

“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.

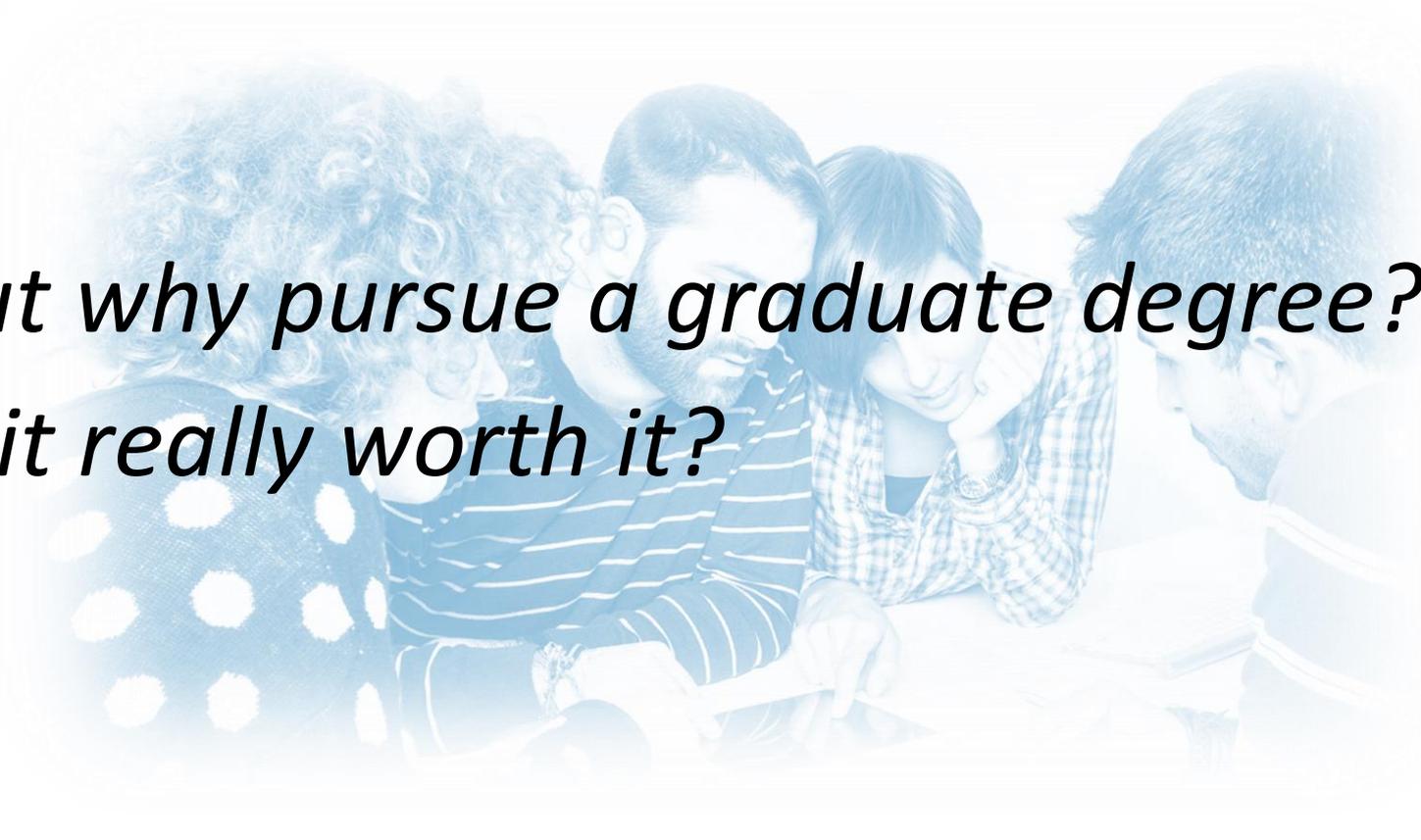
Other Types of Graduate Education

Professional Degrees

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

Certificate Programs

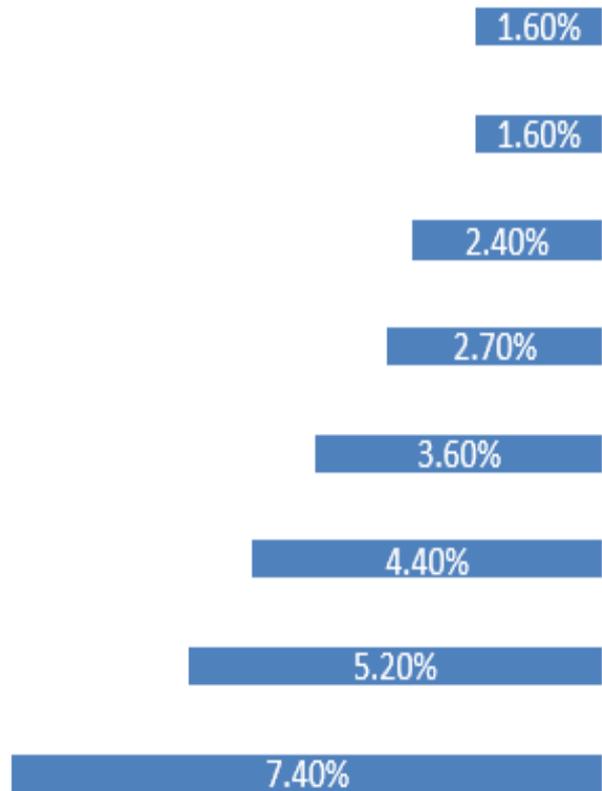
Shorter programs that may take two or three semesters to complete. Designed to meet specific employer needs or skillsets.



