

Episode 26 – Some Final Thoughts on Your Grad School Application

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.

I thought I'd speak a little more extemporaneously today on just a few things to consider as you submit those grad school applications and start the waiting process for a decision.

First, we discussed where to apply in [Episode 23](#), but you will probably want to hedge your bets and apply to several different schools. That's fine and wise, but keep in mind that the application fees can pile up. We're talking several hundred dollars here for just a handful of applications. Seek a fee waiver where you can. You may have to show need or give an explanation, but it is worth exploring. There may be different policies for master's vs. PhD applications, so read carefully. You may even have to go all the way through the application process to find out if the fee is waived or not, but you should be able to verify that ahead of time with the admissions office.

Second, be sure you get an acknowledgment of your application! Like anything other transaction you execute online, it's not done until the recipient receives your request. If you don't receive an email acknowledgment within one business day or two, check with the admissions office.

Third, manage your expectations, both in terms of the amount of time it will take to receive a decision and what that decision might ultimately be. Decisions can take months – be patient. Sometimes decisions are made on an absolute basis – meet these criteria and get in – but other times decisions are made on a rolling basis, especially for smaller programs. They may offer admission to ten of the top candidates, and if five decline the offer, then they'll admit five more. So, a delayed decision is not necessarily a bad thing. You might just be in the queue for an offer. If it gets to be late March and you still haven't heard, or you have an offer in hand and you need to make a final decision, contact the admissions officers and inquire about the status of your application. But don't contact them in early January just because you're curious. Give the process time to work out.

Finally, have a plan B. What if you don't get accepted to any of your preferred schools? Are you also looking for a job? Do you have a place to go when you graduate or your rental contract expires? Maybe there's a "safe" school that you can apply to at the last minute and be assured that you'll get in, or maybe you can take out a loan to get that MBA instead of pursuing the PhD right away. Think these things through now and seek advice from those you trust before it becomes a crisis.

Take some time to relax if you have a break between terms. You put a lot of time and effort into your graduate school applications, now sit back and enjoy the holidays!

I'll be taking a break for a few weeks, too, but I'll be back in the new year with episodes dedicated to your decision-making process as those acceptances roll in, as well as bonus episodes for current graduate students and graduate education administrators.

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

Every person – and every degree – counts!