



Graduate & Professional School Guide

**Muhlenberg College
Career Center**

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Hours of Operation
Monday - Friday: 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Table of Contents

Your Graduate School Decision

Career Decision Making/Goal Setting	1
Postgraduate Awards	2
The Grad School Process	3
Tips for Evaluating Graduate Schools and Programs	8
A Suggested Timetable for Applying to Graduate School	9

Resources

Graduate School Resources in Trexler Library and Online	10
Tips for Keeping Graduate School Costs in Check	12

Application Components

How to Ask for Letters of Recommendation	14
Graduate/Professional School Testing Information	15
Tips for Writing Graduate School Essays	16
Resume Samples	18
Other Important Considerations	21

Special Populations

Students with Disabilities	22
LGBT Students	23

Career Decision Making/Goal Setting

The time and effort you devote to goal setting will pay off when you complete your applications, write your essay, and interview for graduate programs.

Step 1: Identify your goal or objective.

Ex: Decide if I'm going to grad school.

Ex: Decide which programs to apply to.

Step 2: Determine your options/alternatives. **

Ex: Should I look at a Master's program or PhD? Should it be a Counseling Psychology or a School Psychology degree?

Step 3: Research. Explore. Gather information. **

Ex: What do people with a master's degree in school psychology go on to do? What can I do with a master of education in counseling? How do they differ? What faculty research is done at this institution? Am I willing to live the lifestyle that goes with this career?

** It is critically important to establish a clear understanding of the field you are considering. Conduct informational interviews with alumni and others. Talk to faculty in your department and at graduate schools you are considering. Do an internship (or two or three) or spend a day on the job with someone in the field. Participate in the Muhlenberg Shadow Program (MSP). Remember, after you complete an advanced degree, you will be looking for a job, so be sure to explore your field.

Step 4: Evaluate the pros & cons of making this choice.**

Ex: Am I likely to find a job? Am I willing to relocate? Can I live on the salary I will be offered after I graduate? Am I willing to learn the skills needed? Will my ultimate path be consistent with my values, interests and skills?

Step 5: Make a Realistic Action Plan.

Develop a timetable and write the steps you will take to accomplish the goal, given other commitments (current classes, campus activities, jobs, etc). (See the Suggested Timetable for Applying to Grad School in this guide.)

Worksheet

Putting your goals in writing will help ensure that you will proceed toward them.

Step 1: Identify your goal or objective.

Step 2: Determine your options/alternatives.

Step 3: Research. Explore. Gather information.

Step 4: Identify potential barriers and steps to avoid/overcome these.

Step 5: Evaluate the pros and cons of making this choice.

Step 6: Make an Action Plan.

I will complete this process by _____

Signature

(By signing and dating the worksheet you are more likely to follow through - give yourself that added incentive!)

**If you change your mind, begin the process again using this experience as added information to consider when you do Steps 2, 3, and 4.

Tip: If you prefer to talk rather than write, you can discuss the steps with a listening partner (friend, Career Coach, etc.) and ask that person to write down the main points of what you talk about.

Postgraduate Awards

Postgraduate awards include opportunities to fund graduate study, as well as opportunities to spend a year or two doing something worthwhile before heading to graduate school. Some awards are to be applied for in senior year, while others are for sophomores and juniors.

Muhlenberg students and recent graduates have applied for and received such prestigious awards as the Fulbright, Truman, Rotary, National Science Foundation, and more. Additional information on the awards and award winners can be found on Muhlenberg's website at <http://www.muhlenberg.edu/main/aboutus/dean-academic/awards/>, or through the link on the Career Center website.

These are generally awards that do not require a service or repayment. Sometimes, they are a block amount designed to help offset costs, and sometimes they cover specific costs such as tuition and fees plus a stipend to help with expenses. A grant may require one to be studying a certain field and is usually awarded to someone who demonstrates need. A fellowship is usually awarded on the basis of ability and does not require a demonstration of financial need. The portion of a grant or fellowship that is used to cover anything other than educational expenses may be considered taxable income.

Postgraduate awards offer an excellent way to seek funding to meet your goals, but they aren't for everyone. Awards seek to find the most scholarly students, *those with a passion for learning and a restless curiosity*. Unfortunately, students who might be highly qualified often overlook these opportunities.

The following are a few quick tips if you are considering applying:

- Look online at the website noted above to find details on several national and international awards.
- Talk through your ideas with an advisor or faculty member who knows you well. Ask her/him to challenge you. You need to dig deeper than you may be used to. Think of the old adage about peeling an onion – the focused ideas are a few layers deeper than you might initially be thinking. You need to demonstrate that focus and speak about your intended area of study as if you are already a graduate student in that field.
- Plan ahead. Know your deadlines. Ask well ahead of time for recommendations you may need. Plan to revise your personal statement or essay several times before it is finalized.
- GO FOR IT! We hear from alumni that the process alone made it worthwhile, regardless of whether or not they received awards. The self-reflection and discipline required for the application process provide excellent preparation for whatever may lie ahead for you.

The Grad School Process

Applying to graduate programs can seem like a daunting task.

This info will:

- help you decide whether or not you should apply to graduate school;
- show you how to choose a program that suits your needs;
- offer advice on what your admissions essay should and should not include;
- let you know when you should be doing all of these things.

Should I go to graduate school?

Before you apply to a graduate program, ask yourself why you want to go. Postgraduate education is not an alternative to getting a job, nor can you be certain that your advanced degree will increase your earning power. It's much easier to write a resume and get a job than you might think. In fact, if you fear that the real world is going to be difficult and terrifying, the best thing you can do for yourself is jump right in and get an internship or some other kind of work experience. If you need assistance, ask a Career Counselor for help. If you do not need a graduate or professional education to reach your eventual career goal, why spend the time and money required to earn it when you'd be better served by obtaining hands-on work experience?

Graduate schools will want to know that you are focused and serious about the field. Delaying graduate school for a year or two while you gain related experience is a great way to demonstrate your commitment. Let your passion for learning more about a subject drive your decision to apply.

