Tips for Evaluating Graduate Schools

Compare student-faculty ratios

Look in Peterson’s Annual Guide to Graduate Studies (current year available in Trexler Library Reference, previous year in the Career Center’s Resource Library) to determine the number of faculty and students in a given department. See also Peterson’s Graduate Schools Online (http://www.petersons.com/graduate/) . The fewer students per faculty the better: smaller classes = more individual attention.

Look at rankings of U.S. News and World Report

Look in the annually published Best Graduate Schools (Trexler Library), released by U.S. News and World Report, to compare top programs in your subject area. See also Best Graduate Schools (http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools).

Check citing of faculty publications

Faculty reputation can be assessed in part by examining the number of times a faculty member has been cited by other scholars. Trexler Library provides access to Art and Humanities Citation Index at its website under “Articles A to Z,” and to Social Science Citation Index and Science Citation Index upon request at the reference desk. Also, use Google Scholar in your research.

Talk to students who are currently enrolled

Contact the departments in your subject area and see if they can provide you with e-mail addresses of currently enrolled students to ask them what their experience has been. Or visit the school yourself and ask graduate students how they like the program.

Consider financial aid availability

Which schools offer more financial aid? Some schools provide nearly every graduate student with some form of aid through teaching assistantships or other awards.

Ask faculty at Muhlenberg

Don’t forget to discuss your plans with faculty in your field on campus. They may be able to advise you on programs that may fit what you are looking for, and often know faculty at universities that you may be considering.

Written by Kelly Cannon, Reference Librarian, Trexler Library, updated August 2012.