FRESHMAN & SOPHOMORE YEARS

✓ **Take college seriously.** Most graduate schools require a GPA > 3.0 to apply and you will likely need an even higher GPA (typically mid-3’s or above) to be a competitive applicant. Your GPA may also impact your ability to secure quality employment after graduation.

✓ **Look ahead.** Research employment opportunities at different education levels within your major. Within the sciences, a graduate degree is commonly required for advanced research, administrative positions, and to teach in higher education. Talk to graduate students you might know (or seek them out) and learn what it is like to be a graduate student.

✓ **Establish relationships** with faculty members within your department. Become familiar with their research interests and the types of projects they are involved with. Discuss your interest in graduate school with them (especially your faculty advisor).

✓ **Get involved in research.** Approach faculty with research interests similar to your own to discuss potential projects. The **WSU Office of Undergraduate Research** is also an excellent resource.

✓ **Join professional organizations** related to your field. Many professional organizations allow students to join in some capacity at a reduced fee. Consider attending one or more professional meetings/conferences during your time as a student.

JUNIOR YEAR

✓ **Select potential graduate programs.** Research graduate programs online and then contact schools you are most interested in for more information. Discuss your school options with faculty to get their recommendations. The **Peterson’s Guides to Graduate Programs** (available in the Stewart library) are an excellent resource to get you started. Most students apply to multiple schools, using a stratified approach that includes one or more “safe” schools that they believe they have an excellent chance of being accepted into. Learn about entrance requirements, classes you will need to have taken, entrance exams required, etc.

✓ **Present your research.** Continue with your involvement in research with the support and guidance of a faculty mentor. Strongly consider presenting your research at a professional meeting or similar event (e.g., National Council on Undergraduate Research).

✓ **Get involved.** Consider obtaining a formal internship that will give you hands-on experience in your field of study. This will also help you cultivate professional relationships that can lead to strong letters of recommendation. Other types of involvement include volunteer work and participation in student clubs/organizations (take advantage of leadership opportunities).
✓ **Prep for your entrance exam:** Determine which graduate entrance exam(s) you will need to take. Some schools may require subject tests in addition to a general test (GRE, etc.). Begin studying for these exam(s) early in your junior year. Study guides and optional courses are available to help you.

✓ **Take your entrance exam:** This is usually done about a year prior to your desired entrance into graduate program. The GRE is only administered a few times a year so factor this into your timetable. Allow a *minimum* of six weeks before your application deadline (earlier is better to allow time for the test to be retaken if needed).

**SENIOR YEAR**

✓ **Retake your entrance exams** if you did not do your best the first time.

✓ **Consider submitting your research for publication**, either as a primary author or co-author. Do so with the help and guidance of your faculty mentor.

✓ **Select the schools to which you will apply.** Determine the application deadlines and materials you will need to provide. Applications are typically due early in the of the year (Jan-Feb) for programs that start in the Fall. Some programs accept applications on a rolling basis.

✓ **Author a Personal Statement.** Most graduate programs require the submission of a personal statement as part of your application. The school typically provides guidelines for length and content. This statement is a very important part of your application. Begin writing it at least a couple of months before your application is due to provide time for multiple revisions and feedback from others (faculty, WSU writing center, etc.).

✓ **Request Letters of Recommendation.** Select several faculty members, internship supervisors, or other professionals who you believe could write you a strong letter of recommendation. Contact these people in person (making an appointment) and ask them if they would be willing and able to write you a good letter. Give them a copy of your resume and briefly discuss your professional goals and accomplishments. Allow sufficient time (at least a couple of weeks) for them to write the letter. Also provide a stamped, addressed envelope for any letters they will need to mail (depending upon the school recommendations may be submitted electronically).

✓ **Apply.** Prepare and submit your application materials, including application forms, personal statement, transcripts, entrance exam results, etc. Be *sure* to submit application materials on time and to keep a copy of all materials you submit. **Verify that your application materials were received** (including letters of recommendation and entrance exam results).

✓ **Polish your interviewing skills.** Practice your interviewing skills in preparation for campus visits. The WSU Career Services Center can provide information on interviewing and do a short practice interview with you.