

Tips for Applying to Graduate School in the U.S.

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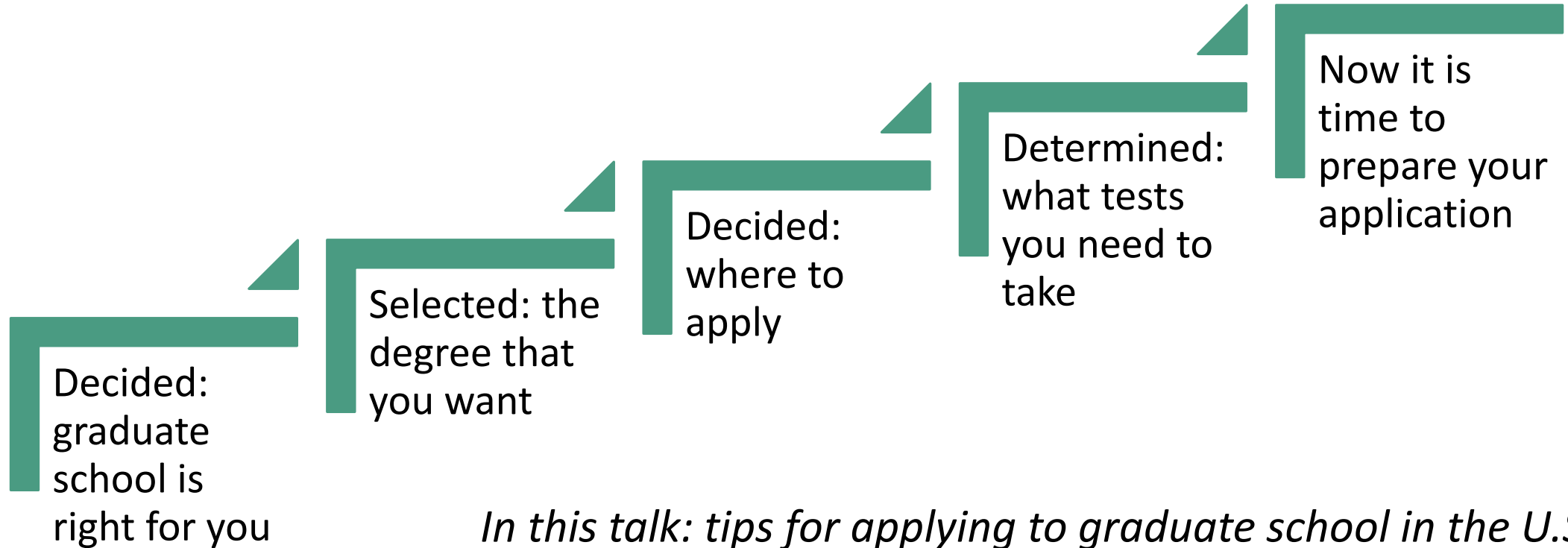
Associate Professor of Agricultural & Biological Engineering

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Mentoring neTwork for African Women in Academia

Introduction



Masters or PhD

- ❑ Some schools will only offer PhD opportunities
- ❑ Some schools will offer a professional (non-thesis) masters
 - States requiring additional credentials for Engineering registration
- ❑ In Tier 1 research institutions emphasis is on the PhD
 - Might offer Direct-to-PhD options
 - Many require MS before admission to the PhD program
 - Some offer MS/PhD track (*requires commitment*)
 - Easier to find funding for the PhD (*but need to be sure that is right for you*)



Do Your Homework



☐ Look up
faculty in
your area
of
interest

Do Your Homework






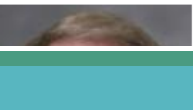
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Faculty by Area of Interest x

Secure | <https://engineering.purdue.edu/ABE/people/ptFacultyByArea>

Faculty by Area of Interest

- [Agricultural Safety and Health](#)
- [Agricultural Systems Management](#)
- [Bioenergy](#)
- [Biological Engineering](#)
- [Cellular and Biomolecular Engineering](#)
- [Environmental and Natural Resources](#)

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Do Your Homework

Dr. Ni's research interest is in methodology and technology in air quality study, bioenergy from agricultural wastes, and air and water pollution abatement, such as measurement and control for research facilities, data acquisition and control software programming, sensor development, biogas technology, pollution assessment, and mathematical modeling. His extension is in livestock and rural waste systems engineering, including state-wide animal manure management, water and air quality protection, and on-farm biological waste treatment using technologies such as anaerobic digestion, bioreactors, and best management practices for reducing environmental impacts from animal agriculture.

