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Using Rubrics in Holistic Admissions and Mentoring for Student Success

University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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Presentation Overview

- What is a Holistic Admissions Process?
- The Search for Desired Evidence in Application Portfolios
- Using Rubrics in Graduate Admissions
- Constructing Rubrics for Graduate
 Admissions and Examples
- Helping Incoming Students be Successful
- Strategies to Help Enrolled Students
 Succeed



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ETS' Engagement with the Graduate Community

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ETS Graduate Education Advisors consult on holistic admissions, recruitment and student success

Learn more at holisticadmissions.org/campus-conversations



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What is the Holistic Admissions Process?

Components of a holistic admissions process



Step 1
Preparing for the
Admissions Process



Step 5
Evaluating the
Admissions Process



Step 2
Collecting Applicant
Information



Step 3
Reviewing the Applicant Files



Step 4Selecting
Applicants



Holistic Admissions

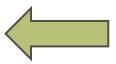
What criteria are considered?

In what order are criteria considered?

Application Review

Who is considering the criteria?

How are the criteria weighted based on goals?



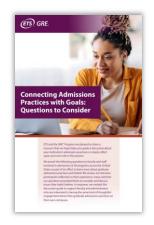




Excerpt from the Discussion Guide

PREPARING FOR THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

- 1. When you think about the admissions process, what does success look like?
 - a. What are the characteristics of a successful admissions process?
 - b. Do you have goals or targets for your program(s) related to enrollment or the "right size" for a cohort? If so, please describe these goals or targets.
 - c. What conversations take place to discuss the characteristics of a successful admissions process? When do these conversations occur?
 - d. How do you define student success in the program (e.g., program completion, time to program completion, GPA in program, productivity in lab/as researcher, job placement)?
- 2. What tools/information/materials are provided to help prepare faculty/staff to review and evaluate applicant files and make admissions decisions? Who has responsibility for this?
- 3. Are rubrics provided to faculty and admissions committee members who will be evaluating candidate applications?
 - a. Who develops them? Are committees tasked with developing rubrics?
 - b. What are the elements of the rubric?
 - c. Is any training or advice provided on how to use a given rubric?
 - d. Does anyone monitor the use of the rubric to ensure consistency in how it is being applied?
 - e. Is the rubric reviewed periodically to ensure that it is still addressing your program's needs?
 - f. How effective has the rubric been in helping to evaluate applications for admission to your program?

