



## **Graduate School: Exploration Guide**

Follow the suggestions in this guide to begin exploring your academic interests and pursuing co-curricular opportunities that may ultimately lead to graduate studies. While this guide assumes you plan to attend graduate school directly after graduation from Rice, many students opt not to attend immediately after completing their undergraduate degree. Taking some time off may provide time for reflection and clearer decision-making for your future. Graduate schools, especially professional programs, expect you to have clearly defined interests and relevant experiences leading to an area of specialization. There are, of course, some programs that seek applicants coming right out of undergraduate school. Some schools will admit you and then allow you to defer entrance for a year or two. It is important to research this carefully to determine the best time to apply. If you decide to take time off, remember to develop a plan that complements your long-term goals.

### **First Year Students**

- Plan a tentative course of study with your Divisional Advisor
- Get to know your faculty
- Think about a major
- Join a club related to your academic interests; attend the Student Activities Involvement Fair
- Identify volunteer programs of interest; visit the Community Involvement Center/Rice Student Volunteer Program
- Learn about education and skills required for possible careers; visit the Center for Career Development
- Identify summer programs and job opportunities; attend the Rice Collegiate Job Fair/Summer Opportunities Fair
- Make arrangements to conduct research during the next academic year; visit the Office of Fellowships and Undergraduate Research

### **Second Year Students**

- Declare a major; plan the intellectual focus of your curriculum with your Major Advisor
- Visit the International Programs office for study abroad opportunities during your third or fourth year; attend the Study Abroad Fair
- Attend the Rice Career Expo; ask potential employers about desired education and skills for possible careers
- Continue activities related to your interests including clubs, volunteer work, and research
- Apply for summer programs and job opportunities

<b>Third Year Students</b>	
<b>Fall Semester</b>	<b>Spring Semester/Summer</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join honorary societies and professional organizations in your field</li> <li>• Plan to attend a conference or symposium; consider presenting your research, if applicable</li> <li>• Identify the area of graduate study you would like to pursue and decide how long you want to attend graduate school</li> <li>• Identify schools that have programs in your field of choice</li> <li>• Visit program websites and live or virtual open house events to learn about programs that interest you</li> <li>• Speak with faculty members, advisors, and other mentors for advice about programs</li> <li>• Plan for cost of applying (application and standardized test fees)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hone your list of programs, taking into consideration curriculum, competitiveness, cost, etc.; determine admissions requirements and application deadlines</li> <li>• Begin preparing curriculum vitae, personal statement, and writing samples; visit the Center for Written, Oral, and Visual Communication</li> <li>• Register and begin preparation for standardized tests</li> <li>• Look for financial aid opportunities including assistantships, fellowships, and scholarships</li> <li>• Request letters of recommendation from faculty</li> </ul>
<b>Fourth Year Students</b>	
<b>Fall Semester</b>	<b>Spring Semester</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue progress toward completion of degree requirements</li> <li>• Check in with recommenders</li> <li>• Request official transcripts from the Office of the Registrar</li> <li>• Complete and submit applications in a timely manner</li> <li>• Research the schools and programs before your visit/interview</li> <li>• Plan time off and/or alternatives to graduate school; visit the Center for Career Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete degree requirements</li> <li>• Submit financial aid applications</li> <li>• Visit/interview with programs</li> <li>• Update the Office of Academic Advising with your admissions status</li> <li>• Once making a firm commitment, notify other programs of your decision</li> <li>• Send thank you notes to recommenders</li> </ul>