Mentoring and funding are important aspects of a graduate education. Students should learn how mentoring and funding work at the schools they are considering. A good match between a mentor and a student can have a significant impact on student satisfaction, learning, and career development. In addition, having a good plan for funding a graduate education allows students to fully engage their academic programs.

**Mentoring/Advising**

There is no one-size-fits-all model of pairing graduate students with faculty mentors. Some programs have a direct admit model while others have a rotation-based model. In the direct admit model, students are paired with mentors when they are admitted to a program, therefore students need to identify and contact individual advisors before they are admitted to a program. In the rotational model students rotate through laboratories in the program before being matched with mentors. This allows students to get to know the faculty members and their research before being assigned to a mentor. There are advantages and disadvantages to both models; and the degree of input students has in the process can vary. Applicants need to understand the advising/mentoring model for any program before they begin the application process.

**Funding**

Like mentoring models, funding modes can vary greatly from program to program. Applicants should ask each program to which they apply how funding works in that department. Generally, there are three sources of funding for a graduate education: teaching/project assistantships, research assistantships, and fellowships/traineeships. Some departments have ample opportunities for teaching assistantships while others do not. Research assistantships often depend on the funding a mentor has obtained. Some departments have fellowship opportunities and students should learn more about fellowships in their disciplines. A few sources of external fellowships include: NSF – GRFP, NIH, Fulbright Fellowships, and the Ford Foundation.

Some programs have the ability to guarantee students funding for part, or all, of their graduate education. Other programs do not have this ability. Students should clearly understand the funding landscape of the programs that interest them.