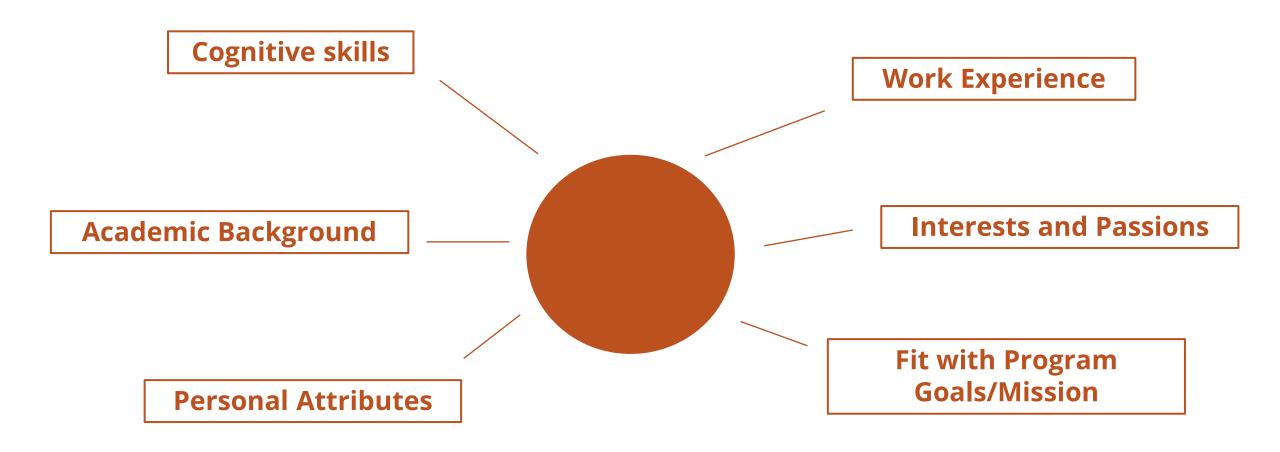


- 4. What, if any, types of training or professional development do you offer to staff/faculty with regard to admissions best practices?
 - a. Who participates in the training admissions officers, department chairpersons, faculty who will review applications (but are not on admissions committees), admissions committee members?
 - b. Is there any training provided or are there conversations with faculty and admissions committee members about implicit or unconscious bias in the admissions process?
 - c. What tools/resources are provided or used to mitigate unconscious bias in the admissions process?
 - d. Does any of the training content cover interview preparation/skills for applicant interviews? How to use rubrics?
 - e. How is the training delivered workshops, conferences, other?
 - f. What are the desired outcomes from the training that is offered?
- 5. What types of professional development would you like to make available that are not currently provided to staff who are involved in reviewing applications for admissions and/or making selection decisions?



Download here.

The search for desired evidence





Where is the desired evidence?

Evidence	Cognitive Skills	Academic Background	Personal Attributes	Work Experience	Interests and Passions	Fit with Program Goals/Mission
Undergraduate Transcript & GPA	•	•			*	•
GRE® Scores	*					•
Personal Statement			*	•	•	•
Statement of Purpose		*	•	•	•	•
Letters of Recommendation			•		*	•
Résumé & Research Experience				*	•	•
Interviews			•	•	*	*



Application criteria, purpose, benefits, drawbacks and mitigations

Application Criteria	Purpose	Benefits	Drawbacks	Mitigation
Undergraduate Transcript & GPA	Specialized experienceAcademic ability	 Growth over time Challenging coursework Passion for subject Well-roundedness Cross-discipline interests 	 Varying institutional rigor Different grading scales Pass/fail options (COVID19) Grade inflation 	 Examine in context Read between the lines Look for evidence of challenging coursework, growth Use a rubric
GRE Scores	Cognitive skillsGrad readiness	 Objective benchmark Equal opportunity Research-based Fairness reviews Professional standards 	 Overweight/cut scores Tendency to combine scores Prep investments vary Group score differences 	 Consider relevant scores Go holistic Use a rubric Avoid predictive emphasis Use alternate review processes
Personal Statement	PassionsPersonalityPotential	 Humanizes objective, quantifiable info Unique experiences, backgrounds, POVs 	 Especially subjective; perceptions dependent on reviewer factors Subject to explicitness of instructions 	 Needs to provide insights on persistence and resilience Gather input on application directions Have multiple reviewers Use descriptive rubric Target info committee is seeking

Download <u>Reviewer Diligence and Responsibility in the Graduate Application Process</u>.



Application criteria, purpose, benefits, drawbacks and mitigations (continued)

Application Criteria	Purpose	Benefits	Drawbacks	Mitigation
Statement of Purpose	 Reason for applying to program 	 Student's experiences as prep for advanced study If applicant is a good fit Applicant's career plans 	 Purpose not understood unless instructions are clear Disagreement with applicant's career goals Often heavily coached and edited 	 Needs to align with program goals Provide clear instructions on content expected Have several reviewers read Use a rubric
Letters of Recommendation	 Third-party assessment and endorsement Attributes Ability to succeed 	 Authentic perceptions of achievements, potential Concrete examples of subjective traits 	 Highly subjective; positive bias Prone to gender bias Courtesy vs sincerity Some are student authored Reviewer bias 	 Pay attention to language, examples Articulate dispositions; request examples Provide a standard form with metrics Diverse group of reviewers Use a rubric with intentional instructions for recommender





Application criteria, purpose, benefits, drawbacks and mitigations (continued)

