SELECTING THE RIGHT SCHOOL FOR DOCTORAL STUDY: A FIVE-STEP DECISION PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

There's not much information available to assist prospective marketing doctoral students in making an effective choice from among the 100 or so Ph.D. programs available. This paper suggests that candidates can improve their odds of landing in the right doctoral program by adhering to a decision process that assures that needs are identified, appropriate questions are asked, and decisions are based upon objective information.

A SEARCH FOR GUIDANCE

A lack of available information makes the selection of programs for doctoral study much more challenging than selecting degree programs at other levels. Those interested in undergraduate programs can consult their high school guidance counselor and view a wide selection of guidebooks and periodicals that provide objective rating information about undergraduate programs, and those seeking advise on master's programs can refer to the annual surveys published by *Business Week* and *US News* to gain valuable insights. However, when it comes to ratings of the 100 plus marketing doctoral programs in the United States, there just isn't much current information available. Most is incomplete and out-dated, and this criticism even applies to the information that schools mount on their web pages.

One problem is that the information provided on doctoral program web pages and university brochures presents a great deal of consistency, almost as if the posted material all comes from the same source. A reading of the materials suggests that just about all programs have core marketing courses, methodological tool skill courses, and support or minor courses. All require some form of comprehensive examinations to test your mastery of the subject, and a dissertation project to demonstrate your research capabilities. This degree of consistency may provide useful background information, but it does little to differentiate one program from another, or enable the candidate to make an educated choice.

Furthermore, the few studies that have analyzed differences in doctoral schools have focused on research output measured by the average number of journal articles published by faculty (see Knight et al. 2000), a very limited perspective for analysis. While these listings can provide a rough indication of the quality of the research being conducted, they often fail to include other important indicators of research productivity and quality, such as grants awarded,

texts written, journal review board or editorship activity, or instructional materials created. In addition, because of the relatively long lead-time involved in shepherding a manuscript through the review and publication process (typically 1 to 3 years), any compilation of journal hit frequency is more correctly an indicator of past achievement rather than current quality or potential. These materials certainly don't provide much insight in distinguishing program differences, nor do they help to identify the emerging programs that offer exceptional value.

The lack of valid comparative information about doctoral programs is somewhat disturbing because there is a high cost associated with making a poor choice. Doctoral study is intense and the dropout rate is high, exacerbated by a mismatch between student expectations and institutional capabilities (Lovitts and Nelson 2000). By carefully analyzing one's needs, then doing a little investigation to find out about program characteristics, students can reduce these mismatches and improve their potential for degree success. The purpose of this article is to provide step-by-step guidance to students as they seek to determine which marketing doctoral programs best meet their needs.

A FIVE-STEP PROCESS

The selection of a doctoral program is a high involvement purchase decision for most students, and the consumer decision-making process for high-involvement decisions provides an appropriate framework for the decision. The process normally consists of five steps, which include: (1) problem recognition, (2) information search, (3) alternative evaluation, (4) purchase, and (5) post-purchase activities (Hawkins, Best, and Coney 1992). However, there are some minor modifications necessary to tailor the process for the specific choice at hand. The revised steps are labeled: (1) personal decisions and goals, (2) information search, (3) campus visit and interviews, (4) making application, and (5) follow-up. Each of these major steps is elab-

orated upon in Table 1 and further described in the following paragraphs.

PERSONAL DECISIONS AND GOALS

The first step in striding toward a career as a college marketing professor is to make some tentative decisions about short and long-term career goals. College is generally expensive, and students should ask themselves, "How will I pay for my education?" and "Can I afford to live in near-poverty for four to six years (or more) while I complete a Ph.D.?" The answers may reveal a good deal with respect to true motivation and resolve for this career path.

A personal financial analysis is recommended in which the student estimates available monetary assets, borrowing capacity, potential assistantship funding and likely fellowships. Against these figures, the costs of tuition, fees, relocation, meals, room and travel for each of the schools in the choice set can be compared. The result should provide a much better understanding of the financial sacrifice required for the program. By the way, unlike a master's program, the level of intensity and workload required for doctoral study is not conducive to holding part-time employment during the school year. Many doctoral students supplement their assistantships or fellowships with student loans.

