



The U.S. Graduate Admissions Office: A 2010 Insider's Perspective

Dr. Jeffery T. Johnson

Associate Dean for Graduate Admissions & Student Affairs
Tulane University School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine

Dr. Kristin S. Williams

Assistant Vice President for Graduate & Special Enrollment Management
The George Washington University

Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education
EducationUSA.state.gov

Overview

- Structure & process
- Key decision-makers
- Use of technology
- The impact of the global recession
- Examples from public & private institutions



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

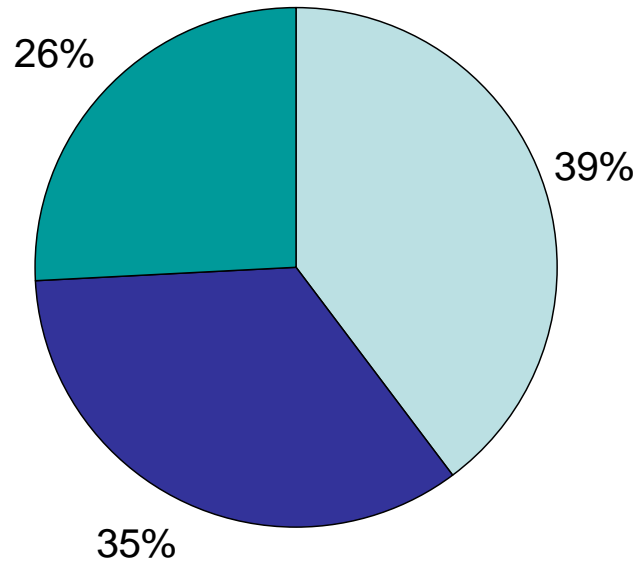
Differences between U.S. graduate admissions offices

- **Organizational structure and processes**
 - Centralized ~ decentralized ~ collaborative/hybrid
 - Deadlines (rolling admissions vs. collective review)
 - Key decision-makers
- **Admission requirements and criteria**
 - Prerequisite degrees and courses
 - Required documents and test scores
 - Minimum criteria for admission
- **Graduate student support: availability, criteria, and amounts awarded**



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Recruitment Activities



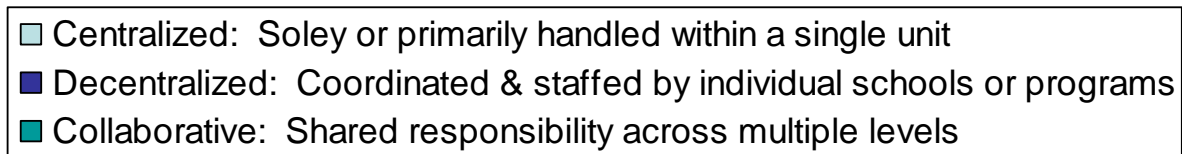
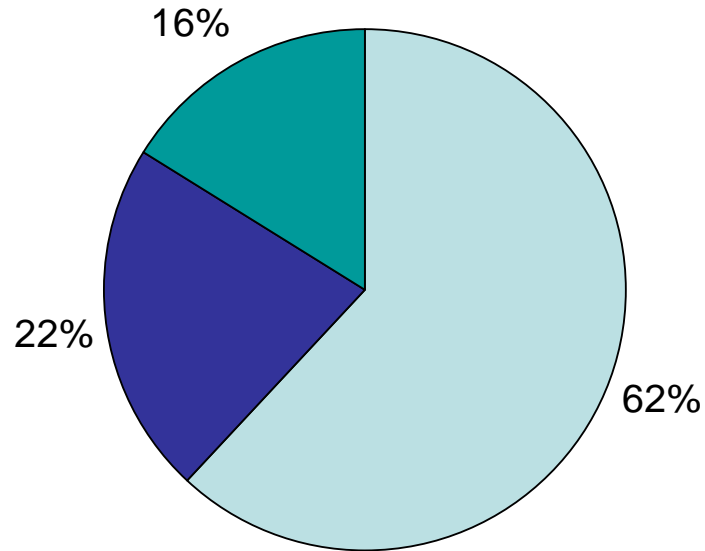
- Centralized: Soley or primarily handled within a single unit
- Decentralized: Coordinated & staffed by individual schools or programs
- Collaborative: Shared responsibility across multiple levels