Application Criteria	Purpose	Benefits	Drawbacks	Mitigation
Résumé & Research Experience	Practical application of classroom conceptsSpecialized experience	 Skills and dispositions to contribute to the field Proof of practical skills that can be advanced 	 Influenced by socioeconomic factors Can be incomplete due to relevancy questions 	 Understand role and impact of privilege Use explicit directions Use consistent format Use a rubric
Interviews	 Fit between student's aspirations and department's offerings Verbal and nonverbal communication skills Interpersonal and intrapersonal skills 	 More insight into candidate Can ask questions about points in application Another piece of information to get best perspective on student 	 Overreliance on interviews Influenced by conscious and unconscious biases If unstructured, may not provide the information needed Cultural differences might cause some students to be at a disadvantage 	 Be intentional about purpose of the interview Standardize interview and use a rubric

Download <u>Reviewer Diligence and Responsibility in the Graduate Application Process</u>.



Rubrics are an effective tool to support the goal of holistic admissions

- They help graduate programs **communicate the critical skills and attributes** important for consideration in a graduate application
- They allow graduate programs to spread key decision points across a range of documents (writing sample, statement of purpose, personal statement)
- They **extend the pool of applicants more holistically** by going beyond traditional metrics (prestige of university, GPA, publication)

Source: UCLA Admissions Rubric workshop, **Engaging Best Practices in Holistic Graduate Admissions** UCLA College of Humanities



Using a Rubric in Graduate Admissions

Evaluation of applicants is tedious and timeconsuming

Rubrics can:

- Speed up the processing of evidence
- Define score levels for each criteria
- Provide consistency in considering key, relevant information



There is a lack of transparency in the graduate admissions process

Rubrics can:

- Assist graduate programs in demonstrating how applicants are considered for the program.
- Provides consistency in documentation from year to year regarding how applicants are being evaluated.
- Assist graduate programs in assessing the usefulness and accuracy of the various pieces of evidence used in the admissions process.



Using a rubric to review and select applicants

- ✓ Use rubrics to help **ensure that reviewers evaluate applicants consistently, in alignment** with program **goals** and across multiple dimensions
- ✓ Give more points to evidence the program values more and fewer points to less important evidence
- ✓ **Increase efficiency** in review process and **reliability** across reviewers
- **✓ Reduce implicit bias**
- ✓ **Increase discussion** of applicant files whose total score ranges are similar or which scores vary by reviewer
- **✓ Recommend actions** based on **total score range**

Rubric Example A sample scorecard with links to



Download here.



Concerns about equity and fairness

Rubrics can:

- Ensure that applicants are reviewed in their entirety
- Provide **established criteria for a more consistent evaluation** of applicants. (being intentional as opposed to "I recognize when I see it")
- Prevent mid-evaluation changes to the criteria
- Apply a standardized process when we are using non-standardized parts of the application
- **Cross validate what you are seeking** in the components of the admission packet (letters, statements, transcript, etc.)

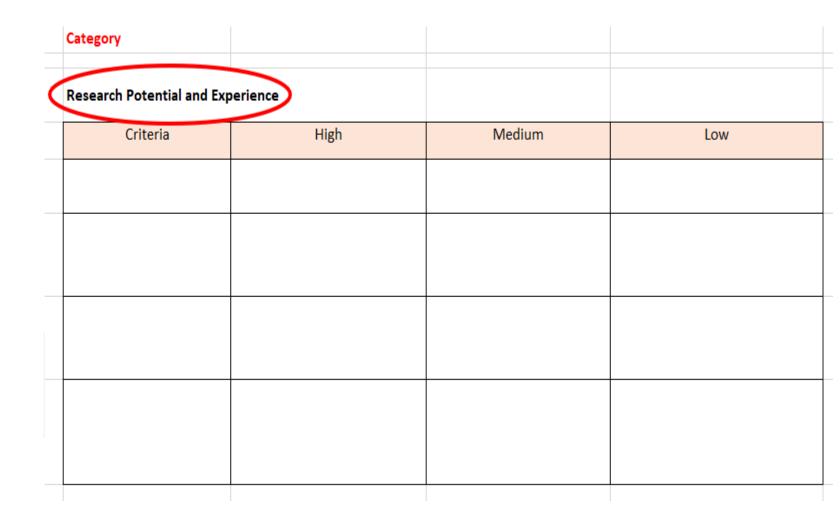


Constructing Rubrics for Graduate Admissions and Examples

1. Constructing a category

Rubrics can be used to evaluate students' applications with predefined and well-articulated criteria:

 Categories are categorical themes that provide a comprehensive assessment of the candidate's portfolio and are made up of clusters of criteria.