Differences in the level of funding provided can affect your pocketbook and peace of mind. Be sure to pay attention to the length of time for which funding is provided. Many schools grant assistantships for a three-year period, subject to the candidate making acceptable progress in the program. Three years is generally an adequate period of time for a student to complete doctoral coursework and examinations. Some schools commit for a longer time period, and this is very beneficial so that students are not scrambling for funding when they are working on their dissertations during the fourth year. In addition to a monthly paycheck, assistantships sometimes include partial or full tuition waiver, a significant benefit given the rising costs of tuition.

TABLE 1
CHOOSING THE *RIGHT* DOCTORAL PROGRAM

Personal Decisions & Goals

Career	What career do I want?
	Is a PhD going to fulfill the job requirements?
University	Where do I want to study?
	Is this university going to provide me with the tools that will allow me to work at the type of academic institution of my choice?
Location	Where do I want to live (geography, population, cost of living)?
	What environment am I most comfortable (social, atmosphere, cultural)?
Financial	Can I afford it?
	Do I have the time to devote to a Ph.D. program?

Information Search

Programs	Start early about six to nine months before the fall semester you would like to attend.
	Gather information from undergraduate or graduate universities that you have affiliation.
	Choose four to five universities.
	Gather information about the university (website, brochures, people).
	Gather information about the application process and fees.
	Evaluate size, time to complete, and attitudes.
	BEWARE of ratings
Academics	Evaluate the program and course offerings.
	Evaluate the quality of the *department*.
Faculty	Evaluate faculty/student ratio.
	How many faculty members do they have?
	How many faculty members are involved in research?
	How many average courses does each professor teach?
Graduates	Research their contributions to the field.
	Research their job placement.
	Research their average postgraduate salary.
Financial	Do they have assistantships? Tuition reimbursement? Student housing?
	Insurance? Loans? Other costs?
Re-evaluate	Is this still something I want to pursue?

Campus Visit

Environment	What is the average cost of living?
	What is the environment like at the university level? Community level?
	What is the average temperature?
	What is the make-up of the student-body? Organizations?
	How are the university's electronic facilities? Geographical layout?
	Research facilities?

TABLE 1 (CONTINUED)
CHOOSING THE *RIGHT* DOCTORAL PROGRAM

Interview

    Faculty   What national or regional organizational meetings are attended?

                        What is the average time to complete the PhD process?

                        What amount of time is focused on research? Teaching? Methods?

                        What examinations are given and their schedules?

                        Are the programs geared to the individual student?

    Student   What research opportunities are available (pros and cons)?

                        What teaching opportunities are available (pros and cons)?

                        What type of environment does the university have? Community?

                        BEWARE of bad attitudes and false information – speak to more than one individual in both the faculty and student population.

Re-evaluate   Is this still something I want to pursue?

Apply

Presentation   Be sure that all materials are completed and addressed to the correct department and *delivered* by the due date.

                        Provide all personal information, university forms, and self-addressed envelopes to the instructors supplying letters of reference.

Follow Up
Rejection/Admittance

Costs for graduate housing and apartments are surprisingly different from city to city, and from campus to campus. So when evaluating alternate offers from different schools, it's best to subtract any un-funded tuition costs and graduate housing costs from the assistantship offer, then use cost-of-living adjustments to convert the remainder to a comparable basis.

Still another issue related to the cost of doctoral education is what to do in the summer. Some programs offer summer classes and provide opportunities for funding so that students may shorten the total elapsed time required to earn a degree. This can be a real advantage. Other programs require that summers be devoted to research projects; yet still other programs suggest that the student take a summer job, clear the mind and come back next fall ready to begin again. If the latter is the case, it may be possible to work a summer job or teach summer school as a way of supplementing your financial resources.

