

# **Keys to Grad School Apps**

**Planners' Writing Exchange - Fall 2012**

# My qualifications

- \* I'm a two-time grad school applicant!
  - \* PhD Econ programs
  - \* Master of Urban Planning programs
- \* Applications met with varying success
  - \* So, I have an idea of what works & what doesn't
- \* I'm now a (funded) grad student!
  - \* I've been where you are
  - \* And I am where you want to go (kind of)

# Why Grad School?

- \* What is your motivation to apply?
- \* Where are you heading?
- \* How *do you envision* grad school helping you get there?

# Are you ready?

- \* Academically
  - \* Relevant coursework
  - \* Advanced reading & communication skills
- \* Personally
  - \* Stress management
  - \* Maturity level
- \* Financially
  - \* Debt?

# How to choose a program?

- \* Faculty interests
- \* Funding
- \* Department culture
  - \* Are its students happy?
  - \* Teaching, research, mentoring opportunities

# How to choose a program?

- \* Connection to other departments within the University
- \* Career goals & outcomes of current students
- \* Location
  - \* Distance from family, spousal considerations, climate, etc.
  - \* Informs research of faculty and post-grad professional opportunities—particularly true in Urban Planning

# Applications!

- ✱ Admissions committee
  - ✱ 5-15 junior and senior faculty (sometimes a student)
  - ✱ read in advance and discussed at a meeting
  - ✱ decisions usually made democratically with some discretion of the program director

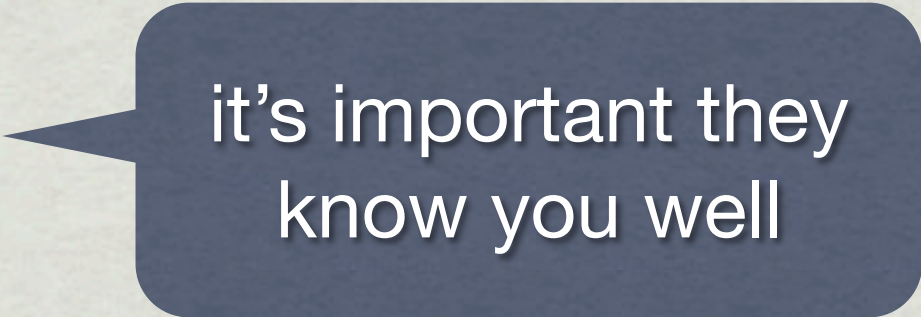
# Applications!

- ✱ Elements
  - ✱ Personal statement
  - ✱ Recommendations
  - ✱ Academic record
  - ✱ GRE
  - ✱ Experience (resume)



# Recommendations

- \* Ask at least a few months in advance
- \* Who to ask?
  - \* Professors
  - \* Professional supervisors
  - \* PhDs who had you in class or advised you in research (if you have to)
- \* Follow-up with your recommenders
- \* Stay in touch with potential recommenders if not applying immediately



it's important they  
know you well

# Personal Statement

- \* Tell a story (or two)
  - \* That connects your experience to planning
  - \* Show what you've done and how you did it (HTWF example)
- \* Be clear about your career goals
  - \* Why will this program help you accomplish them?
- \* Tell how you fit with the department
  - \* Mention faculty, research centers, or concentrations

# Personal Statement

- \* Potentially address flaws in your application
- \* Follow guidelines pertaining to length (usually 1-2 pages)
- \* Ask someone to review it
  - \* Professor
  - \* Graduate student
  - \* PWE!
- \* Let's look at one of my personal statements

# GRE

- \* Study!
  - \* Purchase workbooks, both general and math/verbal specific
  - \* At least 1-2 months leading up to test
  - \* Practice tests, practice tests, practice tests!
  - \* Sign up for a class (if affordable and if you learn well in such a setting)
- \* Take it twice if you have to

# Grad school resume

- \* Probably will differ from your professional resume
  - \* Style varies depending on professional/academic nature of program
- \* Highlight what the graduate program would value
  - \* Significant/relevant professional work
  - \* Academic research
  - \* Unique experiences: volunteer work or study abroad
- \* Utilize your resources: PWE or Career Services

# Questions?

- \* Brett Barkley, DURP Writing Assistant  
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## **OFFICE HOURS**

**MON & WED: 11-2PM**

**TUE: 12:45-3:15PM**