On the other hand, if your career goal requires you to study a particular field in greater depth than an undergraduate education allows, or you need an advanced degree to reach your eventual career goal, then a graduate program it is. Also, if you are driven to attain an advanced degree simply for the joy of learning, go for it!

Where can I go for information?

Peterson's Guides – Can be found in Trexler Library with specific information on Master's and PhD programs. There is a guide for each general category of academic study, including humanities, medicine, social sciences, and business. The guides list programs alphabetically by field and offer statistics such as acceptance rates, price per credit, application deadlines, faculty research, and the size of the departments. The most recent edition can be found in the Trexler Library or online at www.petersons.com.

Educational Rankings Annual – Can be a good resource to narrow down the possibilities and evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of various programs. This publication rates graduate programs in most academic fields according to overall strength and value for money. Ask faculty in your department for other resource recommendations. **Note: While rankings can be helpful, they may not be the complete story since the criteria used by each source may or may not be criteria that are most important to you. Rankings should not be used as your sole decision-making tool.**

Websites listed in this guide can be a good starting point for gathering information. Individual university and program websites are essential to visit as part of your research process.

Don't forget to consult faculty members in your intended field of study. Not only will they have advice for you, they can also connect you with their colleagues. Your professors and their contacts at other institutions can provide you with a wealth of knowledge concerning various graduate programs.

In graduate school, the activity of the individual professor or department in which you are studying may be more important than the prestige of the overall institution. Do not under-estimate the benefit of keeping current with what is happening in your chosen discipline. Become familiar with the journals and publications in that field. Follow your area of specialization and know who is publishing and from what institutions. Also note those who are on the editorial boards of those publications. You can research this using Google Scholar. It's helpful to learn which faculty co-author with students.

There are several basic questions to keep in mind as you examine institutions. First, look at their academic training, and secondly at their research activities. In addition, how do they approach teaching and the area of student development? Additional information to consider includes the make-up of the graduate student body, the library and research facilities, as well as students and faculty, and what kind of financial assistance is possible? Other important questions include what kinds of experiential opportunities exist, such as assistantships and internships, what types of advisement and career services they provide, and where do program graduates find employment?

It is also a good idea to visit the institutions in which you are interested. Some criteria to focus on include faculty reputation, career opportunities, the size of the department, the quality of their facilities, the availability of financial aid, teaching and research opportunities, as well as any other factors you determine to be high on your priority list.

A good rule of thumb is to apply to 6-9 Masters or PhD programs, 10 medical schools, or 6-9 law schools. See "Tips for Evaluating Graduate Schools" for more information.

How do I get in?

Typically, the criteria for admission into a graduate program are as follows:

1. Satisfactory undergraduate GPA and success in relevant courses (varies);
2. High admission test scores (varies);
3. Detailed letters of recommendation (2-3);
4. A well-written admissions essay or personal statement;
5. A strong personal interview (required by some programs).

As the particulars of each institution's entrance requirements vary, be certain that you examine each university's literature/website carefully.

Though you do not necessarily need a bachelor's degree in the field you wish to study in graduate school, there may be a preference toward candidates with relevant courses and/or observation or work experience in the discipline or field. Many programs have prerequisite requirements; if you can't meet them immediately, don't panic. At some universities you can complete these courses as a part-time, non-degree seeking student before you actually apply to the program.

Graduate Admission Test

Most institutions will require you to submit your scores on a **graduate admission test**. These include:

- *GRE (Graduate Record Examination; general and subject tests);
- *MCAT (Medical College Admission Test);
- LSAT (Law School Admission Test);
- GMAT (Graduate Management Assessment Test);
- MAT (Miller Analogies Test);
- DAT (Dental Admission Test);
- OAT (Optometry Admission Test);
- PCAT (Pharmacy).

*These entrance exams are also used for veterinary school.

In this guide, there is more information on these tests. Check the requirements of the program to which you are applying so you know which admissions tests are necessary.

Letters of Recommendation

Be sure to obtain letters of recommendation from your professors. Some programs will require more than others, so make sure you review the admission requirements for each institution you intend to apply to very carefully. Check with the institution of your choice regarding their policy on letters. They may require that the recommendation be from faculty members; however, some schools may specify a mix of faculty members and others who know you well. When choosing a recommender, you should look for someone who has a high opinion of you, knows you in and out of class, and is familiar with your goals. This person should be someone whose opinion will be held in high regard.

When asking professors for letters of recommendation, it is important to set up an appointment to discuss it; don't just show up at their door and ask them to write your letter. Be sure to take along a copy of your resume and a list of courses you took with that professor. Discuss your long term goals with the faculty member, and make certain that s/he can write a positive recommendation for you. Remind her/him of specific papers/projects/characteristics you hope s/he can mention that will be relevant to your application. Give her/him an addressed and stamped envelope if it needs to be mailed, or complete directions if it should be submitted online. *It is recommended that you give your recommenders a minimum of four weeks' notice on letters. Send a nice thank-you letter when it's done.*

Confidentiality

Institutions will generally give you the choice of making your recommendation confidential or non-confidential. Discuss this option with your recommender. If you make it confidential, you will give up your right to review that recommendation. Typically, institutions will give additional credibility to a confidential recommendation; therefore, it is advisable to waive your right to see the recommendation. If it is non-confidential, you will have the right to see the recommendation. Some of your references may provide you with a copy of the letter voluntarily. The decision to have your recommendations confidential or non-confidential is up to you, but this decision must be made before your references write their letters.

See **"How to Ask for Letters of Recommendation"** in this guide.

Auditions and ePortfolios

Graduate programs in music, theatre, and dance will frequently require auditions. Programs in art, architecture, journalism, and other visual fields will often ask for portfolios. The purpose of both the audition and portfolio is to showcase your background and preparation in your chosen field. The admissions committee will also attempt to assess your potential from these sources. Check with your schools of choice for their policies. In your portfolio, be sure to label each piece individually. The level of proficiency in an audition will vary according to whether your program is in performance or in an area such as education. Again, check the policies of your preferred graduate schools so that you can prepare well in advance. Talk with faculty and review your materials before you submit anything! Education majors may submit the eportfolio created during student teaching. This can be as a link on your resume, in your cover letter, or on your LinkedIn profile. This is an excellent way to demonstrate your classroom management style and philosophy.

