Graduate Admissions
Overview for Associate & Assistant Deans

CGS New Deans Institute
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Graduate admissions

From applicant's perspective

Graduate School's goal

Admissions overview

◆ Establish/review admission policy & process

◆ Collect & evaluate applications

◆ Select applicants

◆ Notify applicants about decisions

◆ Maintain admissions data

◆ (Re)Assess admission process

Admissions structure

◆ Organizational structure*
 – Centralized: ~51% of institutions
 – Collaborative: 19%
 – Decentralized: 30%
◆ Who makes admission decision?
 – 71% Program level
 – 12% Administrative staff
 – 7% Academic dean
 – 10% Other

* 2003 NAGAP Survey

Admissions process

- ◆ On-line application
  - – Easier for applicants
  - – Programs get applications sooner
  - – Easier for establishing electronic communication with applicant
  - – Supplemental materials can be attached
- ◆ Paper application obtained online
- ◆ Requires credential matching

Admission process

◆ **Application fee**
  – Amount
    ◆ Peers
    ◆ State or system limits
  – Online payment or process manually
  – Waiver policy (e.g., programs such as McNair)

Admission process: documents

◆ Application
  – Application form
  – Official degree-bearing transcripts of all post-secondary institutions
  – Standardized test scores (e.g., GRE)
  – Proof of English proficiency (e.g., TOEFL)
  – Letters of recommendation
  – Personal essay and/or resume
  – Other (e.g., writing samples, portfolio)

◆ Minimum standards

Admission process

◆ Credentials – requires matching to file
  - Hardcopy
  - Applicant scans (and sends hardcopy later)
  - Institution scans (document imaging)
  - Global transcript delivery network (e.g., eSCRIP-SAFE)
  - Electronic delivery of letters of recommendations (e.g., interfolio.com)
◆ Workflow system to move credentials to evaluators

Admission process: internationals

◆ **English language proficiency**
  – Tests
    ◆ TOEFL (old version, computerized, new version)
    ◆ IELTS
  – Minimum scores
    ◆ Institution (e.g., generally 550 TOEFL-old version)
    ◆ Graduate program (e.g., $\geq$ 600)
    ◆ Teaching assistant (e.g., $\geq$ 625)

Admission process: internationals

- ◆ Credentials review
- ◆ Your process for review of 3-year baccalaureate degrees (e.g., European Union)?
  - Equivalent to USA 4-year degree?
  - Exceptions on case-by-case basis?
  - Conditional admission requirements?
  - Evaluation done centrally or by program?
- ◆ Bologna Process in EU
  - Many graduate programs abroad taught in English
  - Increasing support by governments for graduate students (e.g., Germany's DAAD)

Admission process: internationals

◆ Reputation of USA graduate programs still strong around world

◆ SEVIS (USA Student & Exchange Visitor Information System) & other visa issues less constraining now

◆ But international applicants need enough notice to complete paperwork

◆ They must show sufficient funds (e.g., combination of stipend, tuition scholarship, personal funds, etc., summing to about $27,000 for 1st year)

Admission process: Affirmative action

◆ Does it serve compelling reason?

– To remedy present effects of institution's own prior discrimination

– Achieve educational benefits that arise from racial & ethnic diversity in a program

◆ Is admissions specifically designed to serve one of these purposes?

◆ Not permissible to:

– Set quotas or numerical goals

– Use race or ethnicity as sole criterion

– Have different admission requirements

– Review applications differently

◆ Admit based on *entire* application

Admission process

◆ **Issues of fraud**
  – State on application that fraudulent applications will be denied, or student terminated if already admitted
  – Applies to all aspects of application (application, transcripts, recommendations, test scores, writing samples, personal essay, criminal background check, etc.)
  – State that electronic submission of materials are randomly checked to ensure compliance
  – International credentials can be checked by commercial service - see list from **American Association of College Registrars & Admissions Officers** @ www.AACRAO.org

Admission process: Legal

- Collect only information you want & need
- Do not discriminate based on race, sex, age, disability or citizenship
- Publish admission standards and adhere to them
- Base admission decisions on total application
- Document admission decision
  - Deny
  - Admit
    - Regular
    - Provisional (e.g., waiting for a transcript)
    - Conditional (e.g., must make up course deficiency by set date)

Admission process

◆ FERPA (Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act 1974)

- Right of ADMITTED STUDENT to admission records, except for confidential recommendations which have a waiver to access signed by student

- Does NOT apply to unsuccessful applicants or applicants who do not enroll

- Also means that faculty and staff cannot discuss student record with student's family

Admission process: Legal

- ◆ Screening for prior behavioral issues
  - – Can request information about felony convictions and college suspension and expulsion
  - – Who will review? Work with university counsel
  - – How will data be used? Consideration of nature of activity, time elapsed, rehabilitation efforts
  - – Who pays cost of this process?

Admission process

◆ Rolling versus fixed-date admission

◆ CGS resolution regarding admission offers with funding*

– Admittee not obligated to respond prior to April 15

– Earlier deadlines violate resolution agreed to by CGS member institutions

– So inform admittee of admission and financial package before April 15

* http://www.cgsnet.org/portals/0/pdf/CGSResolutionJune2008

Admission process

◆ Communication to applicant
  – Application status
  – FAQs
    ◆ Web site
    ◆ Self-service (e.g., Intelliresponse)
  – Admission decision
  – Enrollment encouragement
  – Enrollment deposit

◆ Customer service – to applicant & graduate program

Admission process

◆ **Standardize policy and procedures**
  – Appeal
  – Deferral
  – Re-admission
  – Transfer
    ◆ From another institution
    ◆ Within institution
  – Application to more than one program
  – Special programs (e.g., accelerated degree)

Admission records

◆ Federal requirements for data on race and ethnicity

◆ CGS survey on international applicants

◆ NRC survey on demographic data for enrollees

◆ Institutional (and program) enrollment management data on applicants to admittees to enrollees to degrees conferred

Admission guidelines

◆ Develop standard policies & processes in line with "best practices" as outlined in CGS booklets

◆ Train staff for consistency in practice and accuracy in data management

◆ Admission decision works best with multiple evaluators and two-tiered system (e.g., program and graduate school)

◆ If you make exceptions, document why, be prepared to defend that, and apply to all applicants in that category

Useful references

◆ CGS' *An Essential Guide to Graduate Admissions: A Policy Statement*   www.cgsnet.org/

◆ CGS' *Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars, Fellows, Trainees & Assistants* [April 15 offer deadline]
http://www.cgsnet.org/portals/0/pdf/CGSResolutionMay2009.pdf

◆ Evaluating international transcripts
http://www.aacrao.org/nyc/presentations/W2_483.pdf

◆ National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals www.nagap.org