

Meeting faculty

- My number one grad school choice suggested that I attend a conference (in my field of study). They were pleasantly surprised that I went, as it seems that not many undergraduates make the effort. While there, I went to as many presentations from faculty that I could. I introduced myself to a grad student from the university and talked over lunch. She then introduced me to the faculty. The grad student also told me a couple of things that the admissions board looks for (such as they expect their graduates to stay in academia). As well as national conferences, you can also meet faculty at regional conferences.
- If you're planning on speaking to faculty face-to-face, it may be best to first speak to faculty from grad schools that are easy to get into. That way, you can get some practice in interviewing, and you can be better prepared for the better grad schools.
- When attending a conference, the cheapest form of accommodation is a cheap motel such as Super 8 or Motel 6. The conference I attended also had a web page for attending students. On it, students requested info and asked if anybody wanted to share rooms. I should have shared a room as it would have been cheaper and I would have had another person to introduce me to faculty.

Interview / meeting with faculty member:

1. Be prepared to state what you want to do with your qualifications. Top schools expect you to go on to do teaching and researching in big-name universities.
2. Be prepared to explain why you're interested in that program.

Questions I asked:

1. What is the current number of students getting their Masters and PhDs?
2. What is the average time to complete the program?
3. How many students in the Masters program go on to get their PhD?
4. Would I be able to do research for my thesis abroad?
5. What funding is available?
6. What does the advisor look for in a student?
7. Are there travel funds available to attend conferences?
8. Is the person you're looking to study under planning on leaving or having a sabbatical?
9. How can I be better prepared for graduate study?
10. Can I speak to any graduate students while I'm here?
11. Are you bitter about the Revolutionary War (okay, so you might not want to ask this particular question. It was a great ice-breaker)
12. Who can I email if I have any further questions?
13. Where do you see the school in ten years?
14. What is the average age of current students? You may not want to go to a university that has Master's students who are young and only interested in partying.
15. Are there any summer opportunities to study or do research?

Be prepared to answer what books you are currently reading (Calvin and Hobbs probably isn't the best answer). Be prepared to answer whether you have read the faculty member's last book and what you thought of it.

What to do until you get to the grad school:

Get as much research experience as possible. In the words of my professor, "know epistemology...some of my undergraduates don't even know what the word means."

Preferably do an extended research project in your field of study. Corban college doesn't concentrate too much on individual research projects but you can probably find a professor who would be willing to guide you. You may have to do this as independent study. Again, this all depends on how badly you want to get into a good school—those who want to get accepted will go the extra mile.

I asked one professor (who is big in his field) how I could be better prepared for graduate school. He actually said that nobody had asked him before. I think he was pleasantly surprised.