Admissions Essay

Perhaps the single most important part of your application will be your **admissions essay**; this is also the part of the process that you have the most control over. The essay provides an excellent opportunity for you to sell yourself to a graduate program. This is your chance to display your critical thinking and writing skills; the people on the receiving end use it to gauge your level of interest, commitment, and maturity. It should include, first and foremost, an answer to the question posed on the application. No matter how well you express yourself verbally, if you dodge the question your commitment will be in doubt. Assess your reasons for pursuing this field of study, relate your goals, and show that you are ready to undertake this demanding course of study. You cannot afford to write a superficial essay. Expect to write and revise this document several times before you submit it with your application materials.

Since the essay is such an integral component of a graduate school application, don't leave anything to chance. Show it to faculty members, the Career Counselors in The Career Center, and/or a tutor at the Writing Center to assess its strengths and weaknesses and to check for proper grammatical usage.

In this guide, see “Tips for Writing Graduate School Essays”.

Personal Interview

Not all graduate programs require a **personal interview** for admission; if yours does, you need to be prepared. Candidates who are offered an interview have met the basic requirements with regard to grades and test scores. The interview is the graduate school's way of selecting the best candidates from among the group of qualified applicants. Therefore, it is important that you prepare and practice before going to the interview. Medical schools generally require interviews, as do many business schools. Law schools generally do not interview for admission.

Be ready to discuss what makes you uniquely qualified for this program, your career and academic goals, and why this program is the best match for you. You may be asked for your thoughts on a controversial topic or may be asked to put yourself in a situation. In either case, they are not looking so much for you to have a “correct” answer, as they are interested in observing your thought processes and decision making skills.

Attend the “Gearing Up for Graduate School” events and our interview workshop to learn more about researching and interviewing. Schedule a Mock Interview in the Career Center to practice your approach before the actual interview.

How do I pay for this?

Begin researching scholarships, grants, loans, and other sources of financial aid **as early as possible** – ideally, you should begin this process in the fall of your junior year.

Attend the “Funding Grad School Programs” workshop in October.

Another option that may exist for you is a graduate assistantship. These typically come in two specific types: research and teaching assistantships. In most cases, these will involve 10 to 20 hours a week of undergraduate instruction and/or faculty research. You may receive tuition remission and/or a stipend to cover living expenses. Not only do these programs provide an inexpensive means of financing your education, they also provide valuable experience in your chosen field. If this sounds like an option you would like to explore, apply directly to the program in which you are seeking admission. Some deadlines for funding are earlier than the application deadlines, so make sure to request the proper information from the program and read it carefully to keep all the dates straight.

In this guide, see “Tips for Keeping Graduate School Costs in Check” for more information.

Tips for Evaluating Graduate Schools and Programs

Compare student-faculty ratios.

Look in Peterson's Annual Guide to Graduate Studies (current year available in Trexler Library Reference) 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 email 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.

Remember 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 2016.

A Suggested Timetable for Applying to Graduate School

Junior Year, Fall and Spring

- Attend “Gearing Up for Graduate School” events offered in October by The Career Center and various academic departments.
- Research programs and different fields.
- Explore the earning potential of your possible degree path.
- Take the appropriate admissions test(s). Be sure to prepare for these exams!
- Investigate sources of financial aid/funding, including Prestigious Awards.
- Attend an Open House and plan to talk with faculty and current students.

Junior Year, Summer

- Request application materials or collect/review online materials.
- Visit as many schools as you can, connect with faculty and current students.
- Begin work on your admissions essay (really!)
- Check on application deadlines and policies (admissions and financial aid).
- Revise your resume; have it reviewed by the Career Center.
- Research admission test requirements. Reserve your seat at a testing center.

Senior Year, Fall

- Attend “Gearing Up for Graduate School” events offered in October by The Career Center and various academic departments, if you have not yet.
- Request letters of recommendation from faculty, meet and discuss your goals.
- If you haven’t done so, or weren’t satisfied with your score, take/retake your graduate admissions test(s).
- Submit your completed applications, be sure everything is accurate and on time.
- Complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). For more information refer to their website www.fafsa.ed.gov.
- Apply for assistantships and/or other funding. Remember: these deadlines may be different than application deadlines.
- Prepare for your interview, if applicable. Contact the Career Center to schedule a mock interview.
- Revise your resume; have it reviewed by the Career Center.
- Update your LinkedIn profile.

Senior Year, Spring

- Call all institutions to make sure all application materials have been received.
- Visit institutions that accept you. Schedule time to meet with faculty in your program.
- Consider your options carefully. Look for the best fit for you.
- Explore ways to finance your education through fellowships, scholarships, research opportunities, and other financial aid options.
- Send your deposit to the university you choose.
- Notify other universities of your decision; this way they can offer your place to wait-listed candidates.
- Notify those who helped you of your decision and send thank-you notes.
- Notify the Career Center of your decision; complete First Destination survey in HandShake.

Graduate School Resources in Trexler Library and Online

How do I find schools that offer the program and degree I want?

Peterson's Graduate Schools Online
Search by discipline.

<http://www.petersons.com/graduate>

Peterson's Annual Guides to Graduate Study
Leading guide to graduate programs in the U.S.

Graduate Ref Collection 378.1553 P485an

How do I locate program catalogs?

American Universities

<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/CLAS/american-universities.html>

Links to home pages of U.S. universities, which in turn link to catalogs and available graduate programs.

How do I find rankings?

Best Graduate Schools <http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools>
U.S News and World Report ranking.

College & University Rankings
A guide to rankings online.

<http://www.library.illinois.edu/sshel/specialcollections/rankings>

How do I do a cost comparison?