2. Identifying evaluative criteria

Rubrics can be used to evaluate students' applications with predefined and well-articulated criteria:

- Categories are categorical themes that provide a comprehensive assessment of the candidate's portfolio and are made up of clusters of criteria.
- Evaluative Criteria detailed criteria to be assessed; clusters of these comprise the Categories; criteria are defined with Score Descriptions

Research Potential and Experience	
Criteria	
Variety/Duration	
Technical Skills	
Attitude Toward Research	
Clarity of Interests	
Evaluative Criteria	



3. Identifying quality criteria and scoring level

Rubrics can be used to evaluate students' applications with predefined and well-articulated criteria:

• Categories are categorical themes that provide a comprehensive assessment of the candidate's portfolio and are made up of clusters of criteria.

Evaluative criteria – detailed criteria to be assessed; clusters of these comprise the categories; criteria are defined with score descriptions

 Quality criteria and scoring level – coarse grained scoring levels (e.G., High, medium, low)

			Scoring level
Research Potential and Expo	erience		
Criteria	High	Medium	Low
Variety/Duration	At least two years in research	One to two academic years in research	less than one academic year in research
Technical Skills	A variety of experimental, theoretical, and/or computional research skills	Has developed only one class of skill (exp or theor or comp)	Demonstrated little more than skills necessary for coursework
Attitude Toward Research	Clear commitment to and enthusiam for research, from all available evidence	Commitment to or enthusiam for research, from more than one piece of evidence	Commitment to or enthusiam for research unclear or only evident from personal statement
Clarity of Interests	Student has specific interests, is clear about details, and expresses a understanding of the big picture implications	Student can state interests, but they are general or superfical	Student does not have clearly stated interests
		Quality Criteria	



Resources from Indiana University, East: Example of a "Completed Rubric"

	Criterion	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Score
Application Form		None	Incomplete	Completed	Completed/Well Done	
Letters of Recommendation	Address qualifications and ambition of candidate for Master's program	None	Vague	General in nature	Directly address qualifications for program	
Professional Objective Statement	Content	Vague Lacks Depth Meaning is unclear	Some objectives Lacks specificity	Objectives w/ some depth	Clear objectives, Concise/ In depth	
	Writing	Multiple instances of poor grammar Poorly written	Some Errors A challenge to read and understand due to the errors	Few errors Easily read	Well written and engaging Grammar and diction are consistent with strong writing ability.	
	Aligns with Program objectives in terms of both quality and quantity	No alignment	Minimal alignment	Good alignment	Strong alignment	

Source: https://www.iue.edu/education/programs/mose/documents/MasterofScienceinEducationAdmissionRubric-revised.docx



Resources from Indiana University, East: Example of a "Completed Rubric"

	Criterion	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Score
Professional Documentation	Content	None or some with little relevance to teaching abilities	Minimal and/or Weak Connections to Teaching Ability	Shows Potential as related to NBPTS	Strong NBPTS level	
	Presentation	Random Not engaging	Some organization Somewhat engaging	Organized and Engaging	Of superior quality Reflects high level of motivation and competence	
	Aligns with Program objectives	No alignment	Minimal alignment	Good alignment	Strong alignment	
Resume	Shows experience as an educator highlighting development as a professional	Little relevance to teaching experience	Some teaching experience	Shows development as a professional	Strong background and experience	
Transcripts	GPA: Minimum of Bachelor's Degree from accredited institution	2.79 or below	2.8 - 2.99	3.0 - 3.5	Above 3.5	
	Breadth of coursework		Some weak areas in terms of applicable content	Content reflects adequate breadth and depth	Content reflects the breadth and depth of a master teacher	
Interview Score	Rubric	Below 2	2.0 - 2.99	3.0 - 3.49	3.5 - 4.0	
Final Score	Add total and divide by 12	None or some with little relevance to teaching abilities				