Another personal decision that should be made involves the targeting of an ultimate employer. Student should ask themselves, "Which university do I want to work for when I complete my degree?" As you probably are aware, there is a "pecking order" among universities, and if you desire to be employed by one of the top tier schools when you graduate (the likes of Harvard, Stanford, or Northwestern, for instance), it's easier to land the job if you graduate from one of the top tier doctoral programs. Who you know counts in your favor, and having the right pedigree can enhance employment prospects. However, given the "publish-or-perish" mandate at that level, having a professorship at a top tier university is not everyone's cup of tea. With over one thousand four-year colleges and universities

employing doctoral qualified marketing professors, there's a great deal of choice available beyond the top tier. So, when evaluating doctoral programs, the student might want to find out where that program's graduates have been placed, and if the program has placed anyone at the student's "target" school. While you're at it, examine the range of schools on the list. A healthy mix of schools of various sizes and research orientations, from small teaching schools to major research universities, indicates a balanced doctoral program able to cater to a wide range of student needs (even as they might change over the course of your studies).

After completing these personal decisions, it is a good idea to set up some decision guidelines to help streamline the process. The objective should be to select the best program for the student, and since abilities and needs are unique, just any program won't do. As mentioned previously, the few published rankings of doctoral programs have their weaknesses. These rankings tend to oversimplify the advantages and disadvantages of any single program, and fail to capture within college differences (Baxter 1993). Furthermore, a major portion of the evaluation should be done at the program level, not the university level, and that information can best be discerned by personal investigation (Dukelow 1980).

Early in the process, the student should attempt to rate the relative importance of each salient aspect of doctoral programs, as this will assist in making a meaningful choice. A Decision Model Worksheet (Table 2) has been prepared to assist in this activity. On the worksheet, in the "importance column," each aspect should be given a one to five rating on its importance to the student. Although ratings can always be changed as new information is uncovered, by completing this step up-front, it will help during the decision process especially if the decision is a close one. The decision model also allows you to record your overall impressions about the university, faculty, and location. Once the data collection is completed for each university, the importance rating enables the student to compute a weighted score based on the individual specifications and impressions about each program.

INFORMATION SEARCH

The next step in the decision process is to conduct the information search in earnest, and a guide called the Information Search Worksheet (Figure 3) has been prepared for assistance. The information search enables the student to organize information about each program's key characteristics. Facts about deadlines can be recorded, and the student can begin to total the financial impact associated with each choice. Furthermore, the degree of attention students can expect to receive from each faculty member based upon the professor's time constraints with class, research, and number of students should be noted. Prospective students should also record information about faculty expectations.

Once schools of interest have been identified, the next step is to re-visit their website. Although the information presented therein may not be free from bias, the student can acquire valuable factual information such as the specific classes offered, facility names and vitas, deadlines, and current doctoral students. The website will also provide specifics about the university's size and facilities. This kind of information provides insight about which resources are available at your disposal and the level of attention you can expect (Dukelow 1980). This information will also help identify the necessary contacts (such as the department head and program director) to maximize the effectiveness of any campus visits made later on.

The website will also provide contact phone numbers and email addresses to received brochures, catalogs, and applications that are not available on the web. A good idea is to print out all application-related information, such as deadlines, prerequisites, the number of references, required GMAT score, fees, and transcripts re-

TABLE 2
DECISION MODEL WORKSHEET

First, fill out the importance of each item 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. Once you have collected information about the university using Information Search (Figure 2) and Campus Visit (Figure 3) as guides, rate each item with a score of 1–5 with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. Lastly, multiply the weight given by the importance by the score for each item and add those scores together for the overall score.