Publication reprints available at my [Google Scholar](#) page.

Contact the Faculty: express interest

- ☐ First contact by email (*must have done your homework!*)
 - Express interest in graduate program (state area of interest)*
 - Attach statement of purpose, transcripts, GRE scores*
 - State if you need funding support
- ☐ Email etiquette
 - Address faculty by their title (Prof., Dr.)
 - Do not use CAPITAL LETTERS, **bold font**, **colored text**, or larger text
- ☐ Request follow-up (phone or Skype call)

Credentials

SCORES



■ TOEFL/IELTS

- But I'm from an English speaking country
- Schools are required to verify English proficiency before they can issue an I-20

■ Minimum GPA = 3.0 +

- Screening typically done at the Grad Sch*
- *Have your transcripts translated**

Recommend:

World Educational Services (WES)[†]

<https://www.wes.org/>

[†]Note that MTAWA has no financial or other interest in WES

Grading Systems Differ

U.S. GPA: **1 = D/Poor** through **4 = A, A+/Excellent**

Other system: **1= Excellent** through **5 = Poor**

Variants

GPA 1 through 5 (both directions)

Overall A-F

E= Excellent vs E just a little better than F

S= Superior vs S= Satisfactory

Grading	Weight
Classwork	17%
Quizzes	33%
Computer assignments	25%
Final	25%
Total	100%

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- GRE Scores
 - Often required by graduate programs
 - Minimum requirements may vary by program
 - Viewed differently in different programs*

Scaled Score	Percent of Test Takers Scoring Lower than Selected Scaled Scores	
	Verbal Reasoning	Quantitative Reasoning
170	99	98
169	99	97
168	98	95
167	97	94
166	96	92
165	95	90
164	94	88
163	92	86
162	90	83
161	87	80
160	85	78
159	81	75
158	79	71
157	74	68
156	71	64

Source: ETS GRE® Guide to the Use of Scores 2015-2016

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Score Levels	Percent of Test Takers Scoring Lower than Selected Score
	Analytical Writing
6.0	99
5.5	98
5.0	93
4.5	80
4.0	56
3.5	38
3.0	15
2.5	7
2.0	2
1.5	1

Source: ETS GRE® Guide to the Use of Scores 2015-2016

Credentials

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- Critical if you do not have a Masters
 - Esp if looking at Direct-to-PhD or MS/PhD
 - Ask your professors for opportunities
 - Be open to volunteering if paid positions are not available (experience, strong reference)
- If you have a Masters
 - Evidence of presentations to scientific audiences
 - Evidence of publication (at least one)



Your Application

- Apply early
 - Do not wait for deadline*
- Ensure application is complete*
 - If scores are pending, state availability dates
- Give your references a heads-up well in advance*
 - References will get automated email

For all applicants:

EXAMPLE

- Create an application account to start your application.
- Submit results of required tests (if needed) for your graduate program (examples of tests: GRE, GMAT, TOEFL, IELTS, PTE).
- Prepare any additional documents based on your desired graduate program.
- Pay the nonrefundable application fee (not required for nondegree or teacher license applicants).

