So, what I was going to present to you today is tips on applying to grad school. Kind of give you a timeline because if you're juniors thinking about applying a year from now you are so ahead of the game. I am so happy for you. I've had students come in, let's see, last Friday, I had a couple of students come in today, the deadline day of when applications are due and still finalizing that personal statement. So, you're not going to be any of those students, because you're here now. It's a whole year before you'll need to apply, at least in some areas, in some instances.
Okay, can everyone see this? It's pretty straightforward. What I wanted to go over is just some of the resources that we have available for you in the career center. We have the Peterson Guides. We have both the online version of the Peterson Guide and the hard copy version. Right back here in that little cubby area is where my interns usually reside and the Peterson Guides are back there. You can take a look at those. And typically the way those are organized is in book one your discipline that you're interested in you would go and look that up. If you're interested in med school, you'd look up med school If you're interested in social work you'd look up social work and see whether or not it has a master's a PhD, what kind of degree that it's offered. And it'll give you a list of schools. And then your research begins. Another area is through our website, www.csuchico.edu/careers. A little bit later, before we finish, I'll show you where to find that information on the website. The summer before, so here we are, March 1st, the summer before you are applying this is a great time to do a lot of your research. If you want to start researching now, all the better, you'll just be very well prepared. The summer is also an excellent time to study for the entrance exams, whether it's the GRE's the GMAT, the LSAT, whatever exam is required of your discipline. And the testing office is in 420 upstairs. It is one of the best things that you can do is to find out what assessment do most of the colleges that you'd like to apply to, what are they looking for. Gaining relevant experience and enquire about scholarships, fellowships. You can take a test prep course for the exams. How many of you have looked into that and thought about doing that?
And are you going to do it here, do you know? And actually next, in April, the next talk that I give on getting into grad school and the process, I am going to invite the Kaplan representative. And Kaplan usually does the study guides for the GRE, the MAT, the LSAT, etcetera, and so if you'd like to hear him speak about those guides, you certainly are welcome to come. The first place I would start is upstairs at the testing office. Where do you get a guide for the GRE? Upstairs in the testing office is the place where I would begin to look for that information. What they will give you is the registration, the website and the GRE has some study guides right on their site. We have some hard copies of, probably published in 2005, of the GRE, what does it consist of, what does it cover. But one of the things that are now a reality with the GRE is it's all online. And so some of the techniques of taking that exam have changed from when you took the paper pencil form and you went back and could go back to questions that you really didn't know the answer at the moment and you wanted to make sure you finished; if you had time you could go back. Now, with the online version you do not go back. You respond to the question and you move on or you don't respond and you move on and you can't go back. That's my understanding of how the GRE is set up. So I would start at testing, that's the first place. And again, the Kaplan people will be here on our next how to get into grad school seminar. And you could certainly ask them more specific questions.
One of the things about grad school and one of the worries, I know, when working with a lot of students who are thinking about going to grad school is really how will I pay for it, how can I afford to go to grad school. One of things about grad school is, first of all, nine units is considered full time rather than 12, so you don't typically take as many units and typically assistantship, research assistant, teacher's assistant is often part of the grad school experience. And whether or not it is, getting related experience while you're in a graduate program is very, very important. Get internships, things like that. Components of the application, there's the actual application. For the CSU system it's CSU Mentor. That's the application you fill out for graduate school. Typically it has a resume. Sometimes they don't ask for a resume. One of the things I want to tell you is that we do review resumes every afternoon of every day from one to four o'clock right here in this room. So, if you have a resume that you need to have someone review, please feel free, come in between one and four every day and we'll give you feedback whether it's for grad school or an internship or a job, very similar. Now, some grad school programs ask for a CV, curriculum vitae, a CV. That is not all that dissimilar from a resume, especially typically at the undergraduate level. Because chances are you haven't had an enormous list of publications. But you can always tell us when you're coming in for a review that this is a resume slash CV for graduate school. And then if it's kind of lengthy, that's fine, we won't worry about it. Okay, it also includes your statement of purpose. Some people call it letter of intent. They're the same thing. And I do review those statements of purpose, those letters of intent. Transcripts, typically a 3.5 you're competitive to get into programs or you're competitive to get into competitive programs, 3.5 or above. Like here at the University, some of our most competitive programs, and let's see a show of hands of who's going that direction. Masters in psychology; anybody thinking about that? Okay, very competitive program. You want to make sure you are very competitive on paper. MSW, Masters in Social Work, nobody. Speech, language, communications, communication sciences and disorders?
