

Graduate School is an imperative stage of your educational journey. As you reach the end of your UNDERGRADUATE years, many may ask, "Is graduate education for me?" The answer is: ABSOLUTELY!

## How do I prepare? Work on the Educational Pillars

In preparation for graduate school, you will need to incorporate the 5 educational pillars into your journey. The five educational pillars include a relevant curriculum in your field of interest, research experience, practical experience, leadership skills, and community involvement. These pillars will serve as a blueprint for academic success & graduate school preparation. To ensure a quality portfolio for the graduate school process, dedicate time to each pillar.

### I Academics

A good academic foundation in your field of interest is essential for graduate education. Faculty expects students to have knowledge of the basic theories in the field and an understanding of its findings. Considering these factors, if you plan to pursue a field, you should have majored or minored in it. If you did not, you may want to consider a Masters before a Ph.D. Relevant curriculum in the field provides the student with basic theoretical training, exposure to general theories, and a strong background for graduate studies in the field. In addition to a strong foundation in the field, you need training in statistics and research methods.

### III Practical Experience

Practical experience translates into hands-on work. It means you have done a practicum in the field of interest and you know what it requires. Often, there are various on-campus opportunities for you to refine your skills in your area of interest. Off-campus practical experiences entail internships in the community where you acquire hours with a supervisor assisting the population of interest. Make sure the internship provides substantial quality responsibilities and that you are working directly under a supervisor who will guide and direct your work.

### V Community Service

Community service is a requirement for one to have a true understanding of a population. One cannot understand a community's needs without being involved in it. Community service entails working/volunteering for the betterment of a community. Take the time to learn about the major issues of a community. Be an advocate for change and show your investment in providing your time for local events and community activities.

### II Research Experience

Research experience is more than a literature review. Although many students may have gone to the library to find articles, not all students have collected data. For graduate school, you will need data collection experience. Quality research experience includes survey research experience, experimental/lab experience or qualitative training. Make sure you collect the data, analyze it, and make conclusions of the findings. Working with a faculty who provides direction with your research is essential. Honors programs and undergraduate research programs (e.g., undergraduate research programs) facilitate this process. Summer research programs are also encouraged. These programs allow you to work with faculty outside your home institution and help you become acquainted with a potential graduate school program.

### IV Leadership Skills

Leadership skills can be enhanced by joining student organizations and clubs. Join your peers in a club that enhances the skills needed for your field: become a member of an honor society and/or join a national organization (e.g., **American Psychological Association** or the **National Latina/o Psychological Association**). Each national organization has student fees and allows you to become an active member in volunteering and providing service. Take on leadership roles in the student organizations and integrate yourself beyond the classroom. Show your ability to connect with people and demonstrate your interest in making change in your field of interest.