Sample rubric for illustrative purposes

Component & Max Points	Points values
Research Max = 5	3 – 1 yr UG + work/ internship research 2 – 1 year of UG research 0–1 – less than a year 1–2 extra for publications, posters, awards, etc.
Letters of Recommendation Max = 3	3 – very strong letters 2 – moderately strong letters 1 – below average letters -1 – red flag in letters
Work exp./CV Max = 3	2 – 2+ years related work exp. 1 – 1–2 years related work exp. 1 extra for volunteer work

Component & Max Points	Points values
Personal statement Max = 3	2 – suggests strong fit 1 – suggests good fit 0 – unclear fit -1 – poor fit 1 extra for hardship, disadvantage
GRE Quantitative Reasoning Max = 2	2 – 164–170 1 – 160–163 -1 – less than 142
GRE Analytical Writing Max = 2	2 – 5.0–6 1 – 4.0–4.5 -1 – less than 3
GRE Verbal Reasoning Max = 1	1 – 150–170 0 – <150
Total Score:	20–25 – Strong admit 17–19 – Admit 14–16 – Probable admit 10–13 – Probable deny 0–9 – Deny



In Summary Rubrics can:

- Be used to ensure objective and consistent evaluation of materials related to personal attributes
- Be used in both the application assessment and the interview process
- Foster transparency and consensus regarding the selection criteria



Helping Incoming Students Be Successful

Understand where students are coming from

1 Every student is a unique individual

2 Students may experience an emotional rollercoaster

Students are influenced by multiple communities



Students come to the program with unique mental and physical attributes and personal experiences that have shaped their individuality, including:

- Intellectual capabilities
- Educational experiences and opportunities
- Problem-solving skills and strategies
- Acquired skills or talents shaped to varying degree by parents, teachers, coaches, etc.
- Social skills (partly dependent on disposition/situation)
- Resources (financial, social support systems, time, etc.)





- Students may experience an emotional roller coaster
- Excited and proud of new status as a graduate student
- Imposter syndrome may set in:
 - Self-doubt they are good enough
 - Concerns of challenges to their self-esteem
 - Concerns that they will fit and feel a sense of belonging
- Mitigating strategies for students:
 - Social support network to meet emotional, personal and/or civic engagement needs
 - Time management skills