So, those are some of the very competitive programs that we have and you want to be very competitive on paper. Letters of recommendation; it is excellent to be asking your faculty, even your junior faculty this semester in your junior year, especially those ones that you really get along with, you anticipate you're going to get an A in their class, it is a good time to ask them if they would be willing to write you a letter of recommendation. It's a great time to start developing a connection with your faculty, going to their office hours. It's a great time. Are any of you doing research projects with faculty? Great, this is a great time to be doing that, this year and your last year, next year. Yes, question? I can briefly talk to you about the letters of recommendation. This is what I would do, ideally. With a letter of recommendation, she's asking what do we ask our faculty members to write in a letter of recommendation. Typically I would have my resume prepared. I would have my personal statement prepared. I would have my list of schools with the addresses all prepared and not to ask your faculty, but when they have said yes and you're ready to have them start writing those letters of recommendation; I would have all of those pieces of information, because they have their own experience with you but in addition to that they have what you have written. I think that a wonderful example of that was just today when a former student who worked in our office a number of years ago and has done a number of things since, she came in to have me review her personal statement for the second time and I wasn't aware of some of the things that she has done since she left this office. So it I was writing a letter of recommendation for her that would be a wonderful resource of information. I didn't know you were on the board of the catalyst or I didn't know you had done research. You know, that's a great springboard. Now they have their own experience with you from class. Hopefully you're the A student who always participates, asks questions, things like that. But they can really expand what they're going to say about you. The other thing that's so wonderful about bringing your resume, your CV or your personal statement to them is you can ask for any feedback.
They may have time for that, they may not, but it doesn't hurt you to ask if they have any feedback and you would welcome that feedback. Yes, question. The question is when is, a letter of recommendation too old or when is it irrelevant to getting into grad school? So, as a sophomore if you had some letters of recommendation would it be relevant as in your first semester as a senior when you're getting ready to submit your packet, would it be appropriate? I think the ideal would be a letter that addresses your capacity, your academic capacity to do graduate school. That's what they're really after. That's what board members or faculty who are selecting their grad students, they want to know that academically they can do it. So that's what those letters support. And they support other characteristics, if you did research professors, anything like that. But there's nothing wrong with going back to those professors in your sophomore year, keeping the letters you have. One thing about letters of recommendation for grad school, they're typically confidential. So, they're in a sealed envelope, you don't know what they say. But hopefully they're from faculty who thinks very highly of you and they're supporting your acceptance into grad school. So, I'd go back to those faculty members and ask them if they would update your letter and put it in a sealed envelope. Okay. And you can provide those envelopes; you can stamp those envelopes so that faculty member can send it or you can put it in a manila envelope with everything together and send it sealed. Did that answer your question? Great. Good question on letters of recommendation, very important to get those faculty letters of recommendation. Some of the other questions that have come up about letters of recommendation is should I have my supervisor, my boss from my part time job write a letter of recommendation? Now if it's in the field related to where you're going, perhaps. Typically they want faculty but maybe it's very appropriate to have one letter of recommendation from your supervisor, your employer. Yes, especially should you have a supervisor from your internship write a letter of recommendation was the question and yes, that is an excellent resource for your letters of recommendation. I would not have them all from supervisors. You definitely want that faculty in there. That's who they want to hear from.
Getting into Graduate School Career Center Forums

