“Should I go to graduate school?”
Planning for your future career(s)

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Topics and Questions for Today

- What exactly is a graduate degree?
- What are the benefits of having one?
- How do I make the big choices?
  - Field of study and degree level
  - Program and university
  - Application process
  - Financing your degree
- Tips for success once you begin your degree
MSW... PhD... MBA...
What exactly is a graduate degree?
Common ingredients in the “Alphabet Soup” of Graduate Degrees

• A graduate program helps you build on your undergraduate education with more specialized skills and knowledge.
• A graduate degree is required to enter— or advance in— many careers.
• A good program will help you become a better lifelong learner, so you can adapt to changes in the workforce.
Types of Graduate Degrees

Master’s Degrees
Include a wide variety of research and professional degrees. Often require a capstone project, like a thesis, portfolio, or internship.

PhDs
Preparation for research or research-related careers in academia, industry, government or non-profit sectors. Require a dissertation, or longer research project.
Other Types of Graduate Education

Professional Degrees
• JD (law)
• Professional doctorates required to practice in many health professions (MD, DDS, PharmD, DVM, DPT etc.)

Certificate Programs
Shorter programs that may take two or three semesters to complete. Designed to meet specific employer needs or skillsets.
But why pursue a graduate degree?
Is it really worth it?
Graduate School Pays Off: Higher Salaries, Lower Unemployment Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unemployment Rate in 2016</th>
<th>Median Annual Earnings in 2016</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>Doctoral degree $86,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>Professional degree $90,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.40%</td>
<td>Master's degree $71,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.70%</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree $60,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.60%</td>
<td>Associate's degree $42,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.40%</td>
<td>Some college, no degree $39,312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.20%</td>
<td>High school diploma $35,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.40%</td>
<td>Less than a high school diploma$26,208</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Median annual salaries were derived by multiplying median weekly earnings by 52.
Graduate Students and Alumni Make a Difference

Preserving Art for the Education and Enrichment of Future Generations
Claire Taggart
Art Conservation, Winterthur/University of Delaware

Improving Access to Food Pantries for Food Insecure Populations
Matthew Schwartz
Social Work, University at Buffalo

Improving Airfield Safety During Extreme Weather Using Renewable Solar Energy
Joseph Daniels
Civil Engineering, University of Arkansas

Developing a Breakthrough for Early Detection of Pancreatic Cancer
James Froberg & Fataneh Karandish
Physics & Pharmaceutical Sciences, North Dakota State University
Preparation for jobs of the future, not just the present

“In many industries and countries, the most in-demand occupations or specialties did not exist 10 or even five years ago, and the pace of change is set to accelerate.”

A good graduate program will help you tackle new problems

- Ability to learn more quickly and effectively
- Adaptability
- Teamwork
- Awareness of ethical challenges
- Patience and persistence
- Communicating with others in your field— and outside it.
How do you choose a field, a university, a program?
Choosing a Field of Study and Degree Level

Questions to ask yourself:

• What are my career goals?
• What type of degree is needed to enter that career?
• What type of degree may help me advance in my current job?
• How much time am I able to devote to pursuing a degree?
• What benefits can I expect to receive in return for my investments of time and/or money?

TIP: Do your research!
Try a cost-benefit analysis on
www.gradsense.org

What might your degree be worth?

How to use this tool

What degree level do you want to pursue?*

- Bachelor’s
- Master’s
- Doctorate
- Professional

Choose your field of study*:

Make a selection

GO
Choosing a Program and University

Questions to ask yourself:

• How successful are alumni of the program in finding the kinds of jobs and careers that I want to pursue?
• What kinds of professional development opportunities does the program or university provide its students?
• What kinds of student support services (career counseling, child care, etc.) does the university offer?
• Does the program provide options for study that fit my lifestyle?

TIP: Ask your program these questions when you are applying to grad school or considering an offer of admission.
The Application Process

- Test Scores: How much do they matter?
- Personal Statement or Letter
- References
How will I pay for it?
Most Graduate Students Receive Some Form of Financial Aid

- About 70% of all master’s-level students and more than eight out of ten doctoral students received some type of financial aid in academic year 2015-2016, including loans.
- About 38% of all master’s level students and 55% of all doctoral students in academic year 2015-16 received grants.
- 31% percent of doctorate recipients in 2016 were primarily supported by a research assistantship or traineeship, 28% by a fellowship or grant, and 21% by a teaching assistantship.

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015–16 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:16), Table 7; and National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2016, Table 35.
But be sure to research your options

- www.cgsnet.org/students
- U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid Office
  http://studentaid.ed.gov
- National Association of Graduate-Professional Students
  www.nagps.org
- www.GradSense.org
- Your future university’s Financial Aid Office
How can I stay on track with my goals once I’m in graduate school?
Tips for Success

• Take initiative when it comes to your own career and professional development.
• Seek out faculty mentors that support you.
• Take advantage of peer mentors and student networks.
• Make space for personal time and a life outside grad school.
• Help family and friends understand what grad school means to you and your career plans.
And most important….

Seek out projects and work you enjoy to prepare for a career that has meaning to you.
Join the Conversation about Graduate Education

@CGSGradEd, #CGSGradImpact
Visit us at www.cgsnet.org
Thank you.