



2018-2019 | UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN | CAREER SERVICES

# PURSUING GRADUATE SCHOOL



Clarify your interests, goals, and options for pursuing a graduate degree and plan the application process.

# THE GRADUATE SCHOOL DECISION

From making the decision, to program research and developing application materials, Career Services can help you as you consider and pursue a graduate degree. The following pages get you started as you consider a graduate degree and, if you choose to pursue it, plan and prepare applications for graduate school.

## CONSIDER GRADUATE SCHOOL

### 1 Contemplate Graduate School

Before beginning the research and application process, consider the following:

- Your long-term career goals.
- Whether you need a degree to contribute to those goals.
- Preparation for the academic challenges.
- Financial resources necessary to complete the degree.
- Commitment to your intended field of study and career plans.

### 2 Prepare for Admission

Develop your competencies for graduate school admission. Connect with your academic department early for specific guidance.

- Get involved in research.
- Get to know faculty.
- Gain experience related to your field.
- Make sure your coursework is appropriate.

### 3 Decide When to Attend

#### Advantages of Going Straight to Grad School

- Your professors can write letters of recommendation with recent experiences in mind.
- You are able to live on a student budget and can continue that in graduate school.
- Your mind is still on school and you can more easily write papers and read long articles.
- You will have to make just one transition from school to work.

#### Advantages of Working First

- You will have more time to decide on a program, explore career options, and gain experience.
- You can establish financial stability and save for graduate school.
- You can have a break from school and be excited to learn again when you start a program.
- You may be able to get into a more competitive graduate program with work experience.

### 4 Develop a Parallel Plan

Getting into a graduate program is challenging for even highly qualified candidates. Before applying, realistically assess your level of competitiveness by researching past admissions data for each program of interest. Meet with an advisor to develop an alternative plan in case you do not gain admission.

# RESEARCH PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS

- Clarify the specific area in which you hope to earn your advanced degree.
- Research programs and faculty, including areas of specialization, research interests, and projects.
- Identify procedures, requirements, program length, costs, and financial aid.
- Consider location, population, housing, cost of living, and cultural and social opportunities.
- Talk to current students and faculty in that program to gain their perspective.
- Determine which program delivery method is best for you. Options may include campus/in-person, online, hybrid, and accelerated programs.

## Helpful Websites

- Princeton Review: [princetonreview.com/college-education](http://princetonreview.com/college-education)
- U.S. News & World Report: [usnews.com/education](http://usnews.com/education)
- Peterson's Graduate Schools: [petersons.com/graduate-schools.aspx](http://petersons.com/graduate-schools.aspx)
- Gradschools.com: [gradschools.com](http://gradschools.com)
- University of Nebraska–Lincoln Graduate Studies: [unl.edu/gradstudies](http://unl.edu/gradstudies)

# FUND GRADUATE SCHOOL

Evaluate your financial situation, then research institution and program costs as well as financial support, such as:

**Assistantships** may pay tuition, fees, books and/or a stipend for living expenses. Selections are made by staff and/or faculty in the department.

- Teaching Assistants (TA). Support and instruct undergraduate courses.
- Research Assistants (RA). Assist professors with research projects.
- Graduate Assistants (GA). Work in a role and department which may or may not be related to your area of study.

**Student loan programs** offer long-term, low-interest loans which typically require repayment after completion of your program. Before receiving loans, you must be admitted to your graduate program.

**Fellowship** applications, selection process, requirements, and activities vary. While some provide funding for studies, others may fund research or overseas experience. The Office of Fellowships at [unl.edu/fellowships](http://unl.edu/fellowships) has more information.

# COMMON APPLICATION ELEMENTS



Academic Résumé/  
Curriculum Vitae (CV)



Application Essay/  
Personal Statement



Admissions Test



Recommendation Letters



Admission Interview



Online Application Form



Application Fee



Official Transcripts

## RILEY GREENE

1481 South 23<sup>rd</sup> St. | Lincoln, NE 68524 | 402-555-8196 | [RileyGreene@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:RileyGreene@huskers.unl.edu)

### EDUCATION

**University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL)**, Lincoln, NE | GPA: 3.552/4.000

*Bachelor of Arts* | May 2019

**Major:** Psychology | **Minor:** Sociology

**Universidad del Salvador**, Buenos Aires, Argentina, May 2017-August 2017

Studied Latin American history and politics, Genocide Theory and Human Rights

### RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

**Undergraduate Creative Activities and Research Experience (UCARE) Grant Recipient/Researcher**

*Paul Wilson, PhD*, UNL Department of Psychology

Fall 2017-Spring 2018

- Received \$2,000 grant to assist faculty sponsor with research on the relationship between racial identity and academic achievement
- Conducted, transcribed, and coded 300 in-depth interviews using SPSS
- Completed literature review on relationship between racial identity and academic achievement
- Conceptualized and developed independent research project on transitional justice
- Created and administered qualitative survey to identify salient themes in transitional justice among college students
- Analyzed data and developed thesis and poster session presenting methodology, findings, and recommendations for future research