Criteria	Importance	Institution 1	Institution 2	Institution 3
Personal Goal Achievement				
Career	☐	☐	☐	☐
Location	☐	☐	☐	☐
Time Schedule	☐	☐	☐	☐
Information Search				
Internal				
Assistantship	☐	☐	☐	☐
Average Starting Salary	☐	☐	☐	☐
Faculty/Student Ratio	☐	☐	☐	☐
Placement Opportunity	☐	☐	☐	☐
Required GMAT	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tuition & Fees	☐	☐	☐	☐
External				
Contributions to the Field	☐	☐	☐	☐
Program Endorsements	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ratings	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reputation	☐	☐	☐	☐
Campus Visit				
Internal				
Facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐
Faculty Relationships	☐	☐	☐	☐
Networking Opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐
Research Opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teaching Opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall University Environment	☐	☐	☐	☐
External				
Living Expenses	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall Community Environment	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall Personal Feeling	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall Score	☐	☐	☐	☐

TABLE 3
INFORMATION SEARCH WORKSHEET

University _____ **Comments**
Academics
Explore
  Website   http://_____
  Brochure   _____Received
Classes
  Average Class Size   _____
  Courses Offered per Semester   _____
  Credit Hours Per Class   _____
Completion
  Semesters   _____
  Summer Sessions   _____
  Years   _____
University Statistics
  Full Time Research Faculty   _____
  Number of Faculty   _____
  Total Number of Specialties   _____
  Total Number of Students   _____
Personal Program Endorsements   (communication with education mavens)
Application   _____Received_____
Deadline   __/__ /_____
Fee $_____
Number of References   _____
Prerequisites   _____
Required GMAT Score   _____/800_____
Transcripts   _____
Faculty
Average Courses Taught Professors
  per Semester   _____
Faculty/Student Ratio   _____
Number of Department Faculty   _____
Number of Full Time Research Faculty   _____
Number of Students in Program   _____
Graduates
Average Classes Taught   _____
Average Post Graduate Salary   _____
Contributions to the Field   _____
Job Placement   _____
Financial
Available Assistantships $_____
Health Benefits $_____
Parking or Transportation Fee $_____
Registration Fee $_____
Student Housing $_____
Student Loans $_____
Technology Fee $_____
Tuition $_____
Tuition Reimbursement $_____

quired. By recording all this information, the student can keep a timeline on when things are due and what GMAT score you must have to be admitted. This way any necessary adjustments can be made, from taking or retaking the GMAT to ordering transcripts from previous universities.

One of the most important differences to discern is how the program balances education in the craft of research with education in the craft of teaching. Successful college professors must be excellent at acquiring knowledge through theoretical and empirical research and then dispensing that knowledge to others through the development of course content and effective pedagogy that relates to the target learner. There are some doctoral programs that place all of their efforts on the research side of the equation because they believe that the students can pick-up teaching skills later through trial and error on their own.

Because teaching excellence is becoming more and more a minimum requirement for tenure (based upon increasing pressure from students, parents, alumni and state legislatures), the better doctoral programs help the student develop teaching skills through some combination of course work, teaching mentorship and hands-on experiences in teaching a variety of courses. The doctoral program is really the appropriate time to learn to teach effectively, not after graduation when performance pressures associated with a new tenure-track position escalate.

If after this search you are still interested in the university, it is recommended that the student seek opinions from education experts they know. These "mavens" are trusted scholars who have made it through a doctoral program and have first-hand knowledge. They may be previous instructors, friends, or family members who are able to provide reliable feedback about the universities and programs under investigation (Baxter 1993). Also, it is a good idea to ask about other programs they would recommend, because the more schools investigated, the better the

chances of selecting the right school (Dukelow 1980).

Completing the search is difficult without speaking to someone that represents the university. Contacting the graduate office would be a good place to start for faculty, student, and financial information. Graduate offices provide a coordinator to speak with prospective students about the program. This individual may be able to fill-in the still missing information from your information search worksheet, and provide some feedback as to potential for admission (Rittner and Trudeau 1997). They will be privy to faculty student ratio, faculty research, and job placement because most of those statistics are housed in that department (Dukelow 1980). Other financial concerns can also be addressed with them, such as cost of living as well as assistantships, fees, and tuition. The graduate coordinator may also be able to set up a campus visit and interviews with the marketing program chairperson and current graduate students. This action supports the building of an effective networking system to assist in making the correct program decision.