Personal statement, the contents. If they ask questions on a personal statement, there's no one here from social work, master's in social work, but if they ask a question, which social work asks, it has a part one, A, B, C, D, I believe, part two A and B and then part three. And so they have a lot of questions. And they want each of those questions answered. So, if your university that you're applying to has real specific questions, I would look at exactly the way they list those questions and I'd try to respond to those questions in the way they have been asked. Question. Okay, the question is should we keep it in paragraph form or do an outline responding to their question? And you can do either one. And if you do a paragraph form I think a couple of techniques work well that I've observed. One is to rephrase the question. So, if they're asking what is your experience as it relates to the field of journalism? My experience as it relates to journalism, you know, rephrase the question and respond to it so they know that paragraph is going to be about your experience, okay. Another way to approach this is people do the entire question and then they respond to it, they do the next question and respond to it and it works fine that way. Other people have just done a keyword, you know, part one A, personality. And they'll do a keyword or characteristics or experience. But if they ask questions, do respond to those questions. Okay, if there is no question provided, then make sure you talk about some of these areas. What is the purpose? That's what they want to know, what is the purpose for you applying? What makes you enthusiastic about this field, okay?
What are your related skills and experience and education, your characteristics? How do you fit this program? Motivation, enthusiasm and I would say, on the first paragraph of any personal statement, the most important paragraph, go back and revise it and make sure it shows enthusiasm and motivation for their program because that's what really engages the reader in why that program is a good match for you. Talk about your research interests. Talk about your goals, what are you going to do with this program? And I know working with a lot of students who are applying to grad school they say, well I'm not really sure of my goals I'm pretty open right now. If you're open to different ways to apply this, then tell them you're open to different ways to apply this. And tell them some of the specifics of what you are interested in. So, for instance, if you're getting a master's degree in kinesiology and you're stating whether you want to teach sports and athletics in kinesiology or if you want to be a trainer and work with athletes. So, you might say that. Well, there are two applications of this degree that really fascinate and interest me and I'm certain I would learn more from this graduate program, but if my field went either of these directions or my career went either of these directions I would be ecstatic about it. So, make sure you talk about your goals. And they don't have to be just one. And certainly talk about interest in their program. And what that typically is, is why Chico State's psychology program. What do you know about their program? What's their mission statement? What's their vision? What are they known for? Talk about it, do your research. Find out what your faculty in that department are known for. What are their expertise as far as research? Talk about how that interests you and how you want to learn from them? Any questions?
Adhere to the word limit. So, if they say 250 words that's what you adhere to. Count the words. If they say two pages or under five pages, make sure you adhere to that. I know the same program in different colleges can have completely different limits as far as what they want on their personal statement letter of intent. So typically it's two to three pages, but here social work is a five page personal statement of all those questions.

