DEMystifying Graduate School

Graduate Degrees, Choosing a School, Preparation, Funding and the Application Process

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Professor and Associate Dean
USF Graduate School
OVERVIEW OF SESSION

• What is Graduate School?
• Is Graduate School Different from Professional School?
• Types of Degrees
• What Does Graduate School Cost?
• The Application Process
  – How do I Choose a School/Program?
  – What Type of Qualifications do I Need?
  – How do I Best Represent Myself?
• Financial Considerations
• Graduate School at USF
GENERAL INFORMATION
SOME TERMS

- **STEM** = Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (Ex. Biology, Chemistry, Math, Geology, Engineering)
- **GA** = Graduate Assistant
- **TA** = Teaching Assistant
- **RA** = Research Assistant
- **Social Science** = Disciplines dealing with social science (ex. Anthropology, Geography, Sociology, Government, etc)
- **Humanities** = Disciplines dealing with humanities (ex. English, Music, History, Art, etc)
Graduate School constitutes an advanced post-baccalaureate program of study focused on a particular academic discipline or profession.

“Traditional” graduate school is focused on original research in a particular discipline, but graduate school may also be “Professional" (centered on imparting skills and knowledge to future professionals), or a combination of both.
WHAT IS GRADUATE SCHOOL?

Key differences from undergraduate education:

• Higher expectations regarding the quality and quantity work.
• Graduate study is typically concentrated in a discipline or profession.
• Classes are small, tests are typically written and problem based and require a high level of interaction with fellow students and instructors.
• Original research is typically required with publication requirements.
• Career-related internships and teaching may be required.
IS GS DIFFERENT FROM PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL?

Professional School typically includes but is not limited to:

Business, Dental, Journalism, Law, Medical, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health and Veterinary programs.

These programs are post-baccalaureate and may be associated with a Graduate School. Some offer the same types of degrees as those associated with graduate school (master’s and doctoral).
QUESTIONS?
TYPES OF DEGREES
TYPES OF GRADUATE DEGREES

- MASTER’S DEGREE
- SPECIALIST DEGREE
- DOCTORAL DEGREE
For **full-time** students, it is typically expected that the master’s degree will be completed within 2 years.

There are several different types of master’s degrees.
MASTER’S DEGREES

Thesis-Based Master’s

This type of master’s degree is associated with an original research project and the generation of a thesis that must be defended to a committee of faculty. The level of progress in the research project typically defines the time-to-degree.

May or may not be terminal.
Non-Thesis Master’s

This type of master’s degree is typically based on a series of defined courses that provide concentrated expertise in a specific discipline. There is not a required research or thesis component although there may be a “project” that has to be completed.
MASTER’S DEGREES

Professional Science Masters (PSM)

PSM programs prepare students for science careers in business, government, or nonprofit organizations. PSM programs combine study in science or mathematics with coursework in management, policy, or law. Most PSM programs require a final “project” as well as an internship in a business or public sector enterprise.
SPECIALIST DEGREES

Specialist degrees are usually earned in addition to a master's degree. A specialist degree may require coursework, training, or internship experience beyond what was required for a master's degree. This type of degree usually prepares students for professional certification or licensing requirements (e.g., Ed.S. for school principal).
DOCTORAL DEGREES

Doctoral degrees are the highest graduate degrees possible.

They are based on independent research projects and the generation of new knowledge vs. simply taking defined course work. Students must write and defend a dissertation to a faculty committee and many programs also require peer reviewed publication of the doctoral research.
Full time students typically complete the doctoral degree in 4-7 years, but the time-to-degree is typically determined by the completion of the research and not the attainment of a specific number of credit hours. Students must meet the expectations of a dissertation committee of faculty.

Some disciplines allow students to enter a doctoral program directly from the baccalaureate, while other require a master’s.
WHAT PIECE OF THE PIE DO YOU WANT TO BE IN?

Source: 2007 U.S. Census (educational attainment of U.S. population > 18 years old)
QUESTIONS?
COST OF GRADUATE SCHOOL
WHAT IS THE COST FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION AT USF?

USF 2010-2011

Florida Resident

*$292.86/credit hr

Cost for 1 semester (9 credits): *$2,635
Cost for 30 credit Master’s Degree: *$8,786
Cost for 90 or (60) credit Doctoral (PhD) Degree: *$26,357 ($17,571)

* Tuition only, does not include the student fees ($655.65/9 credits).
## IS IT WORTH IT?