Chronicle of Higher Education Tuition and Fees http://chronicle.com/interactives/tuition_fees
The Chronicle's annual list of tuition and fees at institutions of higher learning.

How do I compare institutions for internally available financial aid?

Peterson's Graduate Schools Online
Search by discipline.

<http://www.petersons.com/graduate>

Peterson's Annual Guides to Graduate Study
Leading guide to graduate programs in the U.S.

Graduate Ref Collection 378.1553 P485an

How do I locate external funding?

Cornell University Graduate School Fellowships <http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/fellowships>
Search by keyword, or limit by discipline or demographic.

Dollars for College Location **Graduate Ref Collection 378.3025 O52d**
The quick guide to funding for both graduate and undergraduate study, one volume for each discipline represented.

Duke University Graduate Student Opportunities <https://researchfunding.duke.edu>
Arranged by discipline. Includes an advanced search.

Financial Aid for Study and Training Abroad **Graduate Ref Collection 378.35 F491s**
Combined index: country and level of study.

The Graduate Student's Complete Scholarship Book **Graduate Ref Collection 378.34 G738s.**
Brief but diverse entries. Most areas of study are included. Includes career/major index.

The Grants Register Complete Guide to Postgraduate Funding Worldwide **Graduate Ref Collection 378.34 G764r**
Funding from foundations for graduate and postdoctoral study abroad.

Money for Graduate Studies in . . . [varied disciplines] **Graduate Ref Collection 378.3025 M742**
A separate volume each for Biological and Health Sciences, Physical and Earth Sciences, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and the Humanities.

MSU Libraries Graduate Fellowships and Loans <http://staff.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/3gradinf.htm>
Links to various lists of financial aid sources, or to websites of funders themselves.

Peterson's Grants for Graduate & Postdoctoral Study **Graduate Ref Collection 378.3025 P443g**
Details on 1,400 fellowships, scholarships, grants, awards, and prizes from American sources for study in the U.S. and abroad.

Scholarships, Fellowships, and Loans **Graduate Ref Collection call # 378.33 S368f**
A compendium of funding sources at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

University of California GRAPES Database <https://grad.ucla.edu/asis/grapes/search.asp>
Search of 540 private and publicly funded awards.

U of Illinois Graduate College Fellowship Opportunities <https://www.grad.illinois.edu/fellowship/>
Arranged in broad categories, such as humanities/social science.

UNC Funding Portal <http://baileydemofundingportal.web.unc.edu/funding-databases/>
A well-organized site. Muhlenberg does not have access to the subscription sites.

Yale Graduate School Fellowship Database <https://yale.communityforce.com/Funds/Search.aspx>
Select your field of study, citizenship status and the type of award you are seeking.

Compiled by Kelly Cannon, Reference Librarian, Trexler Library, updated July 2016

Tips for Keeping Graduate School Costs in Check

Consider attending public institutions rather than private.

Public institutions offer quality education at a fraction of the cost of private institutions — your tax dollars at work! The savings are most noticeable for in-state residents; therefore, get residency as quickly as possible in whatever state you plan on attending graduate school. Tips for getting residency are often available in the graduate school's catalog.

Apply for all possible university funding.

Review the graduate school catalog to discover all funding options from that institution. It is far more likely that you can pay for graduate school using university awards than it is using funding from other organizations. University funding comes in a variety of forms: service and non-service, need-based, and merit. Consider, especially, service awards such as research and teaching assistantships that will give you work experience in your subject area. NOTE: funding availability varies widely from discipline to discipline.

Teaching Assistantships are available to a student who is doing graduate work in an area which also offers courses at the undergraduate level. English is an example of a subject that is taught at the freshmen level by graduate teaching assistants. In a teaching assistantship, you will give lectures, grade papers, correct assignments, teach labs, and counsel students. Some schools abide by policies that require a teaching assistant to have completed a certain number of hours of graduate study or a prerequisite course.

Research Assistantships usually work directly with a professor. This type of assistantship may not be available for first-year graduate students. You should contact the academic department of the institution to which you plan to attend for more information.

Consider non-university funding as supplemental.

Don't overlook non-university funding from the myriad of foundations listed in scholarship and foundation directories. Indeed, many of these awards go begging for applicants. However, consider these awards as supplemental; rarely will they provide the funding necessary to pay for the bulk of your education. (Remember the Post-Grad Honors/Awards discussed in this guide.)

The Federal student work-study program provides students demonstrating financial need with employment opportunities. These opportunities are usually within the institution the student is attending, or another non-profit organization. Some institutions only provide work-study to undergraduates and not all have work-study funding available for graduate students. To qualify, you must be a US citizen, national, or permanent resident, and be enrolled in a degree seeking or certificate program half-time or greater, and you must be making satisfactory progress toward completion of your program of study.

Administrative Assistantships are frequently available to first year graduate students and can be found in a variety of offices. Usually, the graduate student is studying something that relates to that office, but that is not always the case. Assistantships can frequently be found in offices such as admissions, financial aid, student programs, career services, and others. Contact the academic department or the graduate school of the institution you plan to attend for more information.

Consider government loans as secondary.

Government loans can pay for much of your education at low interest, but many students end up saddled with debt long after graduate school. Consider loans as a good source of aid, but secondary, only after other award sources have been tapped.

Get a part-time job.

Get a part-time job on or off campus to supplement any financial aid. You might find that graduate school is less time-intensive than undergraduate school, as you may be taking fewer courses per semester. This leaves time to make some spending money.

Written by Kelly Cannon, Reference Librarian, Trexler Library.

How to Ask for Letters of Recommendation

Ask someone who knows you well and who will be able to discuss in specific detail what distinguishes you and highlights your achievements.

Ask well in advance of the deadline. *Three to four weeks* is acceptable, but it is helpful to consult with the recommender to see how much lead time is needed. This is especially true for letters for major fellowships and for letters to be written over the summer. Do not put this off. You want to give your recommender time to write a strong letter.

