

# Guaranteed grad school acceptance

BY TIMOTHY FOREST

The decision to apply to graduate or professional school is often filled with anxieties. David Mumby wants to help alleviate unnecessary stress by attacking the myths surrounding the entire application process, from choosing the right professors for recommendations to selecting the right faculty supervisor for your graduate studies.

Mumby, a professor of psychology at Concordia, has recently penned a book with a winning title: *Graduate School — Winning Strategies For Getting In With or Without Excellent Grades*. Mumby sets out to answer prospective applicants' questions about graduate school, and offers an array of simple suggestions on how they can make their applications stand out.

"I want students to see their applications through the eyes of the selection committee," he explained, outlining his incentive for writing the book. "I saw a lack of understanding on how students are selected and how undergraduates should apply for graduate study." In addition to having to repeatedly answer the same questions and address the same misconceptions about the application process, he had his own questions about getting into grad school.

The largest misconception that Mumby sees in students' anxieties over applying to grad school is an

overemphasis on marks and standardized test scores.

"Most graduate schools are looking for balanced students who can think flexibly and generate new ideas. If they can demonstrate this to the selection committee, then they can offset a less-than-stellar GPA or standardised test score," Mumby explained.

The committee, according to Mumby, "wants to see applications that indicate that the student is going beyond the minimum requirements of the application. A failure to do this is what kills most applications."

Yet another of the most overlooked parts of the application process is the role of the professor who would be the supervisor of the prospective applicant's research. In the first place, a student can only be admitted to a school if there is a fac-

ulty member who will oversee and direct the student's work. Mumby stresses the need to find a supervisor who not only has the expertise and prestige in his or her respective field, but also is well-matched to the student's personality and abilities. The supervisor is the person on whom an applicant needs to make

often his or her approval that will determine if a student is selected. "I would never select a student who did not try to contact me before applying to study," explained

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There are two other important ways that a prospective applicant can make himself or herself shine — in the letters of reference and the personal statement that most schools ask for.

"The applicant should look at an application like you are applying for a job. The applicant should bring attention to any involvement in campus activities or volunteer organizations in the letter of intent," said Mumby.

"The selection committee is generally looking for experience as a whole — not just work experience — but someone who has gone out and fetched opportunities. This demonstrates initiative and good judgement that will come across as a success in any graduate environment." According to the book, this is the only part of the application in which students have the opportunity to reveal such qualities to the committee.

The role of undergraduate professors is also important. "Many students just pick two or three professors at random for letters of refer-

ence, without fully considering how these professors see them, and thus what they will write about in those letters."

Mumby explained that students should choose professors who know them and their qualities the best. Mumby also emphasised "the role of the professor as a source of information" — in other words, these professors have been through the process, and often know exactly what graduate schools are looking for.

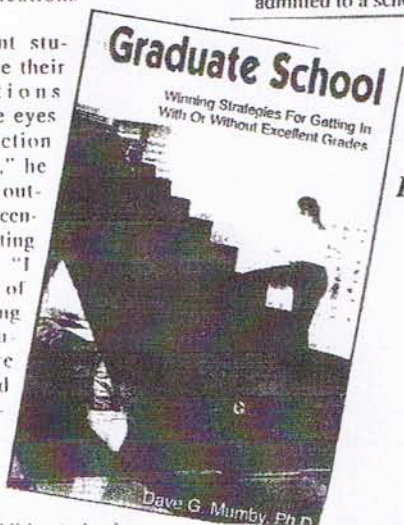
"I want students to overcome the information gap that permeates the whole process of applying for graduate school," the author offered

*"A weak GPA can be offset by a balanced personal statement that expresses flexibly and the ability to generate new ideas."*

as another reason for his writing the book. While stressing the importance of a healthy GPA and standardised test scores, Mumby wants students to know that even if they are not earning straight As, they can overcome this in other areas.

"Students should understand the application process — for it is that knowledge that gives you the power to plan for the other criteria. If a student plans ahead for each and every step of the application process, then he or she is better prepared than many other applicants who may have much higher marks."

*The book is available at most University bookstores or on-line at amazon.com. You can also check out MyGraduateSchool.com for more information on applying to grad school.*



For more information, visit: [MyGraduateSchool.com](http://MyGraduateSchool.com)