**MEDIAN INCOME (from US Census 2008)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Median Income</th>
<th>Difference from Bachelor's</th>
<th>Gain or Loss Over 10 Yrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 9th</td>
<td>$14,104</td>
<td>-$32,492</td>
<td>loss of $324,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12 No Degree</td>
<td>$16,620</td>
<td>-$29,976</td>
<td>loss of $299,760</td>
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<tr>
<td>HS Degree</td>
<td>$24,612</td>
<td>-$21,984</td>
<td>loss of $219,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-$16,499</td>
<td>loss of $164,990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
<td>$34,162</td>
<td>-$12,434</td>
<td>loss of $124,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
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<td>$0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree +</td>
<td>$52,010</td>
<td>$5,414</td>
<td>gain of $54,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
<td>$58,778</td>
<td>$12,182</td>
<td>gain of $121,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>$79,564</td>
<td>$32,968</td>
<td>gain of $329,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Degree</td>
<td>$84,062</td>
<td>$37,466</td>
<td>gain of $374,660</td>
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</table>
## IS IT WORTH IT?

### MEDIAN INCOME (from US Census 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
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<th>Difference from High School</th>
<th>Gain or Loss Over 10 Yrs</th>
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<tr>
<td>College, No Degree</td>
<td>$30,097</td>
<td>+$9,550</td>
<td>gain of $95,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
<td>$34,162</td>
<td>+$12,434</td>
<td>gain of $12,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>$46,596</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree +</td>
<td>$52,010</td>
<td>+$27,398</td>
<td>gain of $273,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
<td>$58,778</td>
<td>+$34,166</td>
<td>gain of $341,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>$79,564</td>
<td>+$54,952</td>
<td>gain of $549,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Degree</td>
<td>$84,062</td>
<td>+$59,450</td>
<td>gain of $594,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
QUESTIONS?
THE APPLICATION PROCESS
THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Typical Graduate Program Deadlines.

Between January-March for Fall Admissions.

USF – Feb 15th for most programs.

Many Fellowships have application deadlines of Feb. 1st.

**October/November is time to start the process**
THE APPLICATION PROCESS

How do I choose a graduate program?

SELF ASSESSMENT I

1) What do I want to accomplish in my career? *(Need an idea)*
2) What skills do I wish to acquire? *(Specific!)*
3) What discipline truly inspires me? *(Work, work, work!)*
4) How much am I willing to work? *(Competitive!)*
5) Is there a particular faculty member that I want to work with? *(It is wise to have a selection of faculty)*
How do I choose a graduate program?

SELF ASSESSMENT II

6) Do I have geographical limitations? *(Spouse, cost?)*

7) What are the job prospects in the discipline? *(Find out!)*

8) Am I choosing graduate school as my first option? *(I wanted to go to medical school but did not get in!)*

9) Am I prepared as well as possible for what lies ahead?

10) Am I willing to make a 3-8 yr commitment?
THE APPLICATION PROCESS

How do I choose a graduate program?

PRIORITIZE A LIST SPECIFIC TO YOU!

Make a list and determine what are the most important factors in your decision.
How do I choose a graduate program?

There is a graduate program for nearly any discipline or sub-discipline.

DO YOUR RESEARCH!

THIS MUST BE AN ACTIVE PROCESS!
THE APPLICATION PROCESS

How do I choose a graduate program?

RESOURCES

Petersons Guide (Petersons.com)
GradSchools.com

Google search by program, university, location, etc.
QUESTIONS?
QUALIFICATIONS
What Type of Qualifications do I Need?

Each program is different but admissions to the top programs is highly competitive.
Typical Application Requirements

1) Baccalaureate/Master’s Transcript from Regionally Accredited College/University
2) Graduate Admissions Exam Scores (typically GRE/GMAT)
3) Letters of Reference (From Faculty that KNOW YOU!)
4) Personal Statement (With truth!)
5) Supporting Documents (Experiences, awards, etc).
THE APPLICATION PROCESS

What are Programs Looking For?

1) GPA is typically >3.5; however, 4.0 in major courses.
2) GRE: 550-650 quant; 450-550 verbal (1100+ total)
3) References that can speak to your ability to succeed.
4) What do you bring to the program? Experience!
5) Publications, meeting abstracts, certificates of participation in traineeships, relevant work experience, etc.
THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Typical Admissions Requirements

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT?

For Thesis Master’s or Doctoral Programs, *practical experience* and a demonstration of the ability to carry out research.

Passion for the discipline.

In addition, demonstration of an understanding of the expectations of graduate school is critical.
THE APPLICATION PROCESS

How Do You Best Represent Yourself?

For master’s thesis and doctoral programs, make contact with the program and the professors that you might want to work with.

Email, call, visit.

Make admission an ACTIVE PROCESS.
THE APPLICATION PROCESS

How Do You Best Represent Yourself?

By making contact you will be able to highlight the key attributes that you bring to the program.

It will also give you a chance to assess the responsiveness of the program to you!
Personal Statement Tips

- Why do you want to come into the program / this school?
- What are two things about you that make you different from anyone else you know?
- Why should you be admitted and get funding?
- How do you know this graduate program is right for you?
Personal Statement Tips

- What skills do you possess that will be useful to a graduate program? (as outlined on the previous slide)

- What obstacles have you overcome? How did you do it, and what have you learned through the struggle?

