

# “I GOT GRAD SCHOOL OFFERS... WHAT NOW?”

Here are 7 things to consider when choosing your *BEST FIT* graduate program!

## 1 WHY DO I WANT A PHD?

This is not to discourage your decision; this is just an important question everyone should ask themselves before committing. Think back to your personal statement: has anything changed? If so, does it support your decision to pursue a graduate degree?

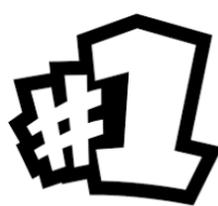
**Ask Yourself:** What is my ideal future job, and will having a PhD help in that field? Does my future field value experience or technical knowledge? Do I have at least 2 different scientific interests?



## 2 DOES SCHOOL RANK MATTER?

Yes, school prestige matters...SOMETIMES. Prestige doesn't always correlate with the range of research. You don't want to go to sacrifice your research interests to be in a top-ranked program.

**Ask Yourself:** Are there multiple faculty members in the program that you would be interested in working with? Is there opportunity for me to get experience in more than one discipline to answer the same question? Ex) Explore disease from an immunology lens vs genetic lens OR exploring same pathway in different organ.



## 3 FUNDING

Not all graduate programs offer students a guaranteed stipend. You do not want to worry about how you will provide for yourself financially while trying to complete your thesis project.

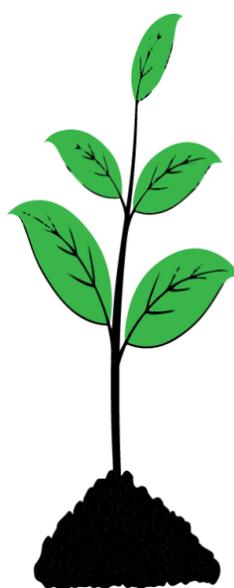
**Questions to Ask:** Is financial support guaranteed for the duration of my graduate career (tuition, fees, AND stipend)? Do I need to teach or work X amount of hours each week to receive stipend? Does my stipend include healthcare, dental, vision insurance? Is there a moving stipend? Does the university offer emergency funds for students?



## 4 ARE CURRENT STUDENTS SUCCESSFUL, GROWING, & HAPPY?

Success should always be defined on an individual basis. It is the by-product of your hard work, dedication, and resilience. However, a major part that is often overlooked are those in background assisting along the way to your success. Programs with faculty and staff that support their students' overall growth and development both inside and out of the lab typically have students that are successful, growing, & happy. YES, your well-being is important as a graduate student!

**Questions to Ask:** Is there grant and manuscript writing support for students? Are there formalized training programs/certificates to obtain additional expertise? Can I take courses outside of my discipline? Can I collaborate with others on research projects? Are there travel awards for students to attend conferences? Can I pursue internship opportunities? Are there opportunities to get involved in outreach, volunteering, or leadership activities? What student orgs are available for additional support?



## 5 HOW CAN I DE-STRESS?

Completing a PhD involves the ability to overcome stressful situations. Therefore, recognizing the way you de-stress is important to deciding what program or school is your best fit. We all grow and change, the advice is to stay true to yourself but allow the flexibility to adapt to new environments.

**To Do:** Think about the things you currently do to unwind and rank them in order of importance.

**Ask Yourself:** Does the institution or surrounding area allow for you to maintain those activities? What mental health services are provided/covered by insurance for students?



## 6 HOW WERE STUDENTS SUPPORTED DURING COVID-19?

## 7 YOU WILL MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION

Celebrate the opportunity to decide on a graduate program because you've worked hard and jumped through hoops to be in this position! Rely on those who've helped you along the way to help make a decision, but **REMEMBER:** this decision is yours. You know that gut-feeling you sometimes get? Yeah, it's okay to listen to it.



Despite the circumstances, HBCU-DAP™ is still committed to supporting you. If you need additional advice or have questions please do not hesitate to reach out. Stay Safe, Stay Healthy, & Stay Encouraged.