Making the Choice
DECIDING BETWEEN GRADUATE SCHOOL AND THE WORKFORCE

Congratulations! You’re about to complete a college degree—but what’s next? Here we explore the pros and cons of graduate school, entering the workforce, and how to navigate and arrive at your decision.

Weigh Each Option You Have

Deciding between going to graduate school and entering the workforce is a unique challenge that imminent college graduates face. For many, the question is, “do I want to pay for more school or get paid to work?” For others the choice is simpler—perhaps your career path demands a graduate degree (e.g., doctors, lawyers, professors, etc.) or maybe you can’t find a job so graduate school seems like a logical way to kill time, stave off college loan payments, and perhaps gain some valuable skills and experience before entering the workforce. Ultimately, the choice is going to depend on your situation. One common misconception is that graduate school is simply more classes. This is not true. Graduate school is a chance to shine as a young professional while you continue your education. Frequently you will be teaching undergraduate classes, presenting your own research, and if you’re lucky, you may get to serve on some panels and committees. These are not trivial tasks, so be prepared to make the adjustment to pseudo-professional life if you choose to pursue a graduate degree. On the bright side, this is good preparation for the workforce!

All Is Not Lost!

So where does that leave you? Well, it leaves you with a lot of opportunities! Consult with everyone you know—friends, family, professors, colleagues, and see what they think you should do to best reach your own professional and personal goals. Nothing is worse than investing time and energy into something you’re not passionate about, so making the right decision is crucial. Either choice will present many opportunities for you, but each is unique, so compare your own goals with what graduate school or working can offer you, and use that as a guide when you make your decision. My final piece of advice is the last thing my platoon sergeant said to me before we parted ways:

“Whatever you choose to do, do it well.” - Gunnery Sergeant Morales, USMC.