Communities of influence: Academic/Professional

Graduate Student Communities of Influence Model

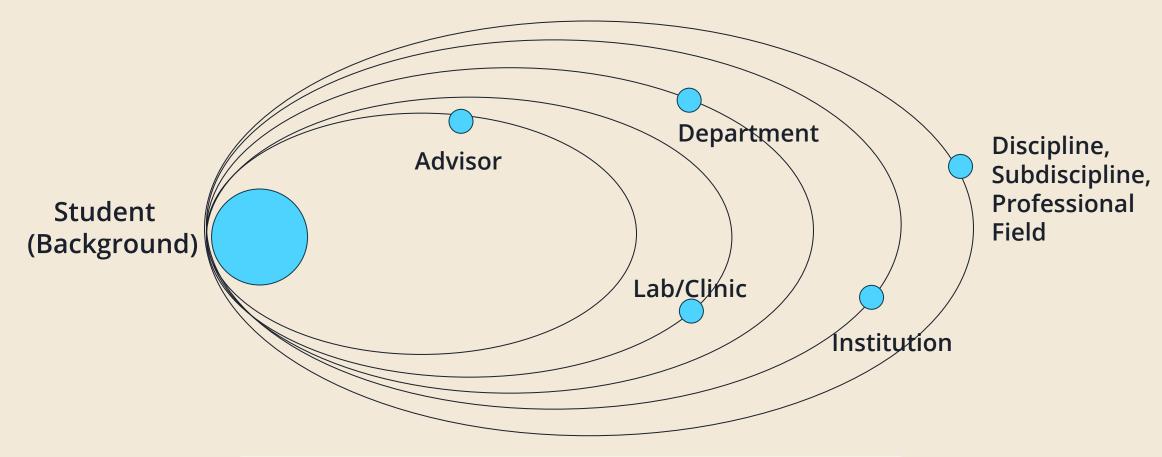
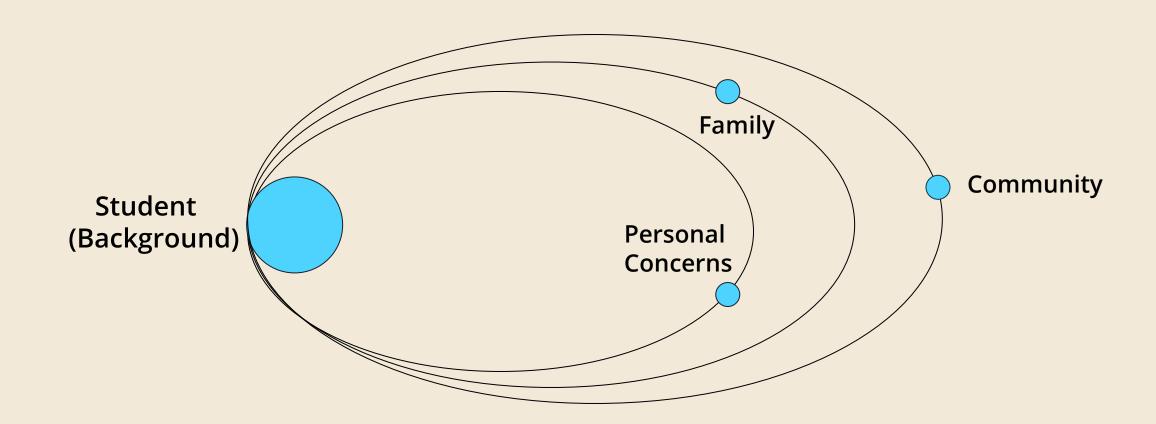




Image adapted from Jessica White & John Nonnamaker (2008) "Belonging and Mattering: How Doctoral Students Experience Community," *NASPA Journal*, 45:3, 350-372, DOI: <u>10.2202/1949-6605.1860</u>.

Communities of influence: Non-academic





Additionally, students may be

Recipients of Pell Grants

Financially challenged and need to work to make ends meet

Challenged by identified learning disabilities

Military veterans returning to the workplace



Communication, communication, communication

- Enrolled students can advise what is important to tell an incoming student.
 - Orientation with upper-level students and graduates
 - "Things I wish I knew when I started my program"
- Introduce and engage the institution and people in the department.
 - Have distinguished professors in the department reach out.
 - Have leaders of relevant student groups (department and university) reach out.











Strategies for Helping Enrolled Students Succeed

A key ingredient for success: Mentoring!

- A mentoring relationship is a close, individualized relationship that develops over time between a graduate student and faculty member (or others) that includes both caring and guidance.
- Although there is a connection between *mentors* and *advisors*, not all mentors are advisors and not all advisors are mentors.
- Resource: Entering Mentoring A Seminar to Train a New Generation of Scientists, by J. Handelsman, C. Pfund, S. Miller Lauffer, and C. Maidl Pribbenow





What makes a good mentor?



Effective mentoring involves not only the transfer of academic skills, attitudes, and behaviors, but a level of interaction, trust, and communication which ... empowers a student with the knowledge and confidence to grow academically and socially regardless of their environment.

