

# J-School *insider*

August 2011



Current J-Schooler, Roberto Daza, getting “the shot”.

## Common Application Pitfalls

| by Pam Gleason

Putting together a graduate application is very time consuming and stressful. Here are some common mistakes to avoid:

1. Don't overwrite your personal statements. Avoid essays that are formulaic, cutesy, arrogant, or cliched. Please don't tell us about your precocious childhood.
2. Don't use recommenders who aren't familiar with your journalistic work. A vague letter of recommendation can hurt your admissions chances.
3. Don't submit work samples on topics that are over-covered in the media.
4. Don't wait until the end of November to call us with questions.

**Remember: We're here for you!**

## Financing Your Master's Degree

| by Joanne Straley

As you continue fine-tuning your application for the December 1 deadline, you will want to also continue your search for outside funding. Here are some tips:

1. Go to our website and review the list of organizations on our Cost and Financial Aid page listed under Outside Scholarships. You can also use the UCLA database GRAPES to conduct searches based on your profile. You'll find that outside funding awards are based on region, media platform, or reporting beats.
2. Select six or seven organizations that seem like a good fit for you and your reporting.

3. Study each award application, figure out the components. Will you need to ask for letters of recommendation? Will you need to write a cover letter and/or provide work samples? Each application will have different requirements. It is also worthwhile to get to know the organization, and include this wherever you can in your application.

Our best advice for outside funding is to get started early. Deadlines are passing, so start your search today. I would be happy to talk with you about your financial aid options, please email me at [jstraley@berkeley.edu](mailto:jstraley@berkeley.edu) or call 510-643-5058.

## Admissions FAQ

| with Cory Welch

**1. How important is my GPA?** The faculty looks closely at transcripts to detect patterns and anomalies. They also look for areas of expertise and advanced coursework. It's a good idea to give an explanation for low grades or incomplete grades. Occasionally we admit applicants who have below a 3.0 if all of the work done since graduation shows a strong work ethic.

**2. I just graduated, should I wait until next year to apply?** Last year we had a surge of applicants who had just finished their bachelor's degrees. We only admitted

those who showed a great deal of professionalism and moxy by getting out into the community to do reporting. Reporting for a school paper is usually not enough to convince the faculty of your commitment.

**3. What if I cannot come to Open House or an Information Session?** We present a lot of information at Open House and Information Sessions that is not available online. However, you could also make a phone appointment with me to discuss your application questions. Email me at: [cwelch@berkeley.edu](mailto:cwelch@berkeley.edu).

## J-School On The Road

### August

Info Session (Washington, D.C.)

**3-7:** NABJ Career Fair (Philadelphia, PA)

**10-13:** AAJA Convention (Detroit, MI)

### September

**20:** Joint Information Session with CUNY Graduate School of Journalism (New York, NY)

**21:** Joint Information Session with Columbia Graduate School of Journalism (New York, NY)

**22-27:** ONA Conference (Boston, MA)

### October

**6-9:** Wordstock (Portland, OR)

**9:** Berkeley J-School Open House: All are welcome! (RSVP to all events: [cwelch@berkeley.edu](mailto:cwelch@berkeley.edu))

For more info:  
<http://journalism.berkeley.edu/>