KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

WHY YOU SHOULD CHOOSE GRADUATE SCHOOL AT KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

What Each Stage of the Academic Journey Means for You

The workforce is more competitive than ever, and every day more and more professionals enter the job market seeking to land their dream career.

What can you do to **differentiate yourself from the pack of job seekers** who are all competing for the same career or promotion you want?

Obtaining a graduate degree could be the launching pad you need to land your dream career.

In this resource, we outline data-backed reasons to pursue a graduate degree and provide you with actionable and practical next steps for applying to the graduate program that will transform your career — let's get started.

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Data-Backed Reasons to Invest in Graduate Education

We're all facing a "new normal" — and as cliché as that may sound, this much remains true: **education will play an important role in shaping our collective future.**

If you're thinking about attending graduate school, then you have a lot to consider. But before you choose to develop your skills with an advanced degree, it is important to understand the benefits of investing in graduate-level education.

There is so much research that shows the value and ROI of a graduate degree. We're here to break it down for you.

What does the data tell us about the value of a graduate degree?

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that employment in occupations requiring a master's degree will increase by almost 17 percent by 2026.
- Harvard Business Review claims that "27 percent of employers now require master's degrees for roles in which historically undergraduate degrees sufficed."
- According to theballancecareers.com, employers understand that obtaining a graduate degree is no simple task, but it shows that you have the grit needed to develop crucial time management and critical thinking skills.
- UNESCO reports that "the number of students earning a university degree has more than doubled in the past 20 years," in turn, actually making a four-year degree less competitive in a professional setting.
- Smartasset.com asserts that graduate school can promote personal growth and actually provide you with the opportunity to reevaluate your strengths and nurture a love of lifelong learning — qualities that are sought-after by employers from every industry.
- As of 2018, professionals with an advanced degree only experienced 2 percent unemployment, in addition to experiencing greater job security and mobility.

5 Main Differences Between Grad School and College

It might seem like a simple question, but it's an important one: **what are the differences between grad school and college?**

While the differences between undergrad and grad school may seem obvious to some, it's important that you understand them so that you can better adjust once you begin a program.

Specialized Coursework

In college, you will take a variety of courses both related and unrelated to your major. In graduate school, this isn't the case. A graduate program's highly-specific coursework will give you the opportunity to dive deep and become an expert in the subject you're passionate about.

Opportunity to Research

While in undergrad, you probably had to write and develop a few research papers or projects, but in graduate school, you will spend a significant amount of your time conducting research – depending on your subject of choice. You will also have access to a variety of resources and systems that will aid you in your research initiatives.

Thesis Requirement

Most graduate students are required to write and present a thesis. **A master's thesis** "enables you an opportunity to develop (and prove that you have developed) a deeper knowledge and understanding of a particular area of study." Your **thesis statement will present your research findings** and ultimately, exist as a physical representation of your graduate school accomplishments.

Visibility and Community

In undergrad, you probably experienced classes of dozens (or hundreds) of other students. In graduate school, class sizes are much smaller, and you can expect to really get to know your professors and peers. You can use these connections to your advantage — by expanding your social network and cultivating relationships with professionals who have on-the-ground experience.

Professional Development

In graduate school, learning is not limited to the classroom. In fact, you will be encouraged (and maybe even required) to participate in experiential learning opportunities such as internships, externships or other kinds of field experience. By doing so, you will increase your practical leadership skills and uncover the power of learning-by-doing in a real-world context.

Should I Go to Graduate School? Questions to Ask Yourself Before Deciding on Graduate School

Before investing your time, money and energy into a graduate degree, it is crucial that you ask yourself some pointed questions in order to identify how, why and where you're going to pursue your degree.

Here are some of the things to consider when choosing a graduate school.

Why do you want to obtain a graduate degree?

Everybody has different reasons for wanting to invest in a graduate degree, but it is important that you reflect on and identify why you are choosing to go back to school. Keep your eye on your "why" — this motivation will be the force that pushes you when you're experiencing the inevitable challenges of graduate school.

Do you have the time to devote to graduate school?

Earning a graduate degree does require a significant investment of time. Most programs take one to three years to complete, depending on whether you choose to earn your degree part- or full-time. So, consider your current obligations — family, work or other important responsibilities. How will you navigate these commitments along with graduate-level coursework? It is definitely possible to earn your degree while working or raising a family, but you'll need to develop a solid plan — and stick to it.

