Considering Graduate School

The decision to go to graduate school should be because you are committed to the idea after extensive self-exploration and research. Whereas a major purpose of undergraduate education is exploration, graduate education is primarily intended to focus or customize your skillset. The following is a list of several questions you may want to ask yourself – as you consider your answers, you may want to consider this list of “red flags.”

Why am I considering graduate school?

- **Why** do I want to attend graduate school?
- Am I **avoiding** making life-career **decisions** by continuing my education?
- Am I considering graduate school because I **don't see** any other career options?
- Am I considering graduate schools because “everyone else is doing it” or because of **pressure** from other expectations of me?
- Am I **clear enough about my career interests** to go directly to graduate school?

Is graduate school the right choice for me, right now?

- Do I **need a break** from the lifestyle of a student?
- Do I know what I want to study?
- Am I ready to enter a program of study that will take me two or more years to complete?
- Have I researched my chosen career to determine the **optimum timing** for graduate school - i.e., does an advanced degree in my field require a prerequisite number of years of work experience?

Is graduate school the right choice given my career goals?

- Does my chosen field require an advanced degree? Do I **know** that it make me more marketable in the future?
- Are there **alternate routes** to my career goals?
- Will a higher degree really affect my salary in my chosen career field?
- Could I get a fulfilling position in my chosen career field **without** an advanced degree?
- A useful way to address these questions is through **informational interviewing.**
How will I navigate the logistics of graduate school?

- Do I enjoy/am I prepared for extensive, rigorous, independent academic work?
- How will I finance graduate school?
- Am I willing to live on a limited budget for the next two or more years?
- Am I willing to dedicate the time and energy that will be required?
- Will I pursue an advanced degree on a full-time or part-time basis? Have I examined the advantages and disadvantages of each?

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