Source: 2009 NAGAP Survey on Organizational Structures



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Application Processing

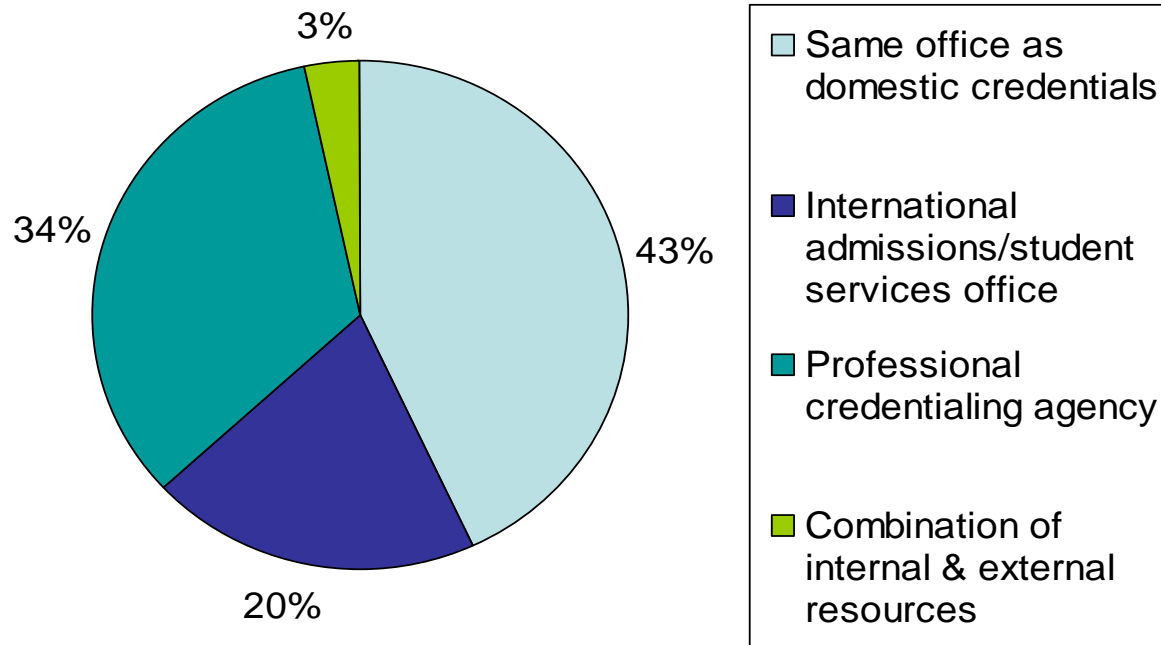


Source: 2009 NAGAP Survey on Organizational Structures



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

International Credential Evaluation

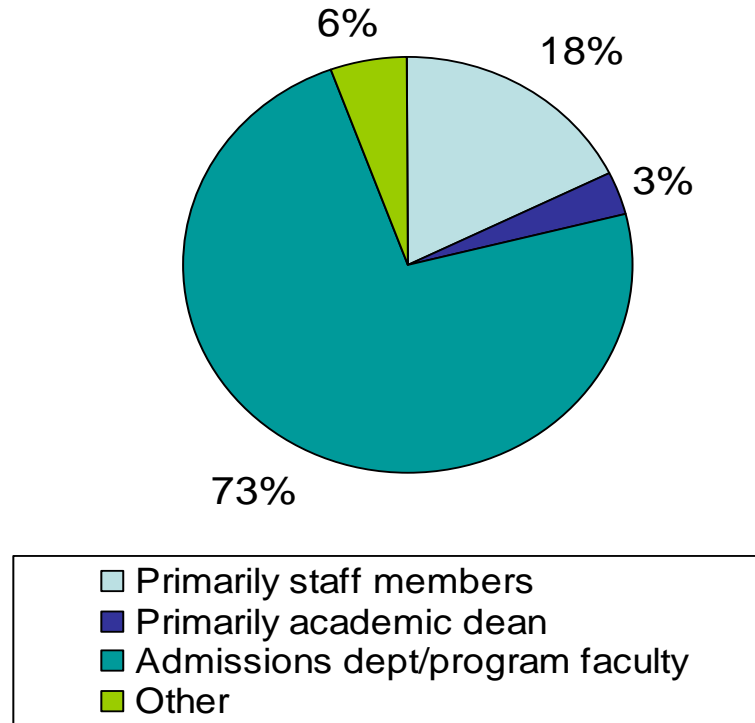


Source: 2009 NAGAP Survey on Organizational Structures



