

## 21 Graduate School

### **ADVANCED DEGREES**

After you have completed your undergraduate or Bachelor Degree program, you might consider continuing your education to obtain an advanced degree. Perhaps you are considering the possibility (and feasibility) of attending *graduate* or *professional* school in an attempt to get your *Master* or *Doctoral* Degree. A *professional degree* program helps you develop the skills necessary for a career in a specific type of work: medicine, law, pharmacy, journalism, nursing, social work, counseling, and business administration. A *graduate degree* program helps you develop skills and conduct research in a broad academic area: English, history, political science, foreign languages, the arts, math, engineering, education, and the sciences.

Among the more popular advanced degrees are: PhD (Doctor of Philosophy), MD (Doctor of Medicine), EdD (Doctor of Education), JD (Juris Doctorate), MS (Master of Science), MA (Master of Arts), MBA (Master of Business Administration), MEd (Master of Education), MN (Master of Nursing), MSW (Master of Social Work).

### **THE GRAD SCHOOL OPTION**

Is graduate school right for you? How genuinely interested are you in this field? How well have you performed in your past academic pursuits? Is a graduate degree a good investment? If so, how and when will it pay dividends? What schools have the best programs for my field? How will this degree improve my job prospects? How will you pay for graduate school? What assistantships are available? In what ways is being a graduate student different from being an undergraduate? Is it worth the effort?

Talk to people who hold graduate degrees. Ask your professor for advice. Visit graduate schools. Make plans to take your entrance exam. Apply to more than one program.

### **THE PROCESS**

Procedures and requirements for entering graduate school vary from one institution to another. For specific admissions policies, contact the university you are interested in attending. Begin the application process early.

Generally, most colleges require a completed application form (with processing fee) and official transcripts from each institution you attended. Such transcripts must include evidence of graduation with a degree. Specific grade point average requirements exist for admission into most graduate programs.

### **ENTRANCE EXAMS**

Graduate applicants must present a satisfactory official score on a prescribed graduate exam specified by the respective college and/or department. Among the most common entrance exams are: GRE, GMAT, LSAT, MCAT, MAT.

### **MORE PAPERWORK**

In addition to the application form and the exam results, many institutions require a *Statement of Purpose* or a *Statement of Professional Goals & Objectives*. The format for these essays is comparable to that of a cover letter used for job applications through which the candidate promotes his/her qualifications and potential for success in the program. The content of the essay may include: reasons for undertaking graduate study, career goals and objectives, professional background, level of preparation for graduate school, identification of interests, skills and values, and prospective contributions to the professional field. The statement confirms that the applicant will represent the graduate program well.

Many graduate programs require letters of reference and/or professional evaluations of applicant's qualifications to pursue an advanced degree.