Have a strong first introductory paragraph. Make it interesting to read. You all know, I'm sure, about starting out reading a novel and sometimes the novel just grabs your attention, you can't wait to keep reading more. And sometimes you're just fighting to get into that novel and try to if I just wade through a little more maybe it'll be interesting. Don't be that personal statement people have to wade through. Start right off the bat with a very interesting statement. A story is very good. So, you can talk about a story from your own experience, your own life. Another technique is to use a quote. So, a quote that encapsulates the theme of your personal statement or is really meaningful to you. That might be a good first approach to your personal statement. Tie it together with a theme. Keep it positive. So, watch yourselves. Here's some of the things that I look for when I review personal statements. So, it's great to have somebody else review your personal statement and I review it. I look for I's. Over and over and over again in every sentence did you start with an I? If you did, that's fine the first time through. Go back through and change some of those. You know, a real simple change, currently I is a real simple change. I look for not or negatives. Are there any negatives, couldn't, wouldn't, not, but, and try to avoid those negatives. Sometimes people just get used to writing in that style. Go through it, look at that, try to change that up and be really positive. Write clearly and succinctly. Don't go on and on and on. And include your name on each page. You can sign it; you can just print it on each page.
Okay, the ideal timeline. So, you're some of the ideal students here, March 1st in your junior year looking at starting this process. So typically in the summer after your junior year and certainly right now is a fine time you'd start doing your research and identify those programs that interest you. I would say start broad and then narrow it down. And some of the ways of doing that is that it might be the state that they are located in, so it might be location that you're looking at. Or it might be tuition, out of state tuition versus in state tuition. There might be a big difference. So, that might be one of the factors that starts narrowing down the programs you would choose. And other areas might be whether or not they have internships, research assistants, teacher assistants. It might be that you don't fit with their pre-reqs with their GPA requirement. So, a lot of things can start narrowing down the field. I would say start broad and then narrow it down based on real information that you find out about that university. I would not narrow it down to one college. And, as I say this. I'm reminded of a few students that I've worked with lately. One, you know it's typical if you're going for a PHD, especially in a competitive discipline like psychology, you apply to 20 schools. I had an intern who was going for a PHD in psychology that researched 100 schools, applied to 20 schools and one of her criteria for applying was that they had a fee waiver, if they had a fee waiver. She'd pay the fee for her top three schools, but beyond that that was one of her conditions.
They needed to have a fee waiver so she could afford to apply. So that's not something they advertise on their university site, so it's something you can do a search for, fee waiver, school fee waiver, and see if they offer that. So, that said, I just worked with one of our alumni who applied to a PHD program in music. He applied to one university in Colorado, one. I said oh, what if you don't get into that one? That's you're A plan, but where's your B and C plan? He said, you know, I just want to focus all my energy on this one school. I want, that's where I want to go. I want to give it everything I got. And he just called me last Thursday and he got in. He's in the PHD program. It was his focus and he's on his way to Colorado. So, although I recommend you apply to more than one, it can be done. You can get in. Talk to your faculty about what they think are good programs. See how you can get involved in research with faculty if you're not already doing so. And consider a field work course or an internship. That is really beneficial. I know med school, hard to get into med school. We have lots of students who are interested. You need to show some related experience. What kind of internship, work experience, have you ever been around a medical setting? How do you know you want to be an M.D? So, grades are wonderful. A 4.0 is really great. But make sure they see that you've had experience and you know what it's like in that environment. Internships, and our office certainly does do internships.
The summer before your senior year, research graduate study in your field, make a list of schools, 20 is a good number, start writing your personal statement, take the GRE or the LSATs or the GMAT. Start getting ready. And you guys, I know you will be there. One of the things I want to say about this is I'm sure you've all heard education is being challenged right now where because of the budget statewide we're reducing enrollment. So, that's on the undergraduate level. I have a feeling that's going to impact the graduate level. And as you see in this room, those of you who have come to find out about the ideal process of getting in to grad school, you see the level of interest in graduate programs. So, I would suggest that you keep that in mind and timing can be really important. I heard from the grad school this year that although March one has been the closing date for our grad programs for years and years, this year they considered closing it early. So, if they closed November one and you were setting your sites on having it due today, you missed the deadline by months. Okay so, keep that in mind. With grad school getting more competitive, the dates could be changed, closing dates could be changed. Keep checking back on your favorite schools. Make sure you're on time with those. Yes?