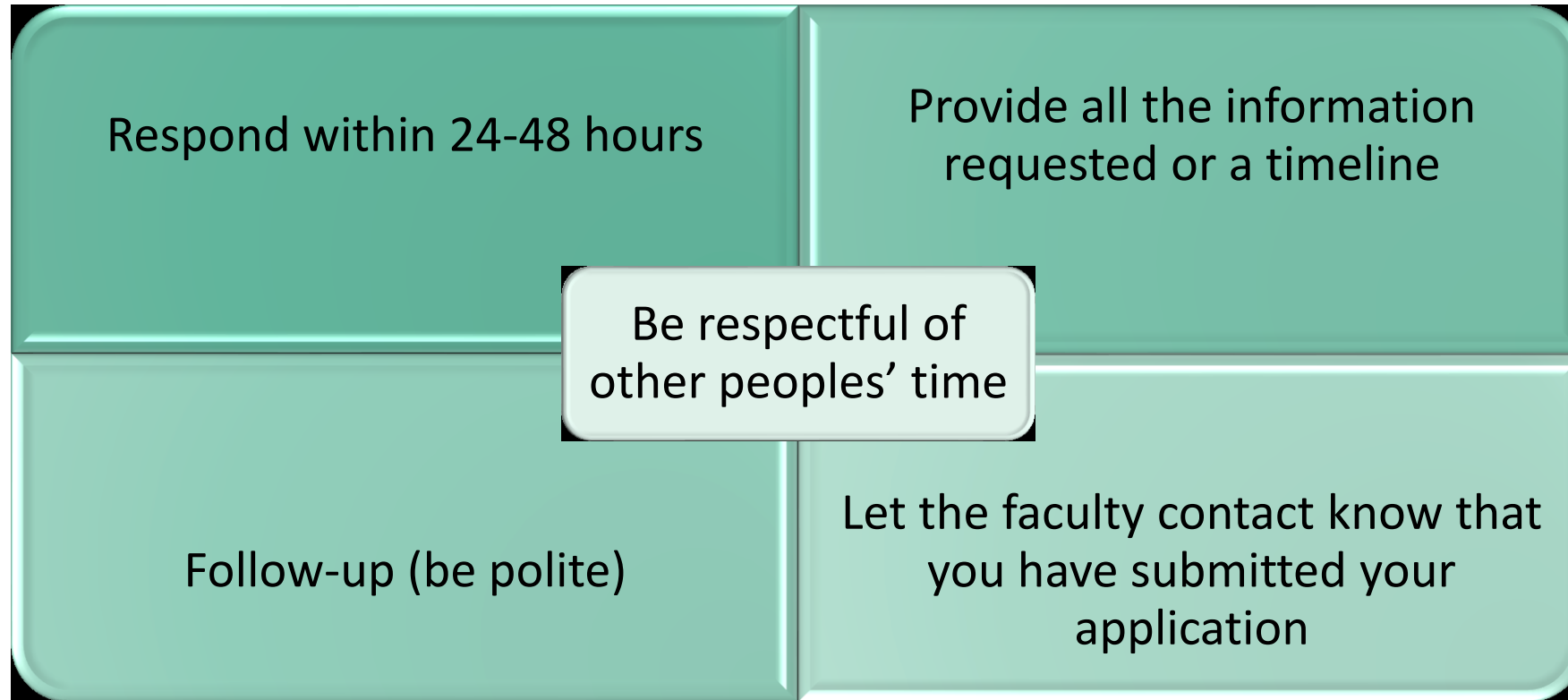
For degree-seeking applicants:

- Upload official transcripts for every institution of higher education attended.
- Submit three letters of recommendation or appropriate number according to your graduate program.

Prep Your References*

- ☐ Choose your referees carefully, *then ask to include them*
 - No friends, relatives, fellow students
- ☐ Give them notice (2 weeks to one month)
- ☐ Let them know where you are applying and what you hope to accomplish
- ☐ Give them a summary of your accomplishments (or CV)
- ☐ Let them know they will receive an automated email and how to submit the letters

Be Responsive



What Next

If your application is **accepted**

- Multiple schools: Decide which one
- Inform the faculty contact of your intent
- Respond within the given timeline (April 15)
- Inform the other schools of your decision and thank them for taking the time to review your materials*



What Next



- If your application is **rejected**
- Follow-up with a thank-you note
 - Thank the faculty contact for taking the time to consider your interests
 - Thank the graduate committee (respond to rejection letter) for taking the time to review your materials*
 - Move on...

- ❑ MS: Get specialized preparation in your field of study

PhD: Becoming an expert in your field of study

- ❑ Open up options for your career

Start early

- *Process can take 6 to 9 months*

Plan for expenses

- *Application fees, TOEFL, GRE, Transcripts, Start-up monies*

Do Your Homework

- *It shows if you are “flying blind”*

Ask for feedback

- *Share your documents with a mentor**

Be responsive

- *Quick turnaround is essential*

Links:

www.phds.org

www.gradschools.com



[`mgitau@purdue.edu`](mailto:mgitau@purdue.edu)
[`web.ics.purdue.edu/~mgitau`](http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~mgitau)

[`mtawainc@gmail.com`](mailto:mtawainc@gmail.com)
[`https://mtawainc.org`](https://mtawainc.org)