

Life after your Bachelor's degree

How to play the graduate school admissions game

Ivy Jacobson

Issue date: 11/26/07 Section: Arts & Life

Life after your Bachelor's degree - Arts & Life 02/09/08 11:52 AM

<http://media.www.fsunews.com/media/storage/paper920/news/2007/11/26/ArtsLife/Life-After.Your.Bachelors.Degree-3112588.shtml>

Okay, you just graduated. If you aren't ready to don a suit a tie quite just yet and can't bear to leave the college

scene, then graduate school is something you should consider. It is becoming more common for college students

to automatically start their graduate degree right after their Bachelor's degree (if they aren't too burned out).

However, getting into the graduate school of your choice is getting increasingly competitive and most students

come to find they are not aware of the high standards of what it takes to get in. That's why Dr. David G. Mumby,

Ph.D., graduate supervisor and Associate Professor at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec, wrote Graduate

School: Winning Strategies for Getting in With or Without Excellent Grades.

"When I finished my Ph.D., I encountered students who had misconceptions about graduate school and who had a

lot of misguided views and ideas. Smart kids with great grades get rejected, and they don't know what they are doing wrong," Mumby said.

If you are a junior, or even a sophomore, now is the time to really start shining. Being a fair-weather member of a

service club or volunteering twice a year isn't going to get you in. To get into the graduate program of your choice,

you need to have the good grades as well as having a good character that shows in your interview, and extra activities that put you above the rest.

"I originally got denied. I got lucky getting in because someone left and a spot opened up. Perseverance is

something kids need to have. If they don't keep their names fresh to those professors or departments of the major

they want, they most likely won't have a fighting chance," FSU graduate student Kal Ridley said. "Your GPA and

test scores only matter to a point, so don't slack on doing things outside of academics, like bands, volunteer work,

recreational activities at school, anything noteworthy to mention on an application. Graduate schools in general are

just a harder set of expectations to meet, and if you don't scout out what you need to get past the initial point of

entry for the application, then you're setting yourself up for failure."

Extracurricular activities aren't the same ones they used to be in high

school. Cheerleading and the science fiction club only got you so far, and

now, you are applying to something that is going to further your education in your intended field of study.

"Get involved in research labs and studios. Your professors can learn about you, and when the time comes, they can write you a letter of recommendation, which is the heaviest weight you can pull in your application. They need to expose aspects of themselves so they can get a lot of support," Mumby said. "Grades are important, but the experience depends on the discipline, so get involved with the faculty.

People come to find that the faculty doesn't just teach. Most professors do research themselves, and students see that in graduate school, they spend less time in class, and more in discipline of their intended study."

Graduate school is certainly not intended to be easy. It's about as far of a cry from Baby Bio and General Psychology as you get.

That's why students need to prep themselves for the rigorous demands of learning on a higher level.

"College students are faced with having to adjust to new education in a new environment," Mumby said. "Most of the learning and training you do yourself and department professors are your resources. Training yourself in an advanced area takes initiative, and you have to make the adjustments. Don't be put off if it isn't what you think and start to manage your time wisely."

The first chapter of Dr. Mumby's book is available on mygraduateschool.com for free, and you can also purchase the book on amazon.com.