Ask: “Do you feel you know me (or my academic record, my leadership qualities, etc.) **well enough to write a strong letter of recommendation for the X scholarship or graduate program?”** You have now given the professor the opportunity to decline gracefully. If the answer is “no,” don’t push. This inquiry may be done via email – if you already have an established relationship with the person.

Schedule an appointment with your recommenders to discuss the scholarship/graduate program, its selection criteria, your most recent and commendable activities, and to suggest what each recommender might emphasize. You may want to let your recommenders know who your other recommenders are, so that they can write letters that complement, rather than repeat, one another.

Bring to this meeting:

- A current resume or a list of your activities and honors. Be sure to include internships or work/research experience, community service, conference papers/presentations and other creative or leadership experiences. Your resume can be longer than one page.
- A copy of your personal statement, project proposal and/or course of study proposal, or other descriptive information from the application. (Information about career plans, foreign travel experience, or non-academic interests is sometimes requested.) If you have not yet completed these materials, provide an informal version in the form of a 1-2 page statement.
- Any pertinent reminders about the work you have done for this professor that will help you highlight what makes you a strong candidate; past papers or exams are especially helpful.
- A copy of your transcript, if applying for a nationally competitive fellowship. This can be an unofficial copy to give your recommender an overview of your academic program, as well as your grades. If your grades are not what you think they should be, be ready to identify any extenuating circumstances (e.g. family or other responsibilities, number or level of courses taken, etc.).
- The official description of the criteria and the deadline by which the letter is due.
- Any cover sheets or official recommendation forms that should accompany the letter. **Be sure to complete any section that pertains to you: name, address to which the letter should be sent, etc.** Each scholarship or graduate program is different. If you have questions about waiving your right to access under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, discuss it with a counselor in the Career Center.
- A stamped envelope addressed to each grad or professional school if letters must be mailed.

Graduate/Professional School Testing Information

GMAT (www.mba.com)

This test is computerized only and measures your analytical skills.

GRE (www.ets.org)

General Test is computerized only; measures your verbal, quantitative, and analytical skills.

- **Subject GRE** is paper-based and offered in biochemistry, cell/molecular biology, biology, chemistry, literature in English, mathematics, physics, and psychology.

LSAT (www.lsac.org)

The LSAT is designed with four 45-minute sessions, one of which does not count in the scoring of the exam. It also includes a 30-minute writing exercise. This is not scored but sent to the law schools with your scores.

- *2017-2018 Test Dates:* *September 16, 2017; *December 2, 2017; *February 10, 2018 (*administered at Muhlenberg College)

MCAT (www.aamc.org/mcat)

The MCAT assesses an examinee's knowledge of basic biology, chemistry, and physics and evaluates scientific problem solving, critical thinking, and writing ability.

Miller Analogies Test (www.milleranalogies.com)

This test is a high-level mental ability test requiring the solution of problems stated as analogies, and is designed to reflect candidates' analytical thinking.

- Consult website for information on scheduling and testing locations. Testing sites may change.

PRAXIS (www.ets.org/praxis)

The *Praxis I*® tests measure basic academic skills, and the *Praxis II*® tests measure general and subject-specific knowledge and teaching skills.

- Now offered as paper-based and computer-based tests. Consult the website for details.

PAPA (www.pa.nesinc.com)

This test assesses reading, math, and writing skills for undergraduate candidates seeking a state approved PA educator preparation certificate.

Tips for Writing Graduate School Essays

- **Write like a scholar.**

Graduate programs are looking for real thinkers, people who get very excited about sometimes extremely esoteric little things. Write about what interests you and don't be afraid to be detailed, sophisticated, and enthusiastic about it.

- **Don't take "personal" too personally.** Don't be fooled by requests for a "Personal Statement". Grad school is serious business. Don't think of the essay as about you "as a person." Think of it as your history as an intellectual. This is not your biography; it is the story of your career as a scholar in your field. Choose for your personal essay those events which led (apparently naturally) to your choice of graduate school and research plan.

- **What do they get out of it?** Remember, no matter how important this step is for you, for the people reading this essay, it's really not about you. They are about to spend a great deal of time, effort, and (hopefully) money on you, so they need to be convinced that you're a good investment. The main thing you want to do with this essay is get them to picture you not only in their graduate program, but out in the world afterwards, contributing to their reputation as an institution.

- **Write a research proposal.** This is the best way to demonstrate your potential as a real scholar/researcher beyond the graduate level. Come up with the project you are burning to do during your time in graduate school. Convince them that it is exciting and important. Talk about how you will accomplish it. Lay it out in steps. Do not worry about whether this is an accurate picture of the future; no one has actually figured out how to predict the future anyway. A good research proposal shows the kind of interest, savvy, and independent thinking that grad schools seek.

- **Do not let them picture you as a child.** Graduate schools and law/medical schools get a million essays about how "ever since I was a child, I have wanted..." laced with sentimental

details about walking along sandy beaches arm in arm with grandparents, etc. This just gets them picturing you as a 3-year-old, which doesn't help your case. In fact, you don't even want them picturing you as a Muhlenberg undergraduate. You should even talk about your research here as *your* research—in collaboration with or under the supervision of your advisor. Be clear that you are collaborating and do not misrepresent collaborative efforts as original work. Emphasize *your* ideas, *your* contributions, *your* independent efforts.

- **Brag.** All this—*your* ideas, *your* contributions, *your* independent efforts—may feel a bit like bragging to you. So brag. We'll make sure you don't overdo it. Go on about all the exciting, scholarly work *you* have done. It will feel much more like bragging to you than it will to your reader.

- **Details! Details! Details!** Generalizations are boring and all look the same. If you want your essay to stand out, provide lots of interesting details and be specific about your career goals.

If you don't know if the details are interesting, ask yourself whether they are interesting to you. Show in your writing why/that they are interesting to you. Then, check whether they are interesting to your test readers. Ask test readers what they'd like to know more about.

- **Don't worry about being a nice person.** Chances are you are more than nice enough already. Don't waste your time demonstrating it. Grad schools aren't that worried about how nice you are anyway, and it will probably come through even if you don't try.