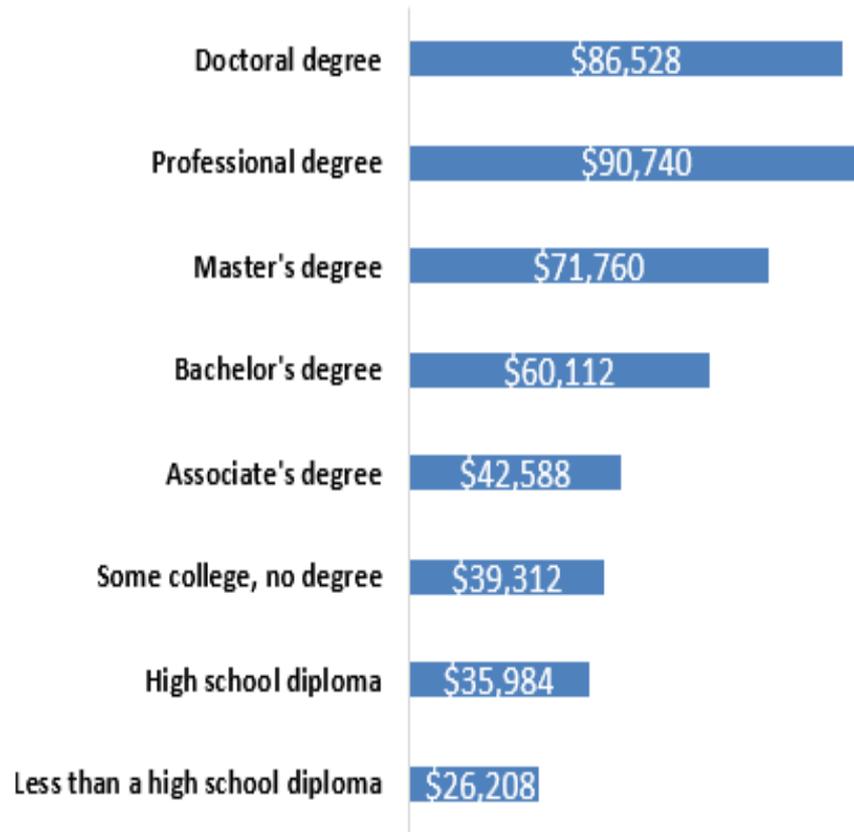
*But why pursue a graduate degree?
Is it really worth it?*

Graduate School Pays Off: Higher Salaries, Lower Unemployment Rates

Unemployment Rate in 2016



Median Annual Earnings in 2016



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

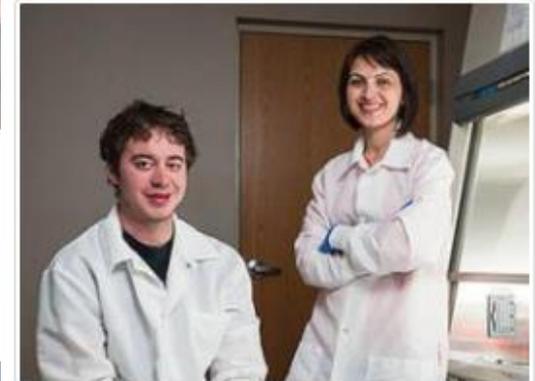
Civil Engineering, University of Arkansas



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.”

- World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs* Report (2016)

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?

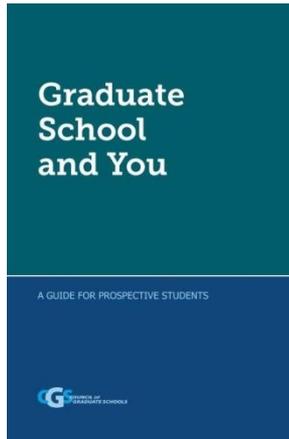
Most Graduate Students Receive Some Form of Financial Aid

- 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



- www.GradSense.org



- U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid Office
<http://studentaid.ed.gov>
- National Association of Graduate-Professional Students
www.nagps.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.*

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