Student:  Is the GRE going offered here during the summer?
Presenter: The GRE, I am not the testing office, so, you need to go there and make sure you get the most accurate information because things change all the time, but with that said, typically the GRE is often, my understanding is it's offered regularly because now it's online. It's not like they have to have a proctor and a set time for 50 students to take it all at the same time twice a week, all semester. I don't know about summer school, so maybe it's offered once a week in the summer that it's offered.

How long to study for the test before taking it? It depends on what you know about your strategies as a test taker. So, if you are excellent at test taking, you've known that for a long time, you will probably not have to study like between now and June, you know, would probably be plenty for you. Some people study for a year before they take the GRE because they know maybe their grades weren't as high as they'd like them to be. And so, they want to make sure their test scores are high to show their ability. Some people do the workshops. They're expensive, pretty pricey, as I understand, but you can do the workshops. I think they're over a weekend. And you can prepare yourself. I would start by going to the grad school and getting online and getting familiar with what their test involves. And I think that's a big part of test taking is familiarity with how is it going to be set up because on a timed test I don't want my brain trying to figure out how is this set up? Are they comparing things? Do I have an A, B, C, D, or E or F choice? You know, get used to how those questions are being set up and kind of the parameters of the questions and you'll be more familiar with taking it when you do and it's being timed, okay.
Write to colleges, so in fall semester, and if you want to do this ahead of time, that's great, but the ideal is at least by the fall semester. Write to the colleges that you're interested in, make your final choice of schools that you're going to apply to. How many are there going to be? Did you research all that was the pertinent information before you apply? Attend the grad school fair on September 14th in the BMU next door. Please attend that. There is nothing finer than coming into a grad school and talking to different grad programs about what they offer and what they're interested in. And what's the ideal graduate student for you? So, finding out more insight about what they're looking for. That is an excellent thing to do. And the career center does put on that grad school fair. And if you have a particular area that you're interested in, a particular field and you've looked at our past grad fairs and you would like a certain college to be invited, let us know, we'll invite them. I know I had a grad student last year who was applying back east to Rhode Island and chances are Rhode Island is not going to come to Chico. Chances are easier for you to go to Rhode Island. And, by the way, she did get in. By October take the GREs. It doesn't hurt. My goal would be August before classes start, before all the applications start becoming due. Now, this is for our programs in our graduate school which opens October 1st. Don't assume that is all programs. Some programs may open August 1st. You need to find out for the schools you are interested in when do they open, what are you looking for. Summer, end of summer, early fall is a good time to start asking those professors for letters of recommendation, giving them your resume and a copy of your personal statement.
Apply early. Typically October one to March one some programs will stay open as late as April 1st. Some may close as early as November 1st. So those are good things to keep in mind. Complete your application. Send them early. It's not only that the deadline could be earlier than they have posted, but the other thing is any application is date stamped as you send it in when this was received. So it's also a matter of who is really clear and on top of things and have gotten their application together and sent it off early. Visit the school. Summertime is a good time to visit the schools. And of course visualize acceptance and be patient. Not always easy to do. I know my friend who got into the PHD program in Colorado, he said I'm going anyway, I'm moving to Colorado anyway. It doesn't matter, that's where I'm going. I'm just going to stay positive that I'm going to get in and he rented his house out, he packed his care. He was going anyway. And two days before they were about to leave he got the initial letter of his acceptance. And he said first I screamed and then I cried. I didn't realize how important this was to me. So try to be patient. It is, I know, very important, okay.
I have some handouts for you. These are I'm not going to go through each one of these. These are on your handouts. These are some of the dos and don'ts about writing a personal statement. And one of the best things I've found that will be, could you pass those straight back, one of the best things is the blue sheet on the back, and that is a guide for researching. I've got to give you a few more and you can just keep passing them back. This blue sheet I wanted to talk to you just a little bit about and then show you online briefly some of the resources that we have. This is a guide to researching and applying for grad school. It has some of the key areas, what is the name of the school, the name of the program, what are their pre-reqs for getting into their program, when do they open, when do they close. So, I'd really urge you to fill in a lot of this information. It will just, when you start comparing colleges and as you research these, your mind is full of bits and pieces of information and you don't always relate it to the right school. So if you write those things down, you'll have it all in one place where you can compare and contrast. How long is their program compared to somebody else's program? What's the emphasis of one program compared to someone else's? And once you start to define that for yourself, okay. Some dos and don'ts.
The biggest don't is don't write an autobiography, okay. And let me show you some of the resources we have available.

Your Statement of Purpose

Ten Don'ts

10. Include information that doesn't support your thesis.
11. Start your essay with “I was born in...,” or “My parents came from...”.
12. Write an autobiography, itinerary, or résumé in prose.
13. Try to be a clown (but gentle humor is OK).
14. Be afraid to start over if the essay just isn't working or doesn't answer the essay question.
15. Try to impress your reader with your vocabulary.
16. Rely exclusively on your computer to check your spelling.
17. Provide a collection of generic statements and platitudes.
18. Don't give weak excuses for your GPA or test scores.
19. Don't make things up.
So, a lot of this you can use our resources here, but in addition to that you can use our resources on our website. And that is www.csuchico.edu/careers. Right here there are a couple of places. Is anyone going into a licensed occupation? Well, psychology, especially if you're thinking MFT, that's a licensed occupation, MSW, Master's in Social Work, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, med school, law, any of you law people. What are you thinking?