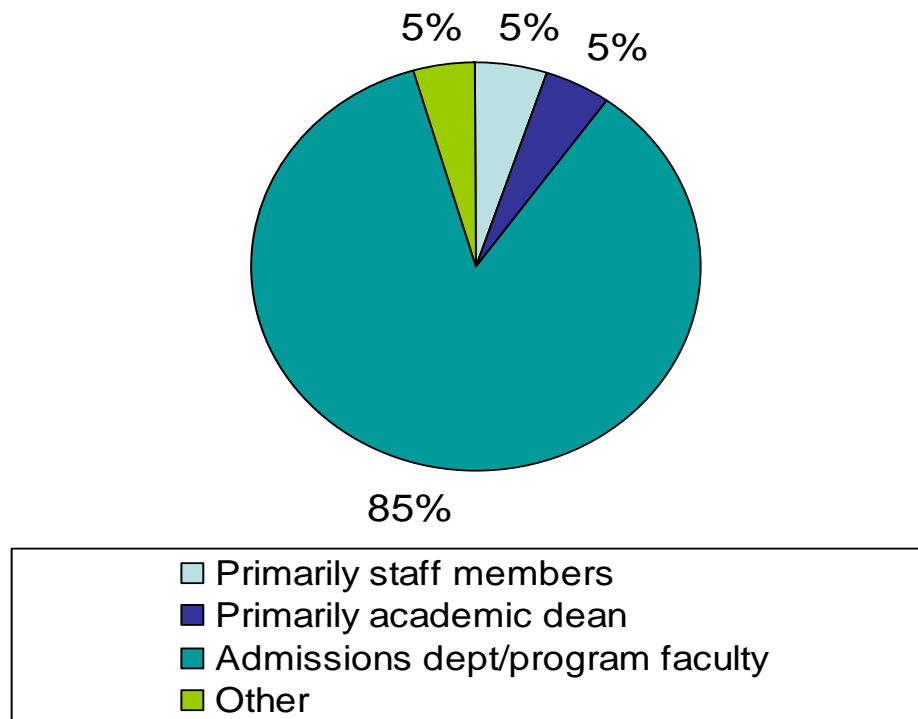
Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Admission Decisions: Master's Programs



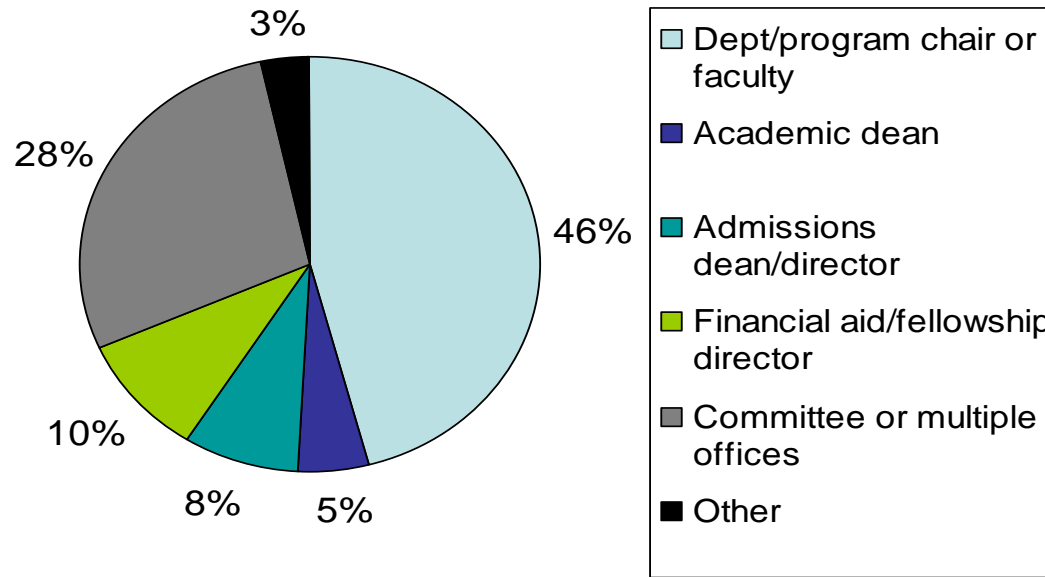
Source: 2009 NAGAP Survey on Organizational Structures

Admission Decisions: Doctoral Programs



Source: 2009 NAGAP Survey on Organizational Structures

Who Makes Decisions about Graduate Support?