What kind of program completion format will match your lifestyle?

Academic institutions continue to offer more flexible graduate school options for professionals who have a busy lifestyle. You should carefully consider what kind of completion format will allow you to achieve your academic goals without disrupting your other important responsibilities. Inquire as to whether your program of interest offers either online or a hybrid (combination of online and in-person classes) format.

Will a graduate degree enable you to move up in your industry?

A graduate degree will not only set you apart from other job seekers — it will also give you more job security and allow you to command a higher salary upon hire. By obtaining a graduate degree, you will differentiate yourself from the many other professionals who hold only a bachelor's degree — making you more competitive when it matters.

What are my options for financing graduate school?

You have several options when it comes to financing graduate school. For instance, if you are fortunate enough to have an employer who is willing to pay for you to earn your degree, this greatly reduces any stress that comes with the cost of grad school. If you are going to pay for your own degree — don't worry! There are lots of resources available to help you navigate financing your degree. Start early, do your research and apply for scholarships, grants, loans and graduate assistantships that will help offset the cost of graduate school.

Pick YOUR Timeline for Preparing for Graduate School

Every year of college is different, and each year poses new opportunities as you're preparing for grad school.

Read through each year to get an understanding of how to navigate the transition from undergrad to grad school.

Freshman Year:
GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED

It's your freshman year — and you may be thinking "I'm not ready to think about grad school yet!" It's understandable if that's your current thought process. However, in actuality, many freshmen are already considering graduate school and are taking the initiative to make that transition as easy as possible.

Pro Tip:
If you're thinking about entering a field that will likely **require you to achieve graduate-level credentials,** you should start researching which graduate degrees will pair well with your college major and start considering whether attending the same grad school as undergrad could be a good option for you.

Sophomore Year:
START DOING YOUR RESEARCH

As a sophomore, you are getting used to college life and hopefully, finding your groove when it comes to keeping up with your various classes and deadlines. Your sophomore year is also a great opportunity to start speaking with your academic advisor or career services professionals regarding your interests and goals. These professionals will help you determine if obtaining a graduate degree is a strategic choice with your long-term career goals in mind.

Pro Tip:

You can also start researching 4+1 programs, programs that will allow you to obtain a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in five years instead of six or seven years. By choosing a 4+1 program, you'll also save money by completing your master's more quickly than a traditional graduate degree.

Junior Year:
PREPARE TO APPLY

As you enter junior year, you should decide whether you're going to pursue a graduate degree after college and start taking steps to make that goal a reality. Reach out to graduate admissions counselors and begin evaluating specific graduate programs that will align with your professionals goals. You should start researching classes at the master's level that you may want to enroll in — in order to get a taste of graduate-level coursework. You may also be eligible to enroll in classes that will "double count" for both your undergraduate and graduate degrees. Talk to your academic advisor about how you can get a jump start on graduate classes.

Pro Tip:

Find out whether you will need to take a standardized test for graduate admission, such as the GRE or GMAT, and start researching ways to prepare for the test you'll need to take. Now that you are starting to take upper level courses in your major your class sizes are probably a smaller, and the faculty are able to get to know you a little better. Think about which faculty you might ask for a letter of recommendation and discuss your graduate school plans with them.

Senior Year:
FINALIZE THE PROCESS

You're a senior — congratulations! You're nearly a college graduate, and it's time to take actionable steps toward enrolling in a graduate program. By the time you enter your senior year, you should have a plan for transitioning to graduate school and start gathering the documents that are required for admissions to the program of your choice. Keep in mind that you'll need to allow for enough time to prepare a personal statement and gather letters of recommendation, transcripts, and other application requirements.

Pro Tip:

During this transformative year of your education, keep track of graduate school application deadlines and allow yourself plenty of time to prepare and submit application requirements. If you are applying for a graduate assistantship you will want to note any unique deadlines or requirements for consideration. Reach out the graduate admissions staff or graduate coordinators of the program if you have questions about the application process or program. If you have an opportunity to attend an open house or visit campus it shows the school you are serious about their program and allows you to put your best foot forward in the graduate school admissions process.

