**Great Reasons to Go to Graduate School:**
You love learning
You find research fun
You see more questions than answers
You are looking for advancement
- PhD opens a lot of doors
- Many jobs that can not be had without an advanced degree
You don’t like being told what to do
- PhD’s often set own research agendas
- Everyone has a boss

**Bad Reasons:**
You don’t know what else to do
You are not ready for a ‘real job’
# Understand the Difference Between Professional vs. Research Graduate Degrees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Research</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on course work</td>
<td>Focus on research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service oriented fields:</td>
<td>Research oriented fields:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Law</td>
<td>- Soil Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Medicine</td>
<td>- Agronomy</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Business</td>
<td>- Plant Breeding</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Water Quality</td>
<td>- Biology</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Architecture</td>
<td>- Genetics</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Veterinary</td>
<td>- Veterinary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many Universities / Many Students</td>
<td>Few Universities (50?) / Few students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite universities are tops</td>
<td>School at the top is dependent on field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay (arm, leg and first born)</td>
<td>Get paid (tuition, health care, stipend)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mainly worry about studying</td>
<td>Studying and research</td>
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</table>
Things to Think About and Remember

B.S. → Masters degree: 2yr – 3yr commitment
M.S. → PhD degree: 2.5yr – 4yr commitment
Vs.
B.S. → PhD degree: 4yr – 6yr commitment

Motivation must come from YOU!
- No handholding for getting into graduate school
- No handholding for getting out of graduate school

Everybody’s Graduate Experience is Different – (see above)

Good Students are tough to find:
- Show enthusiasm and knowledge
- Grades are less important than interest & work ethic (my opinion)
Funding – How Does it Work?

Varies from school to school

Could come from professor:
- Assistantship from Departments
- Assistantship from Grad Student training grant (Internal, USDA, etc.)
- Assistantship from a research grant
- Assistantship from a corporate sponsor

Could come from department/ university :
- Scholarship / fellowship
- Teaching assistantship (TA)
  - May lead to problems with getting research done
  - Not in SCS at TAMU
- Main benefit: You chose who you work with

Could come from student
- NSF Graduate Research Fellowship
- Ford Foundation
- GEM
- USDA
- Rockafeller, McKnight, etc. (for international students)
Finding a Good Fit With a Professor

Apply to the school

- Get recommendations from faculty, post-docs, graduate students, etc.
- Look at profiles on University websites
- Send a thoughtful inquisitive e-mail
  - Directly relate your interest in their fields of expertise and research
  - Ask if they are accepting graduate students

Follow up
(hopefully) be invited for an interview

Apply to the school

Each Professor has different search criteria and expectations of students and every student is different

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professor A</th>
<th>Professor B</th>
<th>You</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grades</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational Background</td>
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Academic Inbreeding – Get out of Texas if you want to stay in Texas

MOST schools have developed a unwritten policy of not hiring their own graduates
- Increases the flow of ideas

Exceptions:
- Gone somewhere else for more advanced degrees or experience and come back
- Truly perfect fit for a job

Choose somewhere you want to spend 3-6 years of your life!

In an ideal world:
Your favorite advisor recommends you to a colleague at State X University
State X University professor recommends a great student to your advisor.
Graduation – Where do you go?

After Graduate School, where do you go?:
- Industry: Research & Development Scientist, Marketing
- Government: USDA, DOE, EPA, NASA Scientist,
- Academic: Professor
  - Research
  - Teaching
  - Extension
- Non-Profit: Advocacy, Research, Science
- International: CGIAR Centers, development organizations
  - Scientist, Implementation
Top 10 Reasons To Go To Graduate School

10. You want to use up money left on your copy card.
9. You've gotten used to being poor and you're starting to like it.
8. You like studying subjects so specific that there are only five other people in the world to discuss them with.
7. Two words: Real World.
6. All the number 2 pencils you want, free!
5. Because it's more fun to dish out the grades as a TA than it is to get them.
4. You can't spell "philodendron" without a PhD.
3. So when all of your friends go out and get jobs and have real lives and money you can say, "Yes, but do you have a subscription to the Chronicle of Higher Education?"
2. One more chance to take a standardized test!
1. Your parents changed the locks.

http://www.gettingintogradschool.com/