Source: 2009 NAGAP Survey on Organizational Structures



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Decision-makers by Type of Support

- **Graduate teaching assistantships** – generally appointed by chairs or faculty in the academic department
- **Fellowships** – may be awarded at the department, school, or institutional level
- **Research assistants** – selected by principle investigator for the research grants (usually faculty)
- **Residence/housing assistants** – hired by the university office of residential life
- **Administrative assistants** – hired by office managers



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Consistency in Graduate Admissions

- **The holistic application:** decisions are based on the total application packet, although various parts of the application may be weighted differently.
- **Decisions should not be made by a single person.**
- **Meeting minimum requirements does not guarantee admission.**
- **Admission decisions are based on many factors:**
 - The quality of the applicant's academic and professional background
 - The applicant's "fit" for the program
 - Overall competitiveness of the applicant pool
 - Availability of institutional resources
 - Institutional enrollment goals and strategies



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

The Importance of Technology in Graduate Recruitment and Admissions

	Very	%	Somewhat	%	Not Very	%	Total Respondents
Marketing and Recruiting	160	73%	52	24%	6	3%	218
The Application Process	177	81%	40	18%	1	1%	218
Closing the Deal: From Admittance to Matriculation	93	43%	93	43%	31	14%	217

Source: Technology and Its Impact on the Profession (NAGAP, 2008)

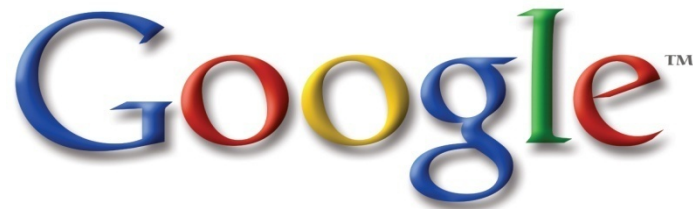


Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Top Websites for Millennials



Broadcast Yourself™



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Connecting People...Connecting Continents...



Net worth: 1.5 billion (*Forbes.com*)

Education: Harvard University (did not complete degree)

23 years young



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

High Touch Meets High Tech

	Yes	%	No	%	Total Respondents
Do you use Blog technology to communicate with prospects, applicants, or admitted applicants?	24	11%	194	89%	218
Do you use Instant Messaging to communicate with prospects, applicants, or admitted applicants?	30	14%	188	86%	218
Do you use social networking type software such as FACEBOOK to communicate with prospects, applicants, or admitted applicants?	35	16%	183	84%	218

Source: Technology and Its Impact on the Profession (NAGAP, 2008)



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Peer-Advice for Millennial College Graduates

1. Spend twenty hours a week *running a project for a non-profit*.
2. Teach yourself *Java, HTML, Flash, PHP and SQL*. Not a little, but mastery.
3. Volunteer to *coach or assistant coach a kids sports team*.
4. Start, run and grow an *online community*.
5. Give a speech a week to *local* organizations.
6. Write a regular newsletter *or blog* about an industry *you care* about.
7. Learn a *foreign language* fluently.
8. Write 3 detailed business plans for projects in the industry *you care* about.
9. Self-publish *a book*.
10. Run a *marathon*.

Seth Godin, from [The Hourglass Blog](#)



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Recession 101: Surviving Economic Volatility



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

The Impact of the Global Recession: Graduate Recruitment & Admissions

- A total of **366** members (19% of the 1,897 members) completed the survey, the majority of the whom hailed from **private institutions and from Carnegie doctoral-extensive universities**.
- Almost half of the survey participants indicated there would be **no change in their recruitment budget**.
- Mantra of doing “**more with less**” is evidenced by the fact that **73% of survey respondents indicated that they were expecting growth at their colleges**, particularly in the area of full-time graduate programs (52%) and online programs (42%).

Source: NAGAP 2009 Economics Impact Report



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

The Impact of the Global Recession: Graduate Recruitment & Admissions

- A remarkable 87% of those indicating a decrease in funding reported they would **reduce their travel for the next (2010) recruiting season.**
- Two-thirds of survey respondents reported they **did not initiate additional incentives to recruit/retain graduate students.**
- Vast majority of survey participants (78%) indicated that they were **dependant on tuition revenue to meet their operating budgets, but the majority of participants (80%) also did not have a contingency plan in case revenue fell short of projected expectations.**

Source: NAGAP 2009 Economics Impact Report



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

The Impact of the Global Recession: Graduate Programs & Student Support

Actions institutions have taken (or are considering):

- Consolidating or eliminating graduate programs.
- Reducing the number of graduate students admitted.
- Cutting the number of assistantships/fellowships and/or freezing or decreasing award amounts.
- Raising tuition rates (particularly out-of-state tuition at public universities).