**Research Assistant**, UNL Department of Sociology

*Joan Mason, PhD*

Fall 2016-Spring 2017

- Conducted intake of participants through parent interviews in study examining socioeconomic factors in the cognitive abilities in children
- Briefed parents on process, purpose, tools, and confidentiality of study
- Recorded individual cognitive assessment sessions with participants and coded videos for evaluation
- Provided feedback to researcher on procedures, parent concerns, and data collection

### RELATED EXPERIENCE

**Outreach Coordinator**, Lincoln Literacy, Lincoln, NE

May 2017-Present

- Initiate and implement preschool literacy program at the People's City Mission serving 20+ children through tutoring, workshops, and parent resources
- Develop and promote literacy program for El Centro de las Americas serving adults through life skills focused activities and dialogue
- Recruit, train, and supervise 10+ volunteers to serve as teachers and tutors for over 100 adult learners

**Tutor**, University of Nebraska Athletics, Lincoln, NE

August 2016-May 2017

- Reviewed course concepts and terminology in Psychology and Spanish courses for student athletes
- Tracked attendance of incoming and outgoing athletes to study hall facilities

**Telephone Interviewer**, UNL Bureau of Sociological Research, Lincoln, NE August 2015-July 2016

- Conducted 12-question telephone interview of 208 first year college students on their experiences with school, work, and finances
- Conducted 21-question interview of 115 adults ages 35-45 for national longitudinal study to understand the effects of stress across generations
- Entered responses to SPSS based interface for analysis and reporting

## HONORS

Psi Chi Honors Society, January 2017-Present

UNL Regents Scholar, August 2015-Present

Franco's List, April 2017

- Recognition of outstanding character as a student at UNL

## POSTER PRESENTATIONS

*"Racial identity and academic achievement."* **2018 UNL Spring Undergraduate Research Fair**, Lincoln, NE

*"Cognitive abilities in children."* **2017 UNL Spring Undergraduate Research Fair**, Lincoln, NE

## INVOLVEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Mexican American Student Association (MASA), UNL, Lincoln, NE

Fall 2015-Present

### Promotions Chair

Fall 2016-Spring 2017

- Create and coordinate campaigns for events welcoming over 300 participants
- Raise awareness about the Hispanic population through social and cultural events on campus

National Human Resources Institute, Lincoln, NE

Fall 2015-Present

### Counselor

- Mentor and advise Junior Counselors in developing leadership, communication and goal setting skills, strengths, and self-confidence
- Led workshops for up to 40 youth at the Priceless Preteen Leadership Program
- Co-Chaired the Teenage Project guiding Junior Counselors in 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade

Student Alumni Association, UNL

Fall 2016-Spring 2018

### Vice-President of Membership Development

Fall 2017-Spring 2018

- Collaborated with a team of 25 to plan events for 1,000+ members
- Increased membership 10% through initiatives such as a rewards program, gaming style contests, and online and in person promotions
- Mentored members on academic success, involvement, and professional development

## Academic Résumé and Curriculum Vitae (CV)

An academic résumé is used when applying for graduate programs, scholarships/fellowships, research programs, honor societies and academic awards. A CV is more detailed and is most often used when applying for academic, scientific, and research career positions. Unlike a job/internship résumé, your academic résumé or CV can be over 1 page. Be sure to use section headings that best highlight your qualifications following your Contact Information and Education sections.

### Possible headings in suggested order include:

- Research
- Academic Honors/Awards & Scholarships
- Internships (if related)
- Publications/Presentations
- Education Abroad (recommend to include in overall Education section)
- Leadership and Involvement
- Work Experience
- Language Skills
- Professional Affiliations
- Volunteer/Service

# APPLICATION ESSAY/PERSONAL STATEMENT

While some programs may specify the topic or prompt(s) to which you must respond, others may leave the content up to you. In general, the following topics are of interest to graduate programs:

- Your reasons for pursuing a graduate or professional degree.
- Areas of study in which you plan to specialize.
- Career goals and plans for the future.
- Reasons for interest in the specific institution and program.
- Preparation and fitness for study in the field which may include academics, involvement, and work experience.

## Identify Your Prompt

### Introduction - Tell Your Story!

*Storytelling:*

- Start in the middle of the action
- Place the reader in the setting and make them feel the emotion
- Show your passion!

