

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Considering Graduate School?	1
Top 10 Job Search Tips in a Tough or Down Economy	2
Thinking about Taking Time off Before Grad School?	2

Considering Graduate School?

Are you sure you want to do this?

People have probably asked this question of you. Don't shrug them off and say, "Of course." Unless you *are* sure. Really.

Graduate school means an extensive commitment in terms of time (programs can take anywhere from two to seven or more years), money and hard work. Graduate school in itself is not a plan. It is a step in the plan. Deciding on your plan means examining where you want to be in the long run, both professionally and personally.

Talk to current graduate students at different phases of the program: masters and doctoral candidates, those who have been working on their degree for some time and those who began this year.

- How are they feeling about their decision?
- How do they feel about getting a job once they have completed their degree?
- What are their long-term goals?
- How is graduate school fitting in with those goals?

Talk to professors. Choose professors who have different perspectives and backgrounds: those who just

received tenure, those who just started their careers, those who have been professors for years. Should you decide to go to graduate school, these people will be valuable sources of information for you once again. At this point, you want to know as much as possible about what they do.

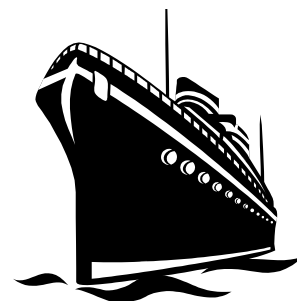
- What are your career options once you have this degree?
- Is your only realistic opportunity as an educator?
- Can they recommend other faculty members who might be willing to talk with you?

Talking to all of these people will help you separate what you *think* graduate school will be like from what it, in fact, *is*. That brings you to the next important question to ask yourself as you consider graduate school. Why do you want to go? What do you want to do professionally? How is graduate school going to move you closer to this goal?

The greatest danger when you make the decision to attend graduate school is failing to ask enough questions of yourself and those in the field to which

you aspire. If a particular career field interests you, make sure you have an understanding of what that career field entails. If possible, obtain some practical experience in the field before making the graduate school investment. Is graduate school a necessary step to entering the career field? Again, talking with people is a valid and valuable source of information for you. In this respect, the more people you talk with the better. Don't limit your conversations to one or two people because then you risk hearing a skewed version, either extremely encouraging or discouraging, neither of which may be accurate for you.

Most importantly, the entire time you are talking to people, be measuring what they say against your own vision for yourself. Until you have made some of these difficult decisions concerning a life-plan for yourself, graduate school may be a delaying tactic stemming from a desire to recapture the safety and structure of your undergraduate years. Once you've taken a close look at why you want to go to graduate school and you feel comfortable with what you see, then you're ready to move on.



FALL INTO SPRING

Spring Career Fair

Thursday, February 5
Busch Student Center

On-Campus Recruiting

Interviews begin
Monday, February 9

Gateway Career Services Association Career Fair

Wednesday, February 18
Collinsville, IL

Backpack to Briefcase

Saturday, March 3
Busch Student Center

Saint Louis University Career Services

Academic Resources Center
3840 Lindell Blvd. Suite 110
St. Louis, MO 63108

Phone: 314-977-2828
Fax: 314-977-3486
Email: careers@slu.edu

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Psychology 194, offered
twice every spring and fall.*



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Career Services

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Top 10 Job Search Tips in a Tough or Down Economy

- 1) **Start early and go with the flow-** Give yourself more time to perfect the art of job hunting and do not set arbitrary deadlines for yourself.
- 2) **Be realistic and flexible-** Have a plan, set goals, evaluate your progress, and refocus if necessary. Understanding that employers may slow down or drag out the hiring process in tough times may help to alleviate some stress and anxiety.
- 3) **Network, network, network-** Effective networking will enable you to learn of multiple opportunities before they are listed.
- 4) **Take temporary or part-time employment-** This will enable you to gain skills, experience, and keep your resume current while making yourself more marketable.
- 5) **Volunteer or explore internship opportunities-** This is a strategy for you to get your foot in the door, allowing you to be noticed for the next opening.
- 6) **Money isn't everything-** Think small for starters. It's important to consider growth opportunities, professional development opportunities, or being paired with a mentor.
- 7) **There's no place like home-** Visit your Career Services or Alumni Association to obtain leads or contacts of alumni in your field.
- 8) **Create your own opportunity-** With mergers and downsizing becoming more commonplace, multiple job functions may be combined into a single position.
- 9) **Revise your resume-** Your resume should highlight your skills and accomplishments not your job duties. Remember to update your resume periodically to eliminate outdated information and list new accomplishments.
- 10) **Always Follow-up-** Make sure to follow-up on every job lead, application, and interview. Keep yourself at the forefront of employers' minds. Be persistent but not pushy.

Thinking about Taking off Time before Grad School?

The average age of students in most graduate programs is 27-30. Obviously, many graduate students do not enroll directly after their undergraduate study. There may be many good reasons for taking time off: to clarify goals, to take a break from school, to earn money for graduate school, to gain related experience and enhance one's background for admission, to establish residency in a state in order to be eligible for in-state tuition rates, to travel, to take prerequisite classes, etc.

If you are planning to take time off before graduate school, you may still benefit by taking several steps before graduation:

- Start a credentials file. Your letters will remain on file for five years. Generally, professors will be able to write a more effective letter for you while you are still fresh in their minds than if they are trying to remember you several years after you have graduated.
- Take required admissions tests. Usually, candidates achieve higher test scores while still in - or close to - academic work. Schools will accept test scores up to three years later, sometimes even longer.



- Gather information. You have easiest access to information about graduate school while you are still a student. Take advantage of the resources at SLU. Talk to faculty for their suggestions about strong programs in your field of interest. Attend the annual Graduate and Professional School Forum.

Call Career Services if you are interested in meeting with a counselor. Good luck in your search!