- **Be a scholar.** The culture at Muhlenberg is often to be self-deprecating about one's academic accomplishments, and to hide what one finds interesting in academic life. Be excited. Talk about what you've accomplished and how interesting and smart it is. Demonstrate that you realize how the program will help you achieve your goals.

- **Be interesting.** Remember, the person reading the essay has to read *hundreds*. What makes yours stand out? Do you have interesting stories to tell, laced with vivid details? Do you have a hook at the beginning to draw your reader in? Are you interested in what you have to say?

- **Pick and choose.** You will never get your whole life into 500 or even 1000 words. On the other hand, you want to write in real detail. So clearly, you will have to be selective.

- **Go through a lot of drafts.** Writers know that writing is rewriting. Even if you follow all of these tips, it will take you several rounds to separate the wheat from the chaff. Start by writing out a long letter (or email) to a smart friend, which includes all of the possibly relevant stories about how you came to pursue this career and what you want to do with it. Then, cut it down to your best examples.

- **Get others to read for you.** Utilize the Writing Center. They will help you sort out what's interesting, what's too general, what's too personal, what to expand on in more detail, etc. When you ask friends or parents or others who may not be in the grad school loop, give them an idea of what you are trying to accomplish. You could even give them this tip sheet.

- **Proofread.** Leave this until later, but don't skip it. What may seem like stupid little things—poor spelling or run-on sentences—can really turn off a reader looking for ways to make his/her pile of work smaller.

Written by Dr. Barri Gold,
Assistant Professor, English.
Edited 2013

JENNIE R. MACGUIRE

138 Raven Street • Barn, NJ (455) 123-5005 • jm233940@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA

Psychology Major

Cumulative GPA: 3.88

Public Health Minor

Bachelor of Arts anticipated May 2018

Honors

Dean's List (all semesters); Psi Chi (National Psychology Honor Society), 20XX;
Omicron Delta Kappa (National Leadership Honor Society), 20XX

PUBLICATIONS and PRESENTATIONS

• MacGuire, J.R. & Kan, T. (in press). What does it mean to be Autistic? Inter-state variation in special education criteria for Autism services. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*.

• Kan, T., MacGuire, J.R. & Avery, L.M. (in press). What's in a name? The inconsistencies of special education diagnoses and labels. In *Multimedia in Education and Special Education*. NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

• MacGuire, J.R. & Kan, T. (2015). Interstate variability in special education diagnostics policies for autism. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, San Diego, CA in April 20XX.

• Kan, T., Cope, E.J., Landon, S. MacGuire, J.R., & Steel, L. (2016). Changes in the WISC norms over time: Implications for children with disabilities. Presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, New York, NY.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA

January 20XX-Present

Independent Study

- Studied motivation and self-efficacy in students who request tutors
- Ran statistical analyses using SPSS
- Gained further experience in APA style writing

Advanced Lab (Senior Capstone Class)

August 20XX-December 20XX

- Conducted experimental study on stress and coping in college students
- Gained further experience with SPSS and APA style writing
- Improved oral communication skills
- Gained experience with various research methodologies such as observational, survey design, and content analysis

Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA

June 20XX

Research Assistant

- Coded IQ data for analyses in a developmental psychology research lab

JENNIE R. MACGUIRE

RESUME PAGE 2

Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA

May-July 20XX

Independent Study

- One of seven recipients of a student summer research grant
- Reviewed archival data on autism as a special education category
- Ran statistical analyses on Microsoft Excel and coded state-by-state criteria for autism eligibility services for analyses
- Started drafting manuscript for publication

Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA

January-May 20XX

Research Assistant

- Conducted research on changing IQ norms over time in a developmental psychology research lab

OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA

January 20XX-Present

Learning Assistant, Academic Resource Center

Learning assistant for psychological statistics classes

- Attend all classes with students and assist with class work and SPSS
- Run weekly workshop outside of class time to review class material
- Prepare practice problems and exams for students

Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA

August 20XX-Present

Writing Tutor, The Writing Center

- Assist students in a freshmen seminar class with writing over the course of semester
- Guide students in any discipline with writing in a drop-in center
- Serve as a one-on-one writing mentor
- Nominated by faculty for position

Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA

August 20XX-Present

Peer Tutor, Academic Resource Center

- Tutor students one-on-one weekly in psychological statistics
- Nominated by faculty for position

SKILLS

- Proficient in SPSS, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint
- Experience in social, developmental, health psychology and educational policy

RYAN C. CHARLES

Ryan.charles@email.com, (555) 221-0000
18 Doors Road, Jamaica, NY 11114

RYAN C. CHARLES

Resume Page 2

EDUCATION

MUHLENBERG COLLEGE, ALLENTOWN, PA
Bachelor of Arts: Political Science, Expected May 2018
Cumulative GPA: 3.6 (Dean's List)

RELATED EXPERIENCE

MUHLENBERG COLLEGE, Community Service

- Student Volunteer Coordinator* *Academic Years 20XX-XX*
- Linked on-campus groups to off-campus service sites
 - Facilitated partnerships for classes to integrate service-learning components into the curriculum
 - Setup and volunteered at multiple annual one-day events with Jefferson Elementary
 - Dedicated over 250 volunteer hours in the past 3 years through various events on campus and locally

HESS CORPORATION, NEW YORK, NY

- Intern, Environment Health Safety/Social Responsibility* *Summers 20XX-XX*
- Analyzed corporate giving trends to benchmark the company and find innovative ways to donate
 - Improved corporate website to inform Hess' global workforce about Environment, Health, Safety and Social Responsibility practices
 - Prepared and launched the first annual Global Safety Appreciation Day
 - Reviewed contracts between business and non-profit organizations

LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE, NEW YORK, NY

- Group Representative* *Summer 20XX*
- Selected to be one of 24 students to study public policy in the context of New York City leadership
 - Interviewed New York City officials and top leaders
 - Presented weekly projects analyzing a specific sector's information

INTERNATIONAL LIVING PROJECT, THAILAND

- Participant* *Summer 20XX*
- Awarded scholarship to travel to Thailand for 5 weeks
 - Studied Thai culture, performed community service and lived with a Thai family