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Public Universities



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

University at Buffalo - State University of New York

Recruitment and admissions

- The Graduate School helps recruit regionally, manages the centralized application, oversees admission standards and data integrity.
- International recruitment and credential evaluation handled by the International Enrollment Management office.
- Specialized recruitment, applications processing, and admission decisions handled within the academic departments.

Graduate student support

- GTA/RA decisions made by program faculty.
- Fellowship recipients selected by a Graduate School committee.

Response to the recession: hiring freeze and budget reductions

- Fewer GTA/fellowship awards, but no change in award amounts.
- Trying to be more creative and cost-effective in recruiting grad students.
- Provide new students with earlier access to student services.



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

University of Minnesota

Recruitment and admissions

- Recruitment handled collaboratively across all levels.
- Graduate School manages centralized app and credential evaluation.
- Applicants upload supporting documents, including transcripts.
- Departments review applications and make decisions.

Graduate student support

- GTA/RA decisions within the department/program.
- University/college-wide awards decided centrally (faculty nominations).

Response to the recession: salary freezes and staff reductions

- Number of graduate support awards dropped in 2009; stable for 2010.
- Increasing online processes (e.g., admitted student portal).
- Collaborating with other offices on campus to share costs.
- An unsuccessful effort was made to dissolve the Graduate School.



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA)

Recruitment and admissions

- Recruitment handled collaboratively across all levels.
- Graduate School manages a centralized application, establishes policies, and trains department staff to evaluate international credentials.
- The departments receive all supporting documents directly, review applications, and make decisions.

Graduate student support

- Departments award GTAs/RAs and some fellowships.
- Graduate School committee makes decisions about campus-wide awards.

Response to the recession: reductions in salaries, staff, and budgets

- Fewer grad support awards in non-science fields; no change in science or engineering.
- When communicating with prospective students, increased emphasis on institutional strengths that may offset graduate student support levels.



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Private Universities



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

The George Washington University

Recruitment and admissions

- Recruitment handled collaboratively across all levels.
- The Office of Graduate Student Enrollment Management coordinates university-wide recruitment and manages a centralized application.
- Applications processing and international credential evaluation varies by school/program.
- Nearly all admissions decisions are based on recommendations of faculty committees within departments.

Graduate student support

- GTA, RA, and fellowship decisions made within academic departments.

Response to the recession: no reductions in salary, staff, or budget

- No change in number or amount of graduate support awards.
- Increased international recruitment activities.
- Continuing to work toward meeting established academic goals.
- Heightened focus on resource-effectiveness.



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Tulane University

The Graduate School was dissolved in 2006 as part of the President's Renewal Plan in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Recruitment and admissions

- Recruitment, application process, and international credential evaluation decentralized and varies by school/program.
- Admission decisions based on recommendations of faculty committees within departments.

Graduate student support

- GTA, RA, and fellowship decisions made within academic departments.

Response to the recession: reductions in staff

- No increases in international recruitment activities.
- Greater use of part-time workers/student assistant.
- Minor increases in number and/or amount of graduate support awards.



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Columbia University

Recruitment and admissions

- Graduate student recruitment and admission processing are centralized.
- Admission decisions for master's programs primarily made by an academic dean; doctoral decisions made by faculty member(s) within the academic department/program.
- International applicants are required to submit credentials to a professional credentialing agency for evaluation.

Graduate student support

- Determined by committee and/or multiple offices.
- More awards and increased funding.

Response to the recession: hiring freeze and budget reductions

- More strategic communications.
- Targeted special events and info sessions for those in career transition.



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Harvard University

Recruitment and admissions

- Recruitment activities and application processing are centralized.
- International credential evaluated within the same office as domestic credentials.
- Admission decision for doctoral programs made by faculty within academic department/program.

Graduate student support

- Awards made by committee or multiple offices.

Response to the recession: hiring freeze and budget reductions

- Increased use of web conferencing software for virtual information sessions in cities to which they can't travel – also benefits applicants who can't afford to visit campus.
- Reduced participation in graduate school fairs.



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education

Questions?



Your Official Source on U.S. Higher Education