CAMPUS VISIT

At this point the student may have decided to eliminate some of the universities under consideration. It is also a good idea to re-evaluate the big decision about continuing toward a doctorate. Information search should offer a good idea of the structure of doctoral programs. After developing the choice set, the next challenge is getting admitted, because there are normally more applicants than spaces available. Faculty committees look at GMAT scores and GPA as rough indications of student potential, but they also scrutinize the personal statement, letters of reference, and other materials to gain insights into the student's skills, intangible qualities and motivation level. The objective is to select a class of students, every one of which complements the other. Accordingly, the materials supplied by the student should include information that demonstrates capabilities, whether or not that capability has a direct relationship to past academic perfor-

mance. And, because performance scores do count in competitive entry decisions, the student may want to retake the GMAT, especially if there is a realistic opportunity for improving the score.

You should schedule visits to your top three choices to demonstrate your interest and "sell" your capabilities to the program coordinator and graduate faculty. While there, you can get a sense of the place, and see if it feels right for you. You can also see what kinds of resources are provided for doctoral students, and what level of office space and office equipment is made available. It's also an opportunity to get the inside story from current students. If it is impossible to make a personal visit, at the very least request a phone interview.

When you visit, be sure to arrange to meet faculty and students, and tour the area. A Campus Visit Worksheet (Table 4) will serve as a guide to recording campus-related information, including cost of living, campus environment, and networking opportunities with faculty and students. Beware of any skewed or biased information (both positive and negative) that may be offered to entice you. Interview more than one faculty member and more than one current student for a balanced perspective. Do not let someone's bad day deter you from a school that's a good fit.

Before arriving, reconfirm interview appointments so that those to whom you want to speak are available. Make sure you allow enough time to look around the area and visit local real-estate agencies, as well as the chamber of commerce (Rittner and Trudeau 1997), as these organizations are in a good position to provide usable and reliable cost-of-living information. Schedule these for the afternoon, so if you do not like the university you can utilize your time elsewhere.

During the interviews, it's a good idea to ask as many pertinent questions as you can. A work sheet is provided for this purpose (Table 4). Ask faculty hosts questions regarding their areas of research, their teaching, their service and their commitment to mentoring doctoral students. This feedback will help garner both a deeper understanding of an academic career, and how doctoral students fit into the daily activities of faculty at that institution. The level of personal attention that students receive is often a big difference in programs. The better programs provide a high level of individual customization in the courses you may select, and faculty mentorship to assist you in the development of research, service and teaching skills. Sometimes an institution puts most of their efforts and resources into their MBA program, and the doctoral program is treated as an afterthought. This is reflected in a lack of commitment by the faculty toward doctoral students, and as a result, students may be treated as copy and library "gophers" rather than research co-contributors. Programs that are small and highly selective tend to value the contribution of doctoral students at a much higher level, allowing the student to learn more and progress at a quicker pace. In any case, a few pointed questions will provide the information needed to form an impression.

At this time, other program questions can be addressed that concern specific marketing interests and the range of opportunities to explore those ideas. After this discussion, the student should come away with some strong ideas on how this institution views its doctoral students. Do they seem to be implying "students are part of our team" or "students should do their thing and stay clear of the faculty." Either attitude could be very telling.

In interviews with current students, general questions can be addressed such as their satisfaction with the local and university environment, their program experiences, and their rate of progress through the program. These individuals were in your shoes not long ago and can help with advice on what to do and what not to do when choosing a program. They can also offer insight into the culture of the program, and how intense the competition is among students. Current pro-

TABLE 4
CAMPUS VISIT WORKSHEET

University	_____				**Comments**
Location	_____				
Living Expenses					
Clothing	$_____				
Entertainment	$_____				
Food	$_____				
Housing	$_____		**Overall**		
Cable	$_____				
Internet	$_____	**Location**	**Environment**		
Rent	$_____	**Good**	**Average**	**Poor**	
Utilities	$_____	☐	☐	☐	
Water	$				
Medical	$				
Transportation	$				
Washing	$				
Other	$				
Total	$				