**Student:** Applying to MFT.

**Presenter:** MFT,
So, let me show you, for some of you who are going into licensed occupations under, investigate majors and careers, licensed occupations.
This should take you directly to, licensed occupations.
I'm going to marriage, family therapist, California and nationwide schools and California accredited schools.
This is the list of accredited schools with MFT programs. So, it's made your research real simple if you're looking at California. And then you can go into those programs and find the information that you need. So licensed occupations, it's so important to go to a school that is accredited by the board that licenses these people. So, if you want to be a nurse practitioner, really important that you go to where they're licensed.
And then another area is here under grad school assistance programs and rankings.
So, we have our programs, gradschools.com, good search engines, they always start with the programs that are, that people donate from universities first. Just know that. Those people have donated money and carry on to the schools that you're interested in. The Peterson Guide is another really good research tool, and then college rankings, U.S. News and World Report. So, they'll tell you which MBA programs are number one and number two, which med school is number one, number two, all the way to 100, so great resources. Yes, question?

Student: I have a question about the Peterson Guide. [Inaudible]

Presenter: You'll need to go to the school. You'll need to go to the University of Washington and see exactly what their program focuses on. Yes. No, the Peterson Guides will tell you they have a program, but not what the focus is. Yes, okay, good question. Psychology program ranking; so, this is an excellent research to use as a springboard to do some of your grad school research.
How many of you are thinking about applying beyond Chico? Great. How many are thinking just Chico? Okay. So, most of you are thinking beyond. Chico can get very competitive in many of its programs and I think that Chico is a wonderful place to live, great school, but I'd apply, but then I'd apply beyond Chico, yes, okay. Any other questions, we have a couple of minutes, specific to your area, to your concerns? Yes.

Student: I was wondering [inaudible].

Presenter: So the question is, let me see if I get this right, the question is would it behoove you to do a Master's at one location, one university, and a PhD at another? Well, it might improve your employability and your attractiveness to universities because you have different faculty members you've learned from. So, that's one of the negatives about doing your undergraduate and your graduate work in the same university. You're learning from the same professors which doesn't mean that there's a whole lot more that they can teach you. But you're not getting a diversity of culture, of location, of professor's expertise. So, that would be the advantage. The disadvantage would be if you're thinking a Master's and a PhD, you could do, there are some programs that are concurrent. So, you can start with a Master's program and that is the first part of your PhD program. So, you could just carry right through and it would probably cut the time shorter. Yes. So, good question. I'd evaluate back and forth, pros and cons. Any other questions? Yes?
Presenter: Yes it is. Okay, the question is if there's a particular program I'm interested in, what is the proper way of approaching professors in that program? There is nothing wrong with emailing those professors. I would not do it from a perspective of not knowing anything about their program. I would have done some research first, know about their program, know that it's very interesting to me and why. And then I would start to communicate with them. There's a fine line between being a bother and just proactive in your own interest in what you're pursuing. So, I wouldn't write to them weekly or anything, but I would write to them and start a dialogue and especially if I planned a campus visit. Summer's coming up and if I was going to Montana State and that was the school that I chose. I would say I plan on visiting this summer. Is there any opportunity that I would get to talk with any of the professors? It's always good to ask for their advice. Could you give me any advice about how I might get some insight into your program? Are there classes that I could sit in on? Anything like that, so yes; good question. It is appropriate. It is appropriate to start a dialogue and start talking with them. Good questions. Anyone else? Okay thank you so much for coming. Remember, we look at your resume. You can make an appointment; have your personal statement reviewed. You can drop in and research grad programs. You can use our computers. You can use our Peterson Guides in the back. And you can always ask questions. Thanks so much for coming.