



## Taking Steps toward Graduate School

### Freshman Year (Self-Discovery)

- Explore your interests and abilities
- Talk to and visit your academic counselor
- Develop productive study habits and skills
- Establish (and maintain) at least a 3.0 GPA
- Seek research opportunities. Join an undergraduate research program on your campus, or join a research lab/opportunity on or off campus
- Develop and practice good financial/budgeting habits
- Plan ahead about your academic course load distribution so that you do not carry more than 12-14 credits in upper level courses in your senior year

### Sophomore Year (Assessing Options)

- Define and establish your personal and career goals, ask yourself what you enjoy doing and unpack that; visit your career services office and graduate programs for assistance
- Begin to make contacts in your chosen career area
- Identify potential mentoring relationships with professors and graduate students
- Begin or continue conducting undergraduate research with a professor
- Attend graduate and professional school fairs, meet with recruiters and ask questions. Start a diary/journal
- Begin web searches on summer research internships and co-ops at various universities and apply to those which match your goals, for example SROP at the Big Ten Universities. This is an important step toward graduate school admission
- Join a grad prep/research training program (for example, the McNair Scholars Program)

### Junior Year (Setting Goals)

- Graduate Schools pay particular attention to grades in the major, so keep grades up, and get tutoring early, if needed
- Examine and confirm your career choices
- Determine a relevant major and minor. If possible, talk to graduate students and faculty in your major area about graduate studies

- Strengthen your mentoring relationships. Discuss your interests with faculty and advisors
- Look for relevant graduate programs. Contact departments for catalogues and visit programs and campuses that interest you, when possible. Research the grad program profiles for details on the program
- Get acquainted with the faculty/authors of specific research that interest you and locate the graduate programs where they teach
- Participate in research, learn academic/scientific writing. Enroll in a research methods course
- Contact and meet with people to discuss how to fund your graduate studies
- Start your Personal Statement and Statement of Purpose; it takes time to write a good, concise, impactful statement
- Take the appropriate entrance exams. Some, but not all, UW-Madison graduate programs require the GRE (Graduate Record Examination)

### Senior Year (Making Your Choice)

- Enroll in upper-level classes and keep the grades up. Grades in the fall semester are critical, graduate programs admit on the basis of these grades
- Continue research and/or apply for pre-doctoral fellowships (e.g., NASA, AAUW, NSF GRFP)
- Contact faculty with whom you may want to work, after you have familiarized yourself with their research work
- Start early! Inquire about application deadlines based on when you plan to enroll
- Remember you have to pay for undergrad transcripts, GRE transcripts (if required by the program), and application fees
- Contact graduate programs for information about eligibility for application fee waiver
- Complete the application process (letters of recommendation, statement of purpose, transcripts)
- Contact the schools to ensure that your application is complete

*Based on the University of California System checklist*