- Example that proves how you will see it through!
THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Be Sure To Follow Up After Application

- Are all documents received, especially letter of recommendation. Most programs have a program administrator that can provide this information.

- Visit the University and Program. Request a meeting with program faculty (especially for thesis-master’s and doctoral programs).

- Seek out the Graduate School that can provide a wealth of resources.
QUESTIONS?
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Types of Aid

**Fellowship/Scholarship:** Typically award a stipend of $4,000-$30,000/yr. and also include tuition. Awards are competitive, typically based on merit, but also may be need-based. These awards are typically not associated with a specific teaching or research assignment. No repayment is required, but enrollment and academic performance is required.

**Loans:** Through financial aid office. Total amounts are capped.

**Grants:** Through State and Federal Agencies. Awards are competitive and based on merit. Usually in support of a specific research project.
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Types of Aid

Graduate Assistantships: (GA) $10,000-18,000/yr. and also include tuition. Are awarded by graduate programs on a competitive basis and require enrollment and performance benchmarks.

Research Assistantship: (RA) Funding from research grants to support research with your Major Professor (mostly for doctoral students).

Teaching Assistantship: (TA) Payment for teaching. SPEAK TEST.

Tuition Waiver: A waiver of tuition payments. At USF, these waivers are provided to those students that are awarded Graduate Assistantships.
Financial Considerations (MASTER’S)

Most non-thesis master’s programs do not provide stipends and tuition assistance (although it may be possible to get assistance).

Assistance for students in thesis-master’s programs is dependent on the discipline and program.
Financial Considerations (DOCTORAL)

Most doctoral programs (especially the STEM disciplines) have significant financial support mechanisms to provide the student a stipend and tuition waiver.

- Teaching Assistantships
- Research Assistantships
- Doctoral Fellowships
Financial Considerations General

National Scholarships, Fellowships and Grants.

These are funds that are awarded by national, regional, or private agencies to individual graduate students. A number of these opportunities can be found through the Graduate School Funding for Research page.

In addition, a number of opportunities can be found through the USF Library’s Scholarships, Research Fellowships and Financial Aid page.
Financial Considerations General

College, Department or Program Scholarships and Fellowships.

These funds are available to USF students and can be searched via the USF Scholarship Database (http://usfweb2.usf.edu/finaid/scholarships/).

Students are also encouraged to review their specific college website.
Financial Considerations General

USF Graduate School Scholarships and Fellowships.

The USF Graduate School is committed to excellence in graduate education and is proud to offer fellowship opportunities for new and continuing students.
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

USF Graduate School Scholarships and Fellowships

Ann Winch Fellowship
Delores Auzenne Fellowship
Genshaft Family Doctoral Fellowship
Graduate Student Success Diversity Fellowship
Kreplick Graduate Fellowship
McKnight Doctoral Fellowship
McNair Doctoral Fellowship
Pan American Fellowship
Presidential Doctoral Fellowship
Dissertation Completion Fellowship
Signature Research Doctoral Fellowship
USF Graduate School Scholarships and Fellowships

(http://www.grad.usf.edu/grants.asp)

Awarded in the Fall

FEBRUARY 1 DEADLINE
QUESTIONS?
ABOUT USF
Some Statistics About USF

**Total Graduate Students** Across All USF Campuses Fall 2010
9,390

**Master’s Students** Across All USF Campuses Fall 2010
6,503

**Research Doctoral Students** Across All USF Campuses Fall 2010
2,315

**Professional Doctoral Students** Across All USF Campuses Fall 2010
572
Where are the Doctoral Graduates?

- PRIVATE/INDUSTRY
- FACULTY POSITIONS
- POST DOCORAL/RESEARCH POSITIONS
- ADJUNCT/VISITING FACULTY
- EDUCATION/K-12
- EDUCATION/HIGHER
- UNEMPLOYED
- PURSUING FURTHER STUDY
- UNACCOUNTED

950 Graduates between 2004-2009
GRADUATE SCHOOL AT USF

Graduate School at USF

134 Master’s Programs
43 Doctoral Programs
10 Different Colleges

Can search all programs and obtain contact info

WWW.GRAD.USF.EDU
USF Graduate School Commitment to Student Success

Comprehensive Graduate Student Orientation
Graduate Student Success and Professional Development Workshops
“Building a Leader” Course Series
Graduate Student Fellowships and Scholarships
Student Opportunities for Funding Searchable on the Website
Graduate Student Research Challenge Grants
Graduate School Times Newsletter
Graduate and Professional Student Council (GPSC)
Comprehensive Graduate School Website and Resources
Office of Post-doctoral Affairs
HOW TO APPLY TO USF

USF Grad Admissions Page

http://www.grad.usf.edu/graduate-admissions.asp

Application is online
THANK YOU!

www.grad.usf.edu