- Sonjia Parker Redmond Tuskegee University Alumni and Outstanding Mentor



Mentoring

- Structured mentoring program
 - Vertical Faculty, postdoctoral scholars, advanced graduate students
 - Horizontal cohorts, peers
- Refining mutual interests
- Defining expectations as mentor and mentee
- Genuine interest in the welfare and well-being of the student *a*voiding the deficit model of mentoring: students need to be "fixed"
- Importance of culturally-relevant mentoring
- Professionalization of the student
- Mentor must be available and committed
- Positive role model
- How to identify effective pairings in a "buddy system"



Other Mentoring Resources

- University of Michigan Rackham School How to Mentor Graduate Students <u>Guide</u> for Faculty
- Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching Mentoring Graduate Students Guide
- Duke University –the Graduate School information
- Council of Graduate Schools list of resources
- **Imagine PhD** (link)-A career exploration and planning tool for the humanities and social sciences
- MyIDP (link) -Resources for PhD students in the sciences

Evaluating the information collected during the admissions process

- The information that is collected during the admissions process is crucial. Not only does it lead to identifying what students you want to admit to your program, but it should also
 - Identify how prepared the student is to be successful in your program
 - Strengths that can be amplified
 - Weaknesses (e.g. writing skills, quantitative reasoning skills) that will need to be strengthened
 - Unique Qualities or personal characteristics that can contribute to the success of your program
- Each year due diligence requires faculty to evaluate the pieces of the admissions portfolio and the directions that are provided to applicants, to determine if they are yielding the necessary information to not only make admission decisions but also serve as a guide to mentor the student through the challenges they will encounter in their program and the field of study.



Support considerations for Retention

- Provide funds for travel, conference expenses, etc
- Create a "Pantry" that contains food and other materials that students need for class and clinics
- Scholarships
- Industry support for conference travel
- Voices of second and third-year students and graduates sharing the best strategies to navigate challenges
- Current students provide helpful insight as to housing options



Create/identify opportunities to support students at risk

- Provide academic and professional workshops
- Engage students and faculty to participate in faculty guided journal clubs
- Encourage students to be involved in a social support network and become part of a critical mass of students with similar backgrounds
- Provide opportunities to explore their new environment
- Connect students with alumni network



Types of additional support

- "5 Minute Mentor" strategies to assist students
- Peer mentorship and Buddy systems (advanced graduate students, postdoctoral scholars)
- Academic Support
 - Tutoring
 - Writing workshops
 - "Capstone" written project engagement
- Mental and Physical Health Support
 - Workshops stress management
 - Professional resources
 - Health Center
 - Women, LGBT resources
 - URM resources





Consider student needs at different stages during life-cycle in the program and benchmarks

- First year coursework, induction into program, research, department
- Capstone Experience
- Job seeking

Provide frequent 360-degree feedback on progress in the program and whether they are meeting important benchmarks in a timely manner.







Professional development support

- Grant writing
- Opportunities to present research/scholarship/creative endeavors
- Professional societies and/or organizations
- Leadership development
- Recognition of accomplishments
- It "takes a Village" to successfully mentor students
- Two part coordinated approach: both students and faculty actively create a plan to action to navigate challenges of student's program



Other ways to enhance the student experience

- Recognition of accomplishments
 - Papers published
 - Honor societies
 - Participation on department or college committees
- Funding to attend conferences
- Speakers coming to the program and ability to engage with them
- Celebratory events



Opportunities in the profession

- Bring graduates working in the field to talk with first-year students
- Internships/ externships
- Partnering with Career Center focus on graduate students



Social support networks

- Maintaining support through completion
- Empowering the student to seek help, advice and support when needed and the freedom to fly solo when ready
- Creating an atmosphere of shared values and concerns for each stage of the graduate life cycle
 - First year
 - Effective group projects
 - Strategic capstone experiences
- Celebrating successes
- Encouraging persistence and tenacity in the face of challenges
- All mentors must articulate the same requirements and expectations to their students.





Support can . . .

Increase student satisfaction

Impact timely degree completion

• Create affinity for the graduate program

• Ensure professionalization of the student

• Strengthen the reputation of the department





To get more information

- Holistic Admissions Strategies
 - Visit www.holisticadmissions.org
- GRE® Tests and Services
 - Visit <u>www.ets.org/gre/institutions</u>
- If you have questions:
 - Terry Ackerman, ETS Graduate Education Strategic Advisor: taackerman@uiowa.edu
 - Dawn Lipker, Educational Partnerships: <u>dlipker@ets.org</u>
 - GRE Help Line: grehelpline@ets.org



Questions?