CONSIDERING GRADUATE SCHOOL?

SEVEN BASIC ISSUES YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Here's a brief overview of some factors that are important when deciding whether or not to attend graduate school. For a more in-depth investigation, see a career consultant or faculty member in your field of study.

1. Why should I consider a graduate degree?
   The single most compelling reason for a graduate degree is your ultimate career goal. Generally speaking, graduate school is for those who wish to teach, do research, specialize in a particular field of study, or seek career advancement or promotional projected employment market for your field of opportunities. Be sure you fully investigate the projected employment market for your field when considering a graduate program.

2. Who should go to graduate school?
   Is grad school right for you? Some factors you may wish to honestly appraise when deciding whether graduate school is for you include:
   - **Interest.** Do you have an interest in a particular field? Graduate work is intense and arduous. Do you like to learn?
   - **Ability.** Are you an above average student who has good study skills and can work independently? Do you have strong research techniques and writing abilities?
   - **Financial consideration.** If you need financial assistance, will the graduate school of your choice be able to provide you with financial support? If you are currently working, how might your work hours be affected? Are teaching or grad assistantships readily available?

3. What is required for admission?
   Although admission requirements vary, the following are basic to most programs:
   - Admission test scores (e.g., GRE, GMAT, LSAT, or MCAT)
   - University application/personal statement
   - Official transcripts
   - Undergraduate degree and/or course requirements
   - Interviews
   - Letters or recommendation from faculty
   - Language/residency requirements
   - Unique to major requirements
   If you’re applying to an SJSU graduate program, contact your grad advisor for specific departmental requirements for more information.
   Keep in mind that university admission requirements and deadlines are often different from individual department (or program) requirements and deadlines.

4. When should I apply?
   Because admission deadlines are usually a year in advance, it is crucial that you look into these dates as soon as possible. For example, at San Jose State University:
   - October of the preceding year typically begins the application period for admission for the fall semester
   - July of the preceding year begins the application period for the Spring semester
   In addition, there are various deadlines (usually earlier) for foreign students or for Americans with foreign study backgrounds. Start the process of investigating, targeting, and applying to a program one to two years before you plan to enter that program.

5. How do I decide which graduate school is best for me?
   There are many issues to consider when evaluating graduate programs, most of which are listed below. The Career Center encourages you to give serious attention to each one and weigh each category against your individual value system.
   - **Geographical/Financial Issues.** Your first choice graduate school campus may be far away from your friends and family. Will adjusting to a new area be difficult? How will you finance your education? Ask about fellowships, grants, financial aid, and the number of students who apply for and are actually awarded fellowships.
   - **Faculty.** Determine the number of full-time faculty members in the department and their specific area of interest. Are their interests similar to yours? Is the faculty diverse or is the department narrowly defined? What is the reputation of the present faculty according to those in the field? If there are nationally-known professors in the department, how accessible are they to students?
   - **Educational Experience.** Investigate the types of education experiences that are provided to students — for
example, reading, lectures, seminars, practicum, research, and
distance format which may allow you to earn a degree without
relocating. Special academic programs are also important,
including accelerated programs, cooperative education, intern-
ships, double majors, independent studies, and study abroad.

Minority Representation.
Inquire about the ethnic and gend-
er composition of the institution’s
students and faculty.

Attrition. Investigate the number
of master’s degrees and doctorates
awarded yearly as well as the aver-
gage length of time students take to
to complete the program. The percent-
age of students who fail to complete
the program may tell you something
about the department.

Placement. Ask what types of place-
sment services are offered. What ser-
vices will you receive as a student?
As an alumnus? What percentage of
program graduates find employment
in their field of study? Where? What
are some typical salary ranges?

6. How do I apply?
Call or check the Web site of the
department in which you are inter-
est. Also, contact the university
admissions office. Ask for a catalog,
application forms, general informa-
tion regarding the department, and
a description of available financial
assistance programs. Keep records
of all applications you make, along
with a status report on the process.

7. What resources are
available?
Identify all resources available to
you. The most obvious are support-
ive faculty members in your chosen
field, pre-professional advisors, and
career counselors. Do your home-
work by investigating resources
in the Career Resource Lab at the
Administration Building, Room 255
and at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library.

Two excellent publications in our Career Resource Lab are:

→ Peterson’s Graduate Programs
→ The Gourman Report

Also, check out EUREKA and GradSearch, databases of
Graduate school information.

EXAMINATION INFORMATION
Some fields of advanced study and employment opportunities re-
quire the completion of examinations. For additional information
and applications for educationally related examinations, contact
San Jose State University’s Testing and Evaluation Office, Student
Services Center, (408) 924 - 5980.

Here are some other testing
resources:

Professional

Graduate Record Exam (GRE)
www.gre.org
For testing information, click
“Test Takers” or call
(866) 473-4373.

Graduate Management
Admission Test (GMAT)
www.mba.com
For testing information, click
“Take the GMAT” or call
(800) 717-4628.

Law School Admission Test
(LSAT)
www.lsat.org
For testing information, click
“The LSAT” and then “Test
Dates and Deadlines” or call
(215) 968-1001.

Medical College Admission
Test (MCAT)
www.aamc.org/students/mcat
For testing information, click
“Registration” or call
(202) 828-0690.

Dental Admission Test (DAT)
www.ada.org
For testing information, click
“Education & Testing,” then
“Dental Admission Test” or call
(800) 232-1694.

Education

PRAXIS
www.ets.org/praxis or call
(800) 772-9476.

California Basic Education Skills Tests (CBEST)
www.cbest.nesinc.com
For testing information, click “Test Dates” or call
(800) 262-5080.

What’s Next?