University	**Good**	**Average**	**Poor**
Campus Environment	☐	☐	☐
Facilities	☐	☐	☐
Amenities	☐	☐	☐
Library	☐	☐	☐
Medical	☐	☐	☐
Recreational	☐	☐	☐
Research	☐	☐	☐
Technology	☐	☐	☐
Graduate Organizations	☐	☐	☐

Interviews

Faculty
  Allocation of Time (100%)
  Research _____%
  Research Methods _____%
  Teaching _____%
  Average Time to Finish *Your*
    Program _____
  Examinations
    Comprehensive _____Yes _____No
    Qualifying Exam _____Yes _____No
  Individualized Programs _____Yes _____No
  National Meetings Attended _____
  Regional Meetings Attended _____

Student	**Good**	**Average**	**Poor**
Community Environment	☐	☐	☐
Networking Opportunities	☐	☐	☐
Research Opportunities Available	☐	☐	☐
Service Opportunities Available	☐	☐	☐
Teaching Opportunities Available	☐	☐	☐
University Environment	☐	☐	☐

gram students can help the prospective student evaluate whether this is the right fit considering ultimate career goals.

Another question to be asked pertains to the quality of collaborative research relationships among faculty and fellow students. It is appropriate to find out the typical number of articles students co-author with faculty during their time in the program. By the time a graduate enters the job market, if a number of co-authored conference proceedings and journal articles are already listed on the vita, that graduate will have a competitive advantage over the other job seekers who have not benefited from this level of research collaboration.

Speaking of time required to complete the program, this is an area that dramatizes differences between schools. Doctoral education, like fine wine, seems to take time, with the typical program requiring four or more years to complete. But the student should ask what percentage of current students require more than four years, and why? Also, the student should find out what the university's "sunset provision" is, that is, under extenuating situations such as adverse health or personal calamity, how much time is allowed before someone is forced out of the program?

Finally, while on the campus visit look for indications as to how well the faculty relates to one another. Unfortunately, there are doctoral programs where competitive strife and turnover among the faculty can spill over into the quality of the doctoral experience, and there are "horror" stories about doctoral students getting a raw deal because of their allegiances with feuding faculty members. Faculty bridge the gap between students and the university through guiding correct expectations, supplementing learning, and becoming an academic cheerleader to help doctoral students avoid personal failure. No one wants a program where one is required to tiptoe through political minefields, or worry about committee members leaving the institution. The visit

should help the student take the temperature of the "political waters," and gain a sense of how much cooperation exists among faculty and among students. Based upon the visit, a student should feel comfortable in rating the program on the "Ph.D. Program Interaction Matrix" provided as Figure 1. If the rating appears to be in the low cooperation quadrant, then candidates would be well advised to look elsewhere. Low cooperation is indicative of a poor quality program and correlated with high drop-out rates (Lovitts and Nelson 2000).
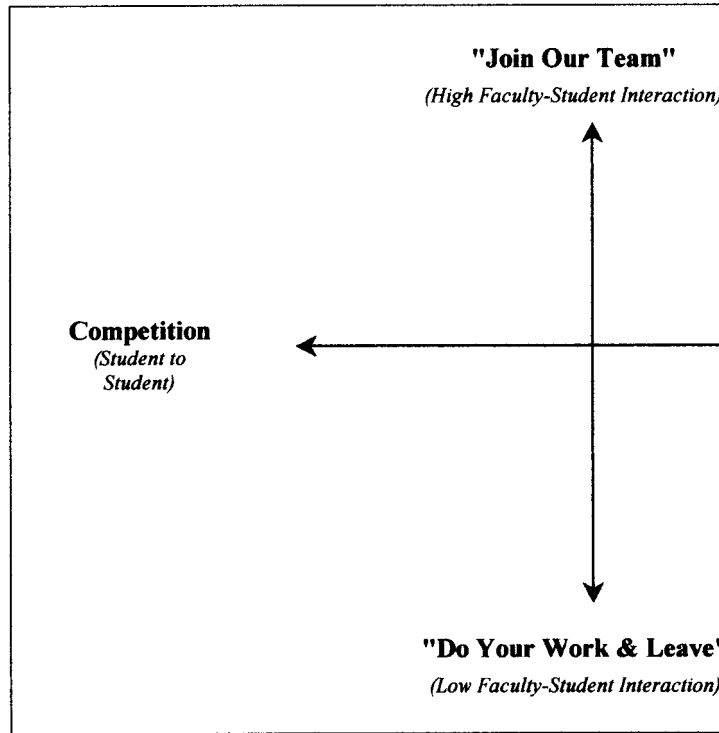
After the visit, be sure to follow up with a phone call or personal note thanking everyone for his or her time. Once campus visits are completed, return to the Decision Model Worksheet. Based upon information and experiences, the student should rate each item on a scale of one to five, one being the lowest and five being the highest. Then, multiply each item times the importance rating assigned earlier and then add each product for an overall score. By comparing the weighted scores for each school, the student may decide it's appropriate to delete certain universities from further consideration. Now it is time for the application process.

