

[Morse code beeps]
[Whoosh]
[Helicopter rotor]
Hi, everyone.
My name is Nick Rober.
I'm a Fellow with the AeroAstro Comm Lab,
and today
we're going to be talking about
graduate school applications.
So first we're going to jump
right into an activity.
So this is just, a reflection activity.
You can go ahead and open the file
"Grad School Motivation" and take five
or so minutes to think about why it is
that you plan to apply for grad school.
[Alien spaceship beeps]
So the lesson goals for today are first,
we're going to identify key elements
of a strong grad school application.
We're going to analyze
sample application materials.
So this could be a CV, statement
of purpose, and then recommendation
requests.
We're going to look at clarity style
and persuasiveness.
And then finally we will learn to draft
and revise sections of different
grad school application components
so that you can go and take these lessons,
to develop your
own grad school applications.
So what are the main components
of a grad school application?
A grad school application typically
consists of a statement of purpose,
so a written piece, a CV/resume,
a set of letters of recommendations
from faculty
or other people that you've worked with,
and then it may include,
reaching out to faculty or departments
that you're interested in applying for.
A successful grad school
application will do a few things.
First and foremost,
it tells a cohesive story.
So, who are you,
why are you interested in a certain field,

and why are you prepared
to do good research?

It will employ
both technical and persuasive writing,
and then it will finally,
convince a committee or faculty member
that you're a good fit for their program
and will do well as a grad student there.
So first, the statement of purpose.
So this is usually the the most
challenging, piece of a grad school
application.

But the statement of purpose
basically lays out your motivation
for applying to grad school.

So, it has to convince some admissions
committee, so this is usually a committee
made up of faculty members, that you're
driven to do important research and,
that you will be able to be successful
in their program.

It might be separated
into a couple of different statements.
So you might see different applications
where you have a personal statement
and a research statement, but ultimately,
it's all kind of the same information
just split in in different ways.

Keep in mind that the audience
for these statements of purpose
are faculty members.

They're pretty busy people.
You need to be able to kind of
catch their attention pretty quickly
and they have a lot of these
to read through.

So you want to be
someone who can stand out in some way.
So ultimately you want to make it clear
why a specific program
and why a specific field?

Tips for actually writing
the statement of purpose.

You want to weave in evidence
that you are going
to be an effective researcher
through your motivation and goals.

You should provide specific
technical examples from your history in
terms of what you have done that support

your preparedness to do research.
And then you want to basically highlight
any kind of elements in your CV
or resume
that may not be super front and center,
but can contribute to your
strength as a grad student.
So next we'll jump into an activity.
So this is going to be
the file "Analyze SOP Excerpts",
and take about eight minutes
to complete this.
[Alien spaceship beeps]
So the next piece of graduate application
is the CV and resume.
So specifically for graduate programs
you want to be tailoring your, your CV
or resume to
this specific graduate program,
so prioritizing research
and research adjacent
experiences is a must.
If you have limited research experience,
that's okay, but you should be trying
to highlight skills
that, would transfer into research.
So if any any experience that you can
highlight some skill that is similar
to research, that should be something
that you try and highlight as well.
And as always,
include strong action action verbs
at the start of each each component,
clear statement of what you did,
and then an outcome as well,
if that's applicable.
And you also want to quantify
outcomes and actions when possible.
Check out our other lesson on CVs
and resumes for a lot more information,
but this was just kind
of the specific stuff to grad school.
So moving on with what to include,
you always want to be
including experiences that demonstrate
research readiness and your ability
to have an impact on a research field.
So one
of the main things, if you have them,
you should be including paper

and research outputs.

So anything that you've submitted to a journal, conference, any papers that you might have in preparation or on a pre-print, basically any any work that you've done that kind of quantifies or describes your research output is is super important.

Another common thing to have is awards and honors. So you might have something like a Dean's List accolade. These are things that can be good to include just to kind of, give you credence to your ability as a researcher.

Teaching experience can be applicable, especially if your program has a specific requirement.

And then also things like technical service, leadership positions, and then other skills that you might have are good to include.

So next, we'll jump into the resume experience activities.

So go ahead and open the "Resume Experience" file and take roughly five minutes to complete that.

[Alien spaceship beeps]

So the next piece of the graduate application is letter recommendations.

And this is kind of unique because this isn't something you necessarily have to do yourself, but it is an important piece of the application because it gives the committee, the acceptance committee, some sort of view into your efficacy as a researcher

from a third person perspective.

So how to choose letter writers?

This is something that we get asked a lot, but basically the the rule of thumb is you want to get letter writers who are able to speak to your specific abilities.

So people that you've worked with, maybe a professor

who you've done research for
or worked a lot in class with,
employers can be valid,
letter writers as well.
But you want people that are able
to speak to your specific skills.
And another thing to keep in mind is
you should definitely be
asking your letter writers
well in advance of a deadline.
This is the one piece of your application
that you aren't fully in control of
and then typically, your letter writers
are going to be very busy people as well,
so they need a good warning
before a letter is due.
You can't be emailing them.
You know, the day before the letter is
due, asking them for a letter of rec
or it's probably not going to be the
highest quality letter that you could get.
So, out of courtesy for your letter
writers and out of your own interest,
be sure to email and ask
well in advance of the deadline.
And then a final piece of a
graduate application,
which may or may not be included in in
many of your applications,
is actually reaching out to faculty.
So, some faculty will ask specifically,
specifically that you don't do this,
some will ask that you do do this,
but ultimately, if you're emailing
faculty members, you should be doing it
with a specific purpose.
So you don't want to be asking
general questions that you can find on
through other resources,
but you should be asking
specific questions that can really
only be answered by emails from them.
So you may want to indicate specific
interests in pieces of their work.
This can help
you kind of stand out as an applicant,
check if they're hiring students,
because not all faculty
are hiring students every year,
and then you can ask other

reasonable questions about, you know,
the typical person that they're looking
for as admitting to their group.
In terms of how this actually fits
into your application, it can help
refine your statement of purpose.
So that this is something you do
before your statement of purpose.
You can kind of work
whatever information you get
from the email
into the statement of purpose.
It also just signals your seriousness
as an applicant.
And, but keep in mind that it's not
usually required for most applications.
This is something that, you can kind of
address on a case by case basis.
So in terms of what
not to do or what to do and what not to do
when emailing faculty members,
make sure you read a couple of
their papers ahead of time
and have some sort of idea
of what type of work
they're, they're doing.
This just gives you the ability to have
a very informed email and look prepared.
Always be concise.
Faculty members
are usually pretty busy people as well, so
they don't have time to read through
a super super long email.
And then again, write with a purpose.
Make sure you're introducing yourself,
giving interest,
and asking any specific questions
that you might have.
Things not to do.
Don't, send an email
if they're specifically asking not to.
That's something I mentioned earlier.
Don't ask questions that can be answered
through other resources
like department website
or the faculty's web page.
And then finally, don't worry
if you don't hear back
because ultimately they're very busy.
If they don't get back to you,

that doesn't mean they're not interested
in bringing you into their lab,
it just means maybe they didn't
have time to send an email.

So that will launch
into the final activity.

Open "Complete an Email" file and take
roughly five minutes to complete that.

[Alien spaceship beeps]

Okay, with that lesson,
you should now be able to identify
key elements of a grad school application
and analyze your own application material
and iteratively improve upon it.

So, thank you.

[Morse code beeps]