gained? How have you learned about this field—through classes, readings, seminars, work or other experiences, or conversations with people already in the field?
- If you have worked a lot during your college years, what have you learned (leadership or managerial skills, for example), and how has that work contributed to your growth?
- What are your career goals?
- Are there any gaps or discrepancies in your academic record that you should explain (great grades but mediocre LSAT or GRE scores, for example, or a distinct upward pattern to your GPA if it was only average in the beginning)?
- Have you had to overcome any unusual obstacles or hardships (i.e: economic, familial, or physical)?
- What personal characteristics (for example, integrity, compassion, and/or persistence) do you possess that would improve your prospects for success in the field or profession? Is there a way to demonstrate or document that you have these characteristics?
- What skills (for example, leadership, communicative, analytical) do you possess?
- Why might you be a stronger candidate for graduate school—and more successful and effective in the profession or field than other applicants? What are the most compelling reasons you can give for the admissions committee to be interested in you?

Career Services is happy to help you think through your personal statement and offer critiques on your drafts. The following are some of our **HELPFUL HINTS FOR WRITING YOUR ESSAY**.

- Give your essay direction with a theme or thesis. Demonstrate you have a definite sense of what you want to do and your enthusiasm for it.
- Choose what you want to discuss and in what order. Some aspects you may wish to include are: reasons for deciding on a particular field and/or school; motivation and commitment for study; expectations for the program; educational background; research and/or work experience; immediate and long-range goals; major area of interest; personal uniqueness.
- You may find questions in each application that are somewhat similar from university to university. Don't, however, use the exact same statement for all applications. Always be sure your answer fits the question being asked.
- Be as specific as you can. Relate what you know about the field and use the language/terminology of your profession. Refer to work experiences, research, classes, and people you are acquainted with in the field. You also might want to mention books you have read, seminars or conferences you attended or presented at. Most often you will submit your application before actually completing your degree, so don't forget to include things you will be doing in your final semester at college as well.
- Use concrete examples to support your theme/thesis to distinguish yourself from other candidates.
- Consider beginning your essay with an attention-grabbing lead (anecdote, quote, question, etc.). End your essay with a conclusion that refers back to the lead and/or thesis.