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

The two major issues concerning the application process are deadlines and presentation. Once information search and the campus visits are finished, applications need to be completed and intended references must be contacted (typically three to five) for letters of recommendation. Be aware that each university may have its own form or standards for recommendation letters, so check with each admissions department to avoid potential delays due to missing or incomplete information. Also, contact all previous universities to request official transcripts and have them sent directly to the universities in the choice set. Do the same with the GMAT results. Furthermore, make sure all addresses are correct and the application fees are included with the application to avoid deadline penalty.

FIGURE 1
Ph.D. PROGRAM INTERATION MATRIX

"Where does this program ran

"Join Our Team"
(High Faculty-Student Interaction)

Competition
(Student to Student)

"Do Your Work & Leave'
(Low Faculty-Student Interaction)

Good presentation is important to both the university and past instructors who are writing letters of recommendation. Send all university forms, resumes, and stamped-addressed envelopes to instructors to ensure complete recommendations. Also, inform them of any time constraints that apply. All applications should be typed and complete. Remember that the student is selling yourself and incomplete information can reflect poorly on one's ability to compete in a doctoral program (Rittner and Trudeau 1997).

FOLLOW-UP STEPS

After completing the application process, the student should contact the program chairperson, and inform him or her that an application is on the way. At this point in time, the applicant should ask the date when admission decisions will be finalized. If that date passes and no notification has been received, wait a week and contact the chairperson for further information. A notification may have three possible results: acceptance, rejection, and waiting list. No matter which notification is tendered, the student should write a cordial note that acknowledges receipt of the decision and offers sincere thanks for being considered. If the student is accepted, the note should also advise when you will reach your decision. If placed on the waiting list, a phone call to the chair is warranted to determine the likelihood of ultimate acceptance. If rejection is the result, the student may still wish to contact the chairperson for information about possible reap-

plication. However, it is important to avoid being bothersome as that could end your career before it begins (Dukelow 1980).

If admitted to more than one program, the student should make a decision promptly and communicate it expeditiously to all appropriate parties. The rejected schools and the candidates on waiting lists will appreciate your thoughtfulness. The Decision Model Worksheet is designed to be used to help decide which school is the best fit.

CONCLUSION

One student who took eight years to complete his degree was asked why it had taken him so long to accomplish what many had done in half the time. "Stubbornness," was his succinct reply.

"I was too stubborn to accept the advice of my professors. When they suggested that I do something one way, I did it the opposite, and in every case time proved that they were right."

There are almost as many reasons that students give for selecting a school for doctoral study, as there are students. But experience suggests that the choice set is usually made on subjective criteria, and usually related to a feeling of comfort with the people and the place. Our advice is to ask the right questions, uncover the hidden differences, and make the decision based upon the differences you discern. Those who succeed in doctoral programs go into them with their eyes wide open: their investigation has uncovered the hidden strengths and weaknesses of the place, and they select the school based upon how it fits with their needs.

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