ACADEMIC HONORS/AWARDS

Pi Sigma Alpha, President, Political Science honor society
Omicron Delta Kappa, Leadership honor society
Harry S. Truman Scholarship Nominee, Muhlenberg College candidate for a national scholarship to pursue public service careers

CAMPUS & COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

- 6th Street Shelter After School Club*, Coordinator *20XX-XX*
- Tutoring and mentoring program for children ages 6-14 who live in the homeless shelter. 5 hours/week
- Sigma Phi Epsilon*, Vice President *20XX-XX*
- Largest national brotherhood focused on diligence and community service
- Dance For A Cure Planning Committee*, Chairman *20XX-XX*
- One of the largest philanthropic social events on campus aimed to educate students on how to help fight cancer
- Students Have A Real Effect*, Advocacy Representative *20XX-XX*
- On-campus community service organization
- Judicial Board*, Academic and Hearings Boards *20XX-XX*
- Selected to serve on campus disciplinary sanctions board of students and faculty
- Writing Center*, First Year Seminar Assistant *20XX-XX*
- Trained to assist freshmen with the transition to college level writing
- Academic Support Tutor*, Spanish *20XX-XX*
- Demonstrate ability to modify teaching method to student learning style
- Cardinal Key Society*, Sophomore Representative *20XX-XX*
- Selected to represent the College at alumni functions and media events
- Urban Development Study*, Youth Projects Committee *20XX*
- Conducted research in a deprived and violent district to recommend to local officials how to increase safety
- Inter Fraternity Council*, Delegate *20XX*
- Committee comprised of representatives advocating for a progressive change of stereotypical Greek image

SCHOLARSHIPS

Muhlenberg Presidential Academic Scholarship	2015 – present
Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund	2016 – present
Sigma Phi Epsilon PA Iota Scholarship	2016 – 2017

STACY K. SILVERBERG

Muhlenberg College Box 2222
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Allentown, PA 18104
555-922-5209

53 Wood Trail Way
Medford, NJ 08055
SS123456@muhlenberg.edu
stacysilverberg@email.com

EDUCATION

Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA
Bachelor of Arts Degree, Expected May 2018
Double Major: Psychology and Media & Communication
Psychology Major GPA: 4.0, Cumulative GPA: 3.882
Honors: Psi Chi, Psychology Honor Society, Dean's List every semester

STUDY ABROAD

University of London, Goldsmiths College, Fall 20XX
Gained appreciation for social, educational, and cultural differences. Lived with host family and traveled extensively throughout UK.
Coursework: Intro to Film Analysis, London Theatre, Anthropology of Religion, Shakespeare's London

RESEARCH and CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE

Psychology Summer Research Collaboration

Psychology Department, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA
Collaborated with two other students. Conducted a survey design assessing the satisfaction of alumni who graduated with an undergraduate degree in psychology. Computed means of standard deviations for various aspects of the department and wrote report in APA style. Transcribed previously recorded interviews regarding participants' perceptions of different childcare arrangements. Formulated a coding scheme using several common themes throughout the interviews. Compared analyses of consistency and agreement. Presented to class and faculty. *Summer 20XX*

Research Assistant for Institutional Assessment

Provost Office, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA
Transcribed and processed data into SPSS for external reporting. Analyzed data and generated tables for distribution in order to support the growth and development of the institution. *Summer 20XX*

Perceptions of Mothers Independent Research

Psychology Department, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA
Designed study with four students and two professors. Documented and tape recorded one-on-one interviews uncovering students' perceptions of different childcare arrangements. Discussed overall themes and group observations among five different childcare situations. Wrote APA style paper and presented to departmental faculty. *Spring 20XX*

LVAIC Undergraduate Psychology Conference

Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA
Presented PowerPoint on "Perception of Childcare Choices" study with three students.
Displayed poster on "Color Perception and Its Effect on a Word Search Task" study with one student. *Spring 20XX*

LEADERSHIP/INVOLVEMENT

Delta Zeta Sorority, member 20XX - *present*
Risk Management Executive Position, *Spring 20XX*
Parliamentarian & Active Member, *Spring 20XX*
Academic Resource Center, Peer Tutor, *Spring 20XX*
Office of Admissions, *Spring 20XX - present*
Campus Tour Guide, *Spring 20XX - Spring 20XX*
Campus Delegate, 20XX
Freshman Orientation, **Student Advisor**, *Fall 20XX*

WORK EXPERIENCE

Lifeguard, Sparkling Pool Services, Inc., Marlton, NJ, *Summers 20XX - 20XX*
Cashier/Food Preparer, Panera Bread Restaurant, Marlton, NJ, *Spring-Summer 20XX*

Other Important Considerations

Resumes

For graduate/professional school, the emphasis will be on experiences relevant to the program to which you are applying. This is your chance to expand on research and other activities related to graduate school. *Please note: when applying to graduate or professional school, it is appropriate for your resume to be longer than one page in order to show the full scope of your background and experiences.*

- What experiences have you had that have led you in the direction you are heading?
- What significant course projects or papers have you done that are relevant to mention?
- Are there skills (such as SPSS or laboratory techniques, for example) that are worth mentioning?
- How can you make a strong academic case for your potential success in graduate school?
- Have you taken a graduate course somewhere already?
- Have you done independent research?
- Have you ever presented at a conference (on or off campus)?
- If you are applying for a teaching assistantship, do you have teaching or tutoring experiences you can highlight?
- Have you been the author or co-author of any publications?

Cover Letters

Your application may require, or you may choose to, include a cover letter or letter of interest. For more information on effective cover letters, obtain a copy of the Career Center's Cover Letter Guide, look on the Career Center website, or make an appointment with a Career Coach to discuss this further.

Interviews

Not all graduate programs include an interview. If your applications will include a personal interview, we **strongly recommend** you access a copy of our Interview Guide and set up a mock interview with the Career Center. When you make the appointment, remember to tell us which graduate school and program it's for, and email a copy of your resume prior to the appointment.

