

Top 5 Reasons to Attend Graduate School

by Dr. Abena Lewis-Mhoon

We all have hopes of graduating with a wonderful undergraduate experience under our belt, and the next day beginning the illustrious career of our dreams. **WRONG!!!!** It does not happen that way for most people. In this competitive marketplace, jobseekers have to outshine their competition. Qualified people, who are equipped with graduate training, internships, and exposure to various experiences that showcase their abilities in the field, instantly appeal to recruiters, human resource personnel, or potential employers. Attending Graduate School is a great way to distinguish yourself and demonstrate your desire for learning, research, and knowledge.

Now, more than ever, students considering graduate school realize the importance of this distinction. Graduate school can open the doors for careers that require education beyond a bachelor's degree by offering specialized study in a chosen field. This guarantees the latest training for marketability in today's workplace.

Graduate education is advantageous for many reasons; yet the decision to attend graduate school is not something to be taken lightly. Graduate School requires a commitment of both your time and monetary resources. The roles and value for graduate school are clear. As you weigh the pros and cons, Graduate Schools Magazine can provide some food for thought.

Graduate Schools Magazine's Top 5 Reasons to Attend Graduate School:

1. Intensive work, study, and research in a field that you enjoy:

Intense study in a chosen field is the primary basis of graduate education, but the passion that fuels the desire to succeed is what propels graduate students' love of learning in their chosen field. This type of highly specialized study is critical to cultivating a career. Taking general knowledge and merging it with life and field experiences, then integrating it with an intense knowledge of the chosen field is a key component for success during Graduate School. The intense reading, research, and writing required is daunting; yet it is the affinity to the subject that makes the intense learning more palatable.

2. Networking opportunities:

Graduate School offers unique networking opportunities for students. It is expected that upon entry to a specific program graduate students will forge relationships with other students developing a peer and cohort group. This group will advance together and serve as a sounding board for ideas, partners for research and development, and eventually become a pool for emotional support. Graduate study allows students to build relationships with professors as peers and potential colleagues.

Instructors expect graduate students to think critically and offer new ideas that challenge accepted thoughts and practices within the field. These new ideas are often presented during conferences and symposia. Graduate students are encouraged to attend and present their research in these settings. This encourages student interaction with professionals in the field while facilitating the personal exchange of ideas and experiences.

3. Rapid career advancement:

Graduate degrees allow jobseekers to be placed in higher-level starting positions. It is assumed that if you have a graduate degree, then you obtained the most current and advanced specialized knowledge in a particular field. This gives people holding a graduate degree an advantage over someone who simply holds a bachelor's degree and possesses general knowledge.

4. Higher starting salaries:

Employers are now recruiting a workforce that has "soft skills" including management and leadership, in addition to academic knowledge. According to the Graduate Management Admissions Council, these "capabilities such as assertiveness, empathy, discipline, and integrity," are marketable skills. These soft skills combined with hard graduate knowledge create the job candidates' total package. During graduate school, one is forced to develop these soft skills and upon graduation, they possess this total package. Therefore, the complete package will yield higher starting salaries.

5. Change direction in a career:

Choosing to attend Graduate School, is a perfect segue when changing direction in a career or changing career goals completely. One will assess transferable skills while determining new skills that are needed. When transitioning into a new career, obtaining the most current and advanced knowledge is always a plus. It shows sincerity and dedication- two things that any potential employer would question when faced with hiring a person who totally changed their career direction.

As you embark on your decisions about graduate education keep your professional and personal goals in mind. Selecting the perfect graduate school and choosing the right program of study opens the door to other questions about internship opportunities, financial aid packages, study abroad experiences and other topics that directly impact on the life of a graduate student. Graduate Schools Magazine is committed to presenting various graduate programs and opportunities to you to assist in your search. So, why go to graduate school is not the question you should be asking. The real question is why wait?

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