GRADUATE SCHOOL PLANNING TIMELINE
Adapted from Michigan State University

JUNIOR YEAR (SPRING)

- Talk to CSTEP/McNair staff and faculty mentors about your interests and begin identifying programs in your field using the websites of programs you're interested in & websites such as:
  - GradSchools.com
  - Princeton Review
  - Peterson's Graduate Schools
  - Pathways to Science
- Gather information about programs including application requirements and deadlines for financial aid.
- Start a list of programs you think you may be interested in, and if you can, visit the campuses.
- Start preparing for standardized tests. Study for the GRE and take practice exams.

BETWEEN JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEAR

- Sign up to take the GRE or other admissions test at the end of summer/early fall. Register for the GRE no later than the end of October! Why? You're going to be busy with classes, jobs and other commitments...it's best to take the exam as soon as possible and get it out of the way.
- Begin investigating scholarships, fellowships, and other sources of funding. Start creating a financial plan for paying for graduate school. Some additional resources for funding opportunities:
  - Cornell University Fellowship Database
  - Grad School Heaven
  - UCLA Graduate Fellowship Search
  - National GEM Consortium Fellowships
  - National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship

SENIOR YEAR

- **September/October**
  - Talk to faculty and alumni to gather more information about programs of particular interest.
  - Narrow your graduate school list to **at least 8-10 programs**. Compile application information and requirements for each program in an Excel spreadsheet, portfolio or binder.
  - Finalize your list of programs and begin compiling application materials (letters of recommendation, personal statement, CV, transcripts, etc.)
    - Refine your CV and personal statement
    - Talk to faculty about writing letters of recommendation. You'll need 3-4 strong letters. Send them finalized copies of your CV and personal statement and provide specific program information and deadlines. Give your recommenders early deadlines and provide them with the specific name of the university, program and department, as well as mailing information.
Email faculty in the programs you're interested in. In your email, be sure to ask specific questions about their research and the program. Attach a copy of your updated CV to show them your qualifications!

- **November**
  - If necessary, re-take the GRE exam no later than Thanksgiving break.
  - Complete applications forms, personal statement, and request transcripts from the Registrar's Office.
  - Make sure that all letters of recommendation have been sent.
  - Attend admissions interviews, if required.
  - Be sure to have McNair staff and faculty mentors review your applications before you submit them.
  - Consult the [Council for Opportunity in Education McNair fee waiver list](https://www.copie.org/mcnair_fee_waiver_list). Find out if your schools offer application fee waivers for CSTEP or McNair students.
  - Mail/submit application packets **before** deadline.
    - **Ideal goal:** submit your applications before Thanksgiving break! Why? Many application deadlines are December 15 (and earlier!). This will also give you first priority for graduate funding opportunities.

- **December**
  - Once your applications are submitted, touch base with graduate department administrators at each school to ensure they’ve received your application, test scores, transcripts and other required documents.
  - Develop a backup plan, in case you aren’t admitted.

- **January-March**
  - Get in touch with schools about setting up campus visits. Some schools will invite you to interview and visit during this time period. Campus visits are important because you’ll meet graduate students and potential faculty advisors. Networking is key!

- **March-May**
  - Accept or decline admissions offers. Most schools will require a firm decision by this time.
  - Write a note to each of your references to let them know what your final decision was, and thanking them for their help.
  - Finalize plans to pay for graduate school. Once you have acceptance, information about assistantships should be available from the department.
  - Resist the temptation to slack off on your current classes just because you’ve been accepted.

**Applicants to medical, law, or other professional schools, will have significantly different timelines. Consult the online application service for your field for more details.**