

Finding a Graduate Degree Program Right for You

Directions: As you consider graduate degree programs, use a check-list like this to record what you learn. Going down each column, place a plus (+) or minus (-) sign to record your impressions about each factor (row). Extra rows are provided to add other factors of interest. Tip: Beyond Web site information, be sure to call programs of interest to talk with faculty, students & alumni. Trust your mentor's advice, too.	University 1	University 2	University 3	University 4	University 5
Institutional Factors					
Size and demographics of student body					
Institutional culture and climate; governance					
Accreditation					
ADA accessible and well maintained buildings					
Library collections, computer labs & other resources					
Partnerships with business and industry					
Alumni engagement and financial support					
Relationship with community & state government					
Proximity to major transportation options (bus, air, rail)					
Tuition and fees (also check residency requirement)					
Student health insurance					
On campus graduate student housing & child care options					
Department and Degree Program Factors					
Degrees & minors; course of study; class availability; online courses					
Admission criteria & program selectiveness					
Application process; required entrance exam(s); deadlines					
Degree completion requirements; time-to-degree completion					
Size, demographics of department (students & faculty)					
Department culture and climate; collegiality					
Research labs; centers; practicum clinics; performance venues					
Opportunity for collaborative & interdisciplinary study					
Accreditation; rankings and ratings from credible sources					
ADA accessible laboratories, equipment and other resources					
Job placement rate of degree program's graduates					
Funding for student conference travel and assistantships					
Graduate student group; peer-to-peer mentoring & support					



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Faculty Considerations					
Faculty research interests, scholarship and reputation					
Interdisciplinary or collaborative work (on & off campus)					
Faculty-student engagement and support					
Mentoring: students publish, present & write grants with faculty					
Faculty office hours (availability for questions & assistance)					
Teaching evaluations by students					
Awarded grants and nature of grant-funded work					
Nature of educational outreach and /or service activities					
Demonstrated leadership at the university and national levels					
Campus Ancillary Services					
Support services such as writing labs, computer labs					
Career Services and professional development					
Enrichment (art, performance, speakers)					
Diverse student groups (e.g., minorities, international , LBGTI)					
Cultural & language support for international students					
Student recreation facilities & extramural sports					
Community Factors					
Cost of living					
Housing options					
Healthcare facilities					
Quality of schools and day care (if needed)					
Places of worship					
Community safety					
Commuter transportation options (car, bus, light rail)					
Grocery store/pharmacy walking distance of campus					

Analysis: Did I view all factors with a critical eye? Are my impressions objective? Was comparable information available from all institutions? Which institutions and programs seem the best “fit” with my interests and needs? Why? Should I rule out any institution, or do I need additional information? Am I interested enough in any of these programs to make a site visit?

