# Finding the Right Graduate Program:

**A Checklist of Questions to Ask Graduate Schools, Departments, and Programs**

These questions will help you get the information you need to choose the right graduate program for you:

## Time to Degree:

- What is the average departmental time to degree for Ph.D.'s?
- If an incoming student already has a Master's, how long is the time to degree?
- What is the timeline of completion (including course work, comprehensive exams, and dissertation milestones)?
- What is the attrition rate?

## Program Options:

- Are joint dissertations possible?
- What interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary opportunities are available?
- What types of teacher training are available for both academic and nonacademic careers?
- What types of internships or externships are available?
- Are there electronic portfolio tools available to gather information about/products of the degree process?
- How actively are students involved in departmental governance?
- What types of teaching, research, or administrative assistantships are available?
- Are there opportunities and training in grant writing, and publishing?
- Is there exposure to disciplinary associations, publications, and conferences?

## Benefits:

- What types of funding are available? For how long?
- What types of health care benefits are available to graduate students?
- What types of childcare options are available?
MENTORING:
✓ What are the guidelines, if any, for faculty mentoring?
✓ How does a student find a mentor?
✓ How do committee members mentor?
✓ How many times per year do doctoral advisors meet with students to monitor progress?
✓ What has the advisor published?
✓ Is the advisor actively involved in research?
✓ What is the advisor’s reputation as a teacher?
✓ To what extent is the advisor willing to involve students in his/her research?
✓ To what extent does the advisor show interest in or support the student’s own research?
✓ Can mentors/advisors/committee members be selected and appointed from outside the university?

CAREER PLANNING:
✓ What types of professional development activities (groups, colloquia, seminars, etc.) are organized for/by the students?
✓ Are there any opportunities for networking/training with outside professionals (both in various types of institutions and outside the academy)?
✓ What types of positions (academic and nonacademic) do students find after graduation?
✓ Can the department/program provide accounts of graduates’ job experiences after graduation?
✓ What are the salary expectations and/or scales?
✓ Does the department/program keep track of its alumni, and have any of the alumni offered to be contacts for current doctoral students?
✓ What proportion of students get jobs?
✓ What types of career placement services are there?

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