Tips for Applying to the CMJN Graduate Program

General Tips

1. When possible, please complete your initial application to the Graduate School prior to asking your references to send letters. All received materials are uploaded into an electronic folder that is created when you pay your application fee to the graduate school.
2. Make sure you sign and return a copy of the Recommendation Waiver Form to the CMJN Graduate Program Officer (GPO) as soon as possible after your application to the Graduate School. It can be mailed or to expedite the process, you can scan the signed form and email it to the GPO.
3. The Department of Communication and Journalism is making every effort to reduce our impact on the environment. Whenever possible we ask that you and your writers submit materials electronically, directly to the Graduate Program Officer or when appropriate to the Graduate School. International students are still required to send a hard copy of their application materials to the GPO.
4. Take the GRE early, in case you decide you want to retake it. We suggest four to six months before applying.
5. Apply early, particularly if you are interested in applying for funding as a Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA). We suggest at least three months before the stated deadline. Graduate School processing of transcripts, GRE scores, etc. may take longer than expected. Also, early application will allow you to address any unforeseen problems.
6. Research our CMJN program prior to applying. We want to ensure that our program fits with your personal and professional goals.
   a. Contact the CMJN GPO if you have any questions about the process.
   b. Call or email the GPO to schedule a campus visit.
   c. Contact members of the CMJN graduate faculty to find out more about our program.
   d. Speak with current graduate students (the GPO can assist you with this) to learn more about what it means to be a graduate student in our program.

Statement of Purpose (SOP)

An SOP is required for application to the CMJN Graduate Program. If applying for an Assistantship, you will write a second SOP addressing your potential as a graduate teaching assistant.

1. You want to convince the graduate application review committee that you have what it takes to be successful in our program.
2. Demonstrate that you can be both a good follower and a leader. Followers are able to take direction and handle criticism well, while leaders can work independently and guide others. You will do both while in graduate school.
3. Discuss your motivation (why do you want to go to graduate school?)
4. Demonstrate your familiarity with our program. This requires that you research our faculty our program, and our institution. How does what we offer fit in with your personal academic and/or professional goals?
5. You will want to prove to committee members that you will be successful and that you will complete the program on time. What experiences or skills have you acquired while pursuing your undergraduate degree or in your current or past employment that you believe will help you as you pursue a graduate degree?
6. Edit and proofread your statement. Errors in spelling and grammar suggest poor writing skills and a lack of attention to detail.
7. Keep your statement short. Rarely does an SOP need to be over two typed pages. In fact, most are only one page long.
8. When writing the GTA SOP, the previous advice applies.

Letters of Recommendation:

When Applying to the Program

1. Choose writers who know you well and who can address your potential as a researcher and scholar.
2. Select writers who can address your academic and professional goals, your motivation for advancing your academic career, and your commitment to graduate study.
3. Consider asking for letters from individuals who have professional or personal relationships with graduate faculty in our program. Check out the list of graduate faculty to see where they may have worked or attended school and compare that to potential writers at your school or place of work.
4. When possible, choose writers who are your direct supervisors, have taught classes you have taken, or who have worked with you on research based projects. Unless the writer has a direct relationship with someone in the department to which you are applying, you will want to avoid asking for letters from a graduate teaching assistant. Graduate teaching assistants are typically considered students (albeit advanced students) by application reviewers.
5. You may want to provide your writer with a copy of your resume, GRE scores, GPA, and a list of current activities to help them craft a solid reference letter.
6. Remember to send a hand-written thank you letter to every reference. This is good etiquette.

When Applying for a Graduate Teaching Assistantship

1. If you do plan to apply for an assistantship, be sure to let your writers know so that they can also address your potential as a graduate teaching assistant in their letter. This will save them time and effort, as applicants often ask the same individuals to write letters for both their initial application and for their GTA application.
2. If your letter writers are writing a letter that addresses both your application to the program and for an Assistantship, please let the GPO know so that the letters can be directed to both committees. An email to the GPO is sufficient.
3. You may want to review the Graduate Teaching Assistant Policy Manual to better understand what is required by our GTAs. Your writers may want or need this information.