

## IS GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR ME?

Graduate and professional schools are for people who seek additional credentials beyond a college degree to attain their career goals. The decision of whether or not to extend your education should be made after careful weighing of options and examining your career goals. It is not advised to attend graduate school if you are unclear about your career goals. If you are still in the career decision making process, it is best to make an appointment with a counselor in Career Services. Going to graduate school is costly, time consuming and uses a lot of energy. Determine what you want to gain from the graduate school experience prior to starting down that path.

**If you are considering going to graduate school, here are some questions you should be able to answer before deciding.**

- What are my career goals? Where do I want to be in five years? Ten? Is a particular graduate degree necessary to get there? Is a graduate degree needed now, or in a few years?
- Are these goals realistic?
- Is graduate school necessary to accomplish these goals?
- Am I willing to dedicate time, effort and money to a degree program that requires extended study and concentration in an academic setting?

**Some Steps You Can Take Now:**

- Talk to people in the fields you are interested in. How did they get there? Is graduate school the only or the best route to the career you want?
- Talk to your academic advisor about your career and academic goals. Your advisor, having assisted and coached many other students with the same questions can offer valuable insight. If you do not feel comfortable with your academic advisor, seek out another faculty member you know, or schedule an appointment with a Career Services staff member.
- Compare all of your options. You may go directly to graduate school, work for a year (or longer), travel, or take a full-time job instead of going to graduate school.
- Seek out experience. Internships, co-ops, summer jobs or mentorship within your field will not only test your interest, but will be a positive addition to your credentials when you apply.
- Thoroughly investigate the requirements before deciding. Some schools and fields prefer applicants who have at least a year or two of applied experience.

**Some Common Misperceptions About Going To Graduate School:**

- *All career goals make graduate school necessary.* This is not always the case. Do your research to learn whether, and at what point, a graduate degree is necessary.
- *A graduate degree improves my chances of getting a job.* Not always! In many professions, employers accept – and even prefer – candidates straight out of college.
- *The job market will improve while I am in graduate school.* This is a very risky assumption. The job market in your field may be even more competitive for those with graduate degrees than for those without.
- *I do not know what I want to do, and hope graduate school will help me decide.* Going to graduate school without clear career goals can lead to a great deal of frustration. It is much more difficult to change degree programs than it is to change your major. There are far better ways to decide your career path than taking on the work and expense of a graduate program. If you are still deciding on your career goals, make an appointment with a Career Counselor at Career Services.
- *I do not have a job, so graduate school is my only option.* Besides, a graduate degree is useful thing to have no matter what. You may find yourself lacking the motivation needed to succeed if you are not truly invested in your degree program. And a degree in psychology will not help you down the road if you decide you want to teach art. There are many options when you find yourself temporarily without a job. You can use the time to conduct a job search, do volunteer work, obtain an internship, travel or other such options that can bolster your experience.