Developing a Plan B

The graduate school application process is always competitive. While you may think that you are an excellent candidate, the numbers may not be in your favor. On occasion, we have seen candidates rejected who we know might have gotten in if it were a different year, a different economy, or if the applicant pool were different. Once you have a sense of what you will need to do for grad school applications, spend some time on Plan B. What will you do if you do not get into grad school? Go into the Peace Corps? Get a job? Travel for a year? Pursue other studies?

You'll need to develop a timeline for your Plan B and become aware of deadlines. Take advantage of The Career Center's job search resources to help you with your plan. Make an appointment with one of our Career Coaches to discuss options and tips for when you try again and help you develop your Plan B.

Consider the following:

- Take a year off to build skills and enhance your application. Work or volunteer in your field of interest.
- Explore post-grad internships in your chosen field. This is a great way to gain additional experience.
- Investigate 'gap year' programs such as City Year, Americorps, or Teach for America.

Students with Disabilities

First, remember that you do not need to disclose unless you know you will need to request an accommodation. If you do require an accommodation, you should contact Disability Services at the particular university as early as possible to determine what documentation they will need you to provide. Universities typically have admission policies that prevent them from considering your disability in the acceptance process, but if you are concerned that knowledge of your disability will adversely affect your acceptance or potentially influence the process, you may decide to postpone your disclosure until after you have been fully accepted into the graduate program. Another possibility is to disclose to Disability Services, but request that they do not reveal your disability to faculty until after your acceptance.

There may be occasions where discussing your disability makes sense during the admission process. You may choose to mention your disability in your essay because it exhibits something important about you. (For example, how you overcame dyslexia to earn a 4.0 average in your English major, or how you completed a marathon in a wheelchair.) These can be very powerful testimonies to your academic strength and character.

If your disability is a visible one, your disclosure will take place the first time you visit campus. This may very well be before you have officially been accepted. If you will be meeting with faculty or other staff members, you may choose to disclose to them on the phone when arranging the meeting. You may also need to verify accessibility to ensure you can physically get to the meeting.

If you have a hidden disability, you may choose to keep it that way. You may be wondering how to keep your disability secret from your classmates while you are receiving accommodations. This is often an issue at the graduate level – especially in such competitive programs as medical or law school.

Also remember that if you receive accommodations on the graduate or professional school admission test, your score report will note that the test was taken under “nonstandard” conditions. You should be prepared to discuss the reason for this with the school if they ask.

Many students who receive accommodations in college try to get through graduate school without them. This could be a grave mistake. Remember, accommodations do not make the educational program any easier – they serve to level the playing field. In your effort to hide your disability, you may end up hurting yourself.

So when should you disclose? That’s up to you. Feel free to talk to Muhlenberg staff in the Office of Disability Services, Academic Resource Center, Career Center, or your faculty if you want to explore your options.

Testing Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you need an accommodation in order to take the admission test for your graduate program, it is essential that you **START EARLY!** Many tests require extensive documentation for approval of an accommodation and it often takes a very long time to go through the approval process. Do not assume that the documentation you provided to the Office of Disability Services at Muhlenberg will be enough. You may be asked for updated information, or perhaps even a new battery of tests, to “prove” your disability. The most important part of this is showing that your disability substantially impacts your ability to take the test, and that the accommodation is directly related to the disability.

Remember – if you wait until the last minute to request an accommodation, it is unlikely that it will be approved. Begin the process as early as possible, and be sure that your information is complete!

LGBT Students

Do You Plan To Be “Out” in Graduate/Professional School?

Whether or not to come out is a very personal decision and there is no “right” answer. For some people, their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression is such an integral part of who they are that to be closeted in graduate school would be denying their true identities. Others prefer to separate their personal from their professional lives and only share this information with close friends. There are pros and cons associated with these choices. The bottom line is this - do what is most comfortable for you.

To help determine what is right for you, consider the following questions:

- What has been your involvement with the LGBT community both on- and off-campus?
- Are most of your friends identified as LGBT?
- Are you out to everyone? Your family? Just close friends?
- If you have a partner, is that person out?

Selecting a Graduate Program

If you plan to be out, you may want to select schools that consider themselves to be “gay-friendly.” While researching possible programs, look for indications of this philosophy. Is there a LGBT group on-campus? How active are they? Does the school offer courses that deal with LGBT or gender issues? Are there any “out” faculty members with whom you can speak? Does the university have a nondiscrimination policy which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity? Does the school offer any form of domestic partnership benefits to faculty, staff, or students?

Disclosing During the Application Process/Coming Out in your Essay or Personal Statement

Once you have determined where to apply, the next decision is whether or not to come out on your application. Some people feel that their sexual orientation is irrelevant and choose not to mention it. Others believe that it is a fundamental part of who they are and want to be open about it. Many fall somewhere in between. Consider the reasons for disclosing on your application. Are you applying for a specialized program dealing with gender or LGBT issues? Does your career goal require an understanding of the LGBT lifestyle (for example, a lawyer specializing in civil rights or advocacy for LGBT clients)? These may be good reasons for you to disclose your own sexual orientation or gender identity. Another reason to identify your LGBT involvement may be to demonstrate a particular skill or leadership quality (for example, being the President of the SQuAd or coordinating the Drag Ball). If you are not comfortable coming out on your application, but would like to discuss your skills and experiences, you can always do so without being too specific about the precise nature of the organization.

The Bottom Line

The counselors in the Career Center are happy to discuss this topic with you, but when all is said and done, the decision is ultimately yours. Do what is most comfortable for you.

Sources: “Information for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Applicants”, <http://www.LSAC.org> and “Disclosing a Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual Identity in Graduate Psychology Programs: Risks and Rewards” by Jill Rader, The University of Texas at Austin



Muhlenberg

Muhlenberg College Career Center

Lower Level, Seegers Student Union
484-664-3170
careers@muhlenberg.edu
www.muhlenberg.edu/careercenter

Hours of Operation
Monday - Friday: 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.