Graduate school?
Choosing the “right” degree program

- What are your goals?
- What kind of career are you preparing for?
Professional Degree Options

- MEng & non-thesis MS degrees – professional degrees for careers in industry
  - coursework only; usually incorporates practicum/project
  - ~ 1 year
  - may include elements of technology leadership (product development, project management, innovation, commercialization)

- Business, Law, Public Health, etc…
Research Degree Options – MS & PhD

- Independent research & completion of an original thesis

- MS degree (w/ thesis)
  - ~1.5 to 2 years
  - can lead to PhD (or not)

- PhD degree
  - ~ 4-6 years; generally funded (tuition & stipend)
  - Highly specialized; “world’s expert”
  - Academic or industry careers
Financial Points to Consider

- Professional degrees = Limited Financial aid; expect to pay tuition.

- PhD degrees
  - Virtually all cover tuition and stipend, usually in return for “services” – research assistant; teaching
  - Example: BU ENG
    - Doctoral Research Fellow (DRF)
      $32,250 for 12 months
      full tuition
    - Doctoral Teaching Fellow (DTF)
      $21,500 stipend for 8 months
      8-10 credits of tuition per semester
Finding the Right School

- Is the school strong in your field?
- Are faculty there known in your field?
- Are there multiple faculty members in your interest area?
- What are employment outcomes?
- Geographical Location
Graduate Education is More Focused

- Not ME - but Acoustic Sensing
- Not BME - but Hearing Research
- Not ECE - but Nanophotonics
- Multi-disciplinary topics
?’s for PhD Applicants

- Is 1st year PhD funding unrestricted or tied to service requirement?
- Are faculty widely recognized in your area of interest?
- Are the facilities ample in your area?
- Are the current PhD students happy?
- Where do their PhD graduates go? Jobs?
What do graduate programs want?

- Has student demonstrated success in their undergraduate program?
- Can student be successful in graduate coursework?
- Does student have professional goals consistent with the degree program?
What do PhD programs want?

"Does this person have the potential to conduct scientific research?"

1. prior research (published or unpublished);
2. letters of recommendation; and
3. personal statement.

Published work? – you’ve answered the question

Unpublished work? - submit it with your application, and someone from the field will judge the quality of the work.

No prior research? - don't lose hope, you can still get in. Schools are trying to judge potential to do research.
What’s in the Application?

- Personal Profile
- Education and Work Experience
- Planned Graduate Program
- Reference Letters
- Personal Statements
- GRE’s
- Proposed Plan of Research
- Previous Research Experience
Personal statement

- Keep it short—about one page.
  - Why you want to attend graduate school
  - What you hope to accomplish
  - How you plan to accomplish it
- Emphasize all research experience (REU).
- Briefly explain any embarrassing grades.
Reference Letters

- Research advisor is the best person to write letters
  - “I've supervised her on a research project, and I have witnessed and believe in her potential to do research”
  - It counts for a lot

- Faint Praise = damnation

- Vague, not good: ‘Mary always asked insightful questions in class’

- Solid examples are convincing

- Do you know anyone at the institutions to which you are applying; does your advisor?
Transcripts

- Transcripts from all colleges attended are required.
- Hopefully you have mostly A's and B's.
- A few C's are okay for MS, bad for PhD.
- A grade of D or F requires explanation.
What should I be doing **NOW** if I want to attend graduate school?

- Research graduate program opportunities
  - Individual College Websites
  - American Society for Engineering Education [www.asee.org](http://www.asee.org)
- Discuss options with advisor & other faculty
- Visit schools; meet with faculty & grad students
- Research graduate fellowship opportunities & application deadlines
- Get involved in research labs (for research degrees)
Early Consideration for BU Seniors

- Application deadline is **Wed, Sept 28th**

- Apply to MS or MEng and receive a decision by October 20th

- Students with a cumulative GPA of 3.4 or higher at the end of junior year will receive ‘**automatic admission**’ to a master’s program in their current department.

http://www.bu.edu/eng/current-students/ugrad/seniors/early-masters-consideration/

College of Engineering