

Eastern Michigan U - DivComm | Career Corner Podcast - S4 - EP19

This is Eastern Michigan University's Career Corner posted by the Career coaches of the University Advising and Career Development Center, and welcome to season four career FAQ.

Welcome back to the Career Corner podcast. My name is April Tarkowski and I am a career coach here at EMU. As we enter our final week of this podcast devoted to our most common questions, we wanted to address a big concern for many students who are thinking about life after their undergraduate degree and are now considering continuing their education into grad school. The question is, should I go to grad school and how do I make that choice?

Well, the first and most important question you must ask yourself is why do I want to go to grad school. There are a couple of practical reasons for pursuing a graduate degree. Before I talk about those a big reason not to go to grad school is fear of entering the job market due to feeling underprepared or directionless. Grad school is not a cakewalk. If you can believe it, it is often more challenging and time consuming than your undergraduate experience. So it is not a decision to enter lightly.

If you're unclear on your career direction grad school is not the place to figure it out with an even heftier price tag. If you're thinking about going to grad school because you don't know what else to do, please meet with a career coach as soon as possible to determine the next best course of action. Now let's get onto the practical reasons for pursuing a graduate degree. One is that the profession you want to pursue requires it like in the case of becoming a counselor or a therapist or a professor.

Another practical reason is that you've done some research into salaries for a given profession and you've discovered that a master's degree or PhD will provide the best job opportunities or highest salary projections. To determine if the profession you want to pursue requires a graduate degree you could Google how to become a counselor or a therapist in Michigan, or look up a professional association for that profession or the licensing body for the profession if it requires a license like the National Board for Certified Counselors.

Additionally, you can look for job postings for the profession and pay attention to what is stated for the required educational background. If you find several job postings requiring the same level of education it is a good indication that you'll want to pursue the graduate degree. To determine if the salary for a profession is much better with a graduate degree than without, you can use salary.com and use the advanced feature to set a master's or doctoral degree level.

Another source for this type of information is the NACE salary survey. NACE is the National Association of Colleges and Employers and each year they conduct a survey of employers to discover the current salaries for various careers based upon majors and degree level. You can Google NACE N as in Nancy A as in apple C as in Charlie E as in elephant salary survey.

There are a few additional important things to know about graduate school. First, it is more expensive per credit hour. So it is vital to determine how you will pay for grad school. Graduate programs for a master's degree or anywhere from 30 to 70 credits and take two to three years to complete. Four PhDs the standard is about 60 to 65 credits and you have much longer usually up to seven years to complete it simply due to the lengthy research in dissertation processes.

Each University and program is different though. So be sure to research those that interest you and make note of financial commitments and time constraints. Note that there are many ways to pay for graduate degrees. Federal financial aid loans and even graduate assistantships or fellowships that cover your tuition costs while also paying you a stipend in exchange for about 20 hours of work at the University.

Second, application deadlines and application requirements are different with every school and program so it is essential that you take note of these. If you want to start a graduate program in the fall semester it is likely that your application will be due in January, February or March. Third, you'll need excellent faculty and professional letters of recommendation.

The important thing to note here is that you'll want to secure the individuals who will write these letters early and probably meet with them in person or over the phone in order to share your goals so that they can write the best letter of recommendation for you, plus they are busy. So you'll want to secure their commitment much sooner than the application deadline.

Lastly, many graduate programs require an admissions test, the most common one is the Graduate Record Examination or GRE. Tests like these are similar to the ACT or SAT from high school and cost about \$200. They require serious preparation and planning. If you want to meet a January application deadline for a grad program then you'll want to study the summer before, and take the exam no later than mid-november in order for your results to be sent to the school by mid-january.

I know that was a lot of information. But don't forget career coaches are here to help you sort through all of this. Schedule an appointment with a career coach as soon as you begin to consider graduate school so we can help you develop a plan for success. In the case of graduate school it is definitely better to plan early. Schedule your appointment today in Handshake @image.joinhandshake.com and remember we support your goals.