

Episode 37 – I Accepted My Offer of Admission to Grad School! Now What?

Welcome to Grad-post! I'm your host, Brian S. Mitchell and we're here to talk about life before, during, and after graduate school, and whether an advanced degree is right for you. I'll draw upon my experiences as a graduate dean and research mentor, as well as my network of students, colleagues, and experts to bring you the most complete information on graduate education that I can.

We bring this season's series on getting into graduate school to a close with some final thoughts on what to do now that you've officially accepted an offer of admission to go to graduate school. Recall that we covered letters of recommendation in [Episode 21](#), your personal statement in [Episode 22](#), where to apply in [Episodes 19](#) and [23](#), submitting your application in [Episode 26](#), weighing your offers of admission in [Episode 28](#), and making your decision by the April 15th deadline that was described way back in [Episode 1](#). So, what's next? Well, if you are an international student, you'll want to listen to [Episode 29](#) regarding the F-1 visa application process and stay tuned for updates as it immigration policy is rapidly evolving. All of you who accepted an offer will also want to review [Episode 31](#) on securing housing. That's your first order of business. But there are some other things to consider as you gear up for starting graduate school this Fall.

First, there will be a series of university-sponsored meetings over the next three to four months before school starts. Attend every single one of them, even if they seem redundant or you think they don't really apply to you. These meetings should be virtual so there's no reason not to attend. You'll have at least one orientation, maybe as many as three or four. Your department will have one. The school will have one. The university will have one. There will be a separate one for new teaching assistants and a separate one for new international students. Unless you're not on a teaching assistantship or you are a domestic student, plan to attend all of these meetings. If you want to get off on the wrong foot with your program, ask a question that was covered in the orientation sessions. Okay, maybe things weren't clear and you have a clarifying question or special case, but if you ask a basic question that was covered three times in each of these orientation sessions, expect a scornful look. It's like asking the professor about grading policies that are covered in the syllabus. You know how well that goes over.

You may be required to take some kind of placement test, although these are less common. Maybe there is still a language requirement for your major and you have an opportunity to test out by showing proficiency. Or maybe you are an international student who can test out of Academic English - sometimes called English as a Second Language. If you are required to take English language training during the summer even if you think you are proficient, take the class anyway. You will meet people. You will learn something, even if your grammar is better than the instructor's. Take every opportunity to show how good you are.

Second, start to engage with the university. There are probably events you can't attend because you are not officially a student until you enroll, but if there are virtual events or events that are open to the general public and you live in the area, take part as much as possible. The department may have what's called a "Bridge Program" during the summer to help ease the transition to graduate school. These are often for incoming students who may not have the same background as other incoming students in the program, like you were a chemistry major but are entering an engineering graduate program. There are even some programs that offer you an opportunity to start on your research or go through a lab rotation prior to enrollment. Do whatever you can. If there's a virtual campus town hall, tune in. If your school's team still has sporting events in June, turn it on. But don't drop out before you even get started, as [Timothy Leary](#) would have advised back in the 1960's. Be as engaged as you can. It will pay benefits later.

Finally, as a counterbalance to being engaged and getting a head start, don't overdo it. I once had an incoming graduate student ask what courses they could take during the summer to get ahead. They didn't need to take any courses - it was completely voluntary. I advised them to just take the time to relax and

prepare both emotionally and physically for what will be an intense first year in graduate school. Most of you have just finished a grueling four years of college, and some of you may be winding down a demanding job to go back to school. Take some time to rejuvenate. Take that trip with your college roommates you've been talking about. Catch up with family. Start working out. Read that stack of books that have piled up. You will need to be in a good place in your life to enter the fast-paced world of graduate school. Take this time to prepare.

And that's it! Let the excitement build naturally to your first day on campus and the prospects of changing your life in nothing but good ways.

Thank you for joining me today. All the links provided in my podcasts are available on my website at gradpost.com. There, you'll find additional information and resources to help you plan your adventure for an advanced degree.

You probably just finished one degree and are on to the next. Congratulations, they all count!

Links

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turn_on,_tune_in,_drop_out