*Include a sentence connecting your story to your current goals.*

### Sample

*Introductory Sentence:*

“I heard the snow crunch ever so slightly behind me; it was then I realized they were following me...”

*Connector Sentence:*

“I can confidently say that caring for and nursing these two kittens back to health was the spark that ignited my passion for veterinary medicine.”

## Outline It!

### Body - What Have You Done? Why Are You Qualified?

What experiences have sustained your ambition over time?

What will make you successful in graduate school?

- *Knowledge* learned from coursework/experiences
- *Skills* developed through hands-on involvement
- *Abilities* that make you stand out

Why does this particular school/program interest you?

*Consider things like research opportunities, faculty, cohort size, location, culture, specialties offered, etc.*

### Sample

*Sustained Ambition:*

“My internship with Dr. Smith at my community humane society sustained my interest in veterinary medicine.”

*Knowledge, Skills, & Abilities:*

- Observe and identify animal behavior
- Verbal and written communication
- Operation of diagnostic instruments
- Critical thinking; ability to synthesize information
- Balance (school work & other activities)

*Program Interest:*

- Concentration in canine/feline practice
- Small cohort (tight-knit)
- Close to home

## Outline It!



# APPLICATION ESSAY/PERSONAL STATEMENT CONTINUED

## Conclusion - Goals & Story Outcome

How will this program help you reach your goals?

*Think about short- and long-term personal and professional goals*

Bring your story back in - reiterate how this experience shaped your interest.

Reaffirm your passion for the field.

## Sample

*Goals:*

- Gain practical & theoretical knowledge
- Participate in clinical work with outstanding faculty
- Long term goal is work as shelter vet

*Bring In Story:*

“Through my experience with the kittens, I gained an appreciation for the challenges, responsibilities, and rewards that come from working in veterinary medicine.”

*Reaffirmation:*

Prepared/excited to become a dedicated member of the veterinary community.

## Outline It!

### Basic Guidelines

1

Adhere to length, organization, and content instructions.

2

Identify and focus your main message throughout the essay.

3

Support your main message using specific examples.

4

Tailor each essay for its intended institution and program.

5

Seek feedback from faculty, advisors, and Career Services.

# PLANNING

Based on the information you have gained here, consider your plan for getting into a graduate program right for you. The sample application timeline is based on a May graduation and designed to give you some ideas for your own time line. Deadlines and requirements vary.

Spring of Junior Year	Summer of Junior Year	Fall of Senior Year	Spring of Senior Year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research programs and institutions.</li> <li>• Identify programs of interest.</li> <li>• Review application processes.</li> <li>• Arrange a campus visit if possible.</li> <li>• Write an academic résumé.</li> <li>• Research test preparation resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take required admissions tests.</li> <li>• Draft application essays.</li> <li>• Meet with advisors to discuss your essay and academic résumé.</li> <li>• Order official transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-take admissions tests if needed.</li> <li>• Begin filling out applications.</li> <li>• Ask references for letters of recommendation.</li> <li>• Provide all forms and information to letter writers a month ahead of the deadline.</li> <li>• Submit application forms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept or decline offers.</li> <li>• Submit financial aid paperwork.</li> <li>• Write thank-you notes to references and others who helped you throughout the process.</li> </ul>

**Your Timeline** | Enter your schedule for completing the steps necessary for reaching your graduate school goals.

Term:	Term:	Term:	Term:

**Program Timelines** | After conducting research, enter the details of the programs you are considering or will apply to.

School/Program:	Application Materials:	Due Date:

## GET IN TOUCH



University Career Services | [careers.unl.edu](http://careers.unl.edu) | 402.472.3145

Think of us as the Career Services hub. Centrally located in 225 Nebraska Union, all students are welcome to utilize our services. College-specific services are available in the six University of Nebraska–Lincoln colleges listed below.



**Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources**  
[casnr.unl.edu/careers](http://casnr.unl.edu/careers)



**Architecture**  
[architecture.unl.edu/careers](http://architecture.unl.edu/careers)



**Arts and Sciences**  
[cas.unl.edu/careers](http://cas.unl.edu/careers)



**Business**  
[business.unl.edu/careers](http://business.unl.edu/careers)



**Engineering**  
[engineering.unl.edu/careers](http://engineering.unl.edu/careers)



**Journalism and Mass Communications**  
[journalism.unl.edu/careers](http://journalism.unl.edu/careers)

The University of Nebraska does not discriminate based upon any protected status. Please see [go.unl.edu/nondiscrimination](http://go.unl.edu/nondiscrimination).