Choosing the Right Graduate School: Why Kent State University is Your Best Option

While you have many options for continuing your education, it's important that you are concerned with choosing the right graduate school. We have ample reason to believe that Kent State University could be the avenue through which you achieve your goals and transform your career.

Our Vision

We strive to be a community of change agents whose collective commitment to learning sparks epic thinking, meaningful voice and invaluable outcomes to better our society.

Our Mission

We transform lives and communities through the power of discovery, learning and creative expression in an inclusive environment.

Our Core Values

A distinctive blend of teaching, research and creative excellence

Active inquiry and discovery that expands knowledge and human understanding

Life-changing educational experiences for students with wide-ranging talents and aspirations

A living-learning environment that creates a genuine sense of place

Engagement that inspires positive change

Diversity of culture, beliefs, identity and thought

Freedom of expression and the free exchange of ideas

A collaborative community

Respect, kindness and purpose in all we do

Kent State University: Facts and Figures

Faculty Expertise

70%+
Faculty Have Highest Degree In Field

University Highlights

257,000+
Alumni Worldwide

Student & Campus Life

38,000+
Enrolled In 8-Campus System

Academic Excellence

Ranked In **The Top 100 Of Best Graduate Education Schools**

Research Achievements

166
Active U.S. Patents For Research

I'm Attending Kent State for Undergrad and Grad School — Here's Why

Tell us a little bit about yourself: name, age and hometown?

My name is Victoria Reynolds. I am 28 years old and from Parma, Ohio — just about 50 minutes from Kent. I am in the Sociology PhD program. I am currently a doctoral candidate and anticipating to graduate in Summer of 2021.

When did you graduate with your bachelor's? What was your major?

I graduated with my bachelor's degree in May of 2014. I double majored in Sociology and Biology. I did this with the intention of going into genetic counseling. I received genetic counseling for a genetic mutation called Lynch Syndrome that runs in my family.

After personally working with a genetic counselor, I was so interested in the work they do in helping people navigate familial predispositions to cancers that I couldn't help but want to become a counselor myself. However, after interning in this department at a nearby hospital, I realized that my goals changed and I was more interested in researching psycho-oncology from a sociological standpoint — I really wanted to know why certain people experienced cancer differently than others. Although my specific career path changed, both my majors still really helped me in defining my research interests in graduate school.

Why did you choose to stay at Kent State for grad school instead of moving on to another institution?

My freshman year in undergrad, I applied to be a research assistant in the Group Processes Lab in the Sociology Department. I was fortunate enough to work for Dr. Carla Goar on running experiments and transcribing focus groups. It was a priceless opportunity to experience the research process so early on in undergrad. After this research concluded, I worked in the main office of the Sociology Department as a student worker. This gave me the opportunity to establish connections with faculty and graduate students in the department.

I made the decision to apply to Kent State's graduate program while I was taking the Sociology of Health and Health Care course with Dr. Tim Gallagher. I turned in an assignment that I was very proud of, and Dr. Gallagher commented that I should consider applying to Kent's Sociology PhD program. I think the very next day I started prepping for the application! I had my heart set on getting into this program and working with Dr. Gallagher and the other awesome faculty members in the department.

What is your favorite thing about the program?

The people! Since I've been interacting with folks in the Sociology Department since 2010, I've really come to know most of the individuals in the department. I also really like that students take the same classes as their fellow cohort members in the first year of grad school. This helped me create friendships that are just as strong today as they were six years ago.

Grad school is tough, but our program does a really good job at providing opportunities to find support and foster relationships. Two of my fellow cohort members met when we started grad school, and they married in 2018. And I was the maid of honor to boot!

Did you participate in a graduate assistantship or internship? If so, tell us about that experience.

Yes, I was fortunate enough to be offered research and teaching assistantship opportunities for the first 5 years in my program. During this time, I assisted faculty with research-related tasks and instructed courses in my areas of interest. I also applied for a graduate assistantship within the Statistical Consulting department which is housed within the University Libraries. I am still currently in this position while I continue working on my dissertation. All of these assistantships have helped me in various ways — each of them being a learning experience.

What do you hope to accomplish post-graduation?

My career goal is to find an applied position that deals with the entire research process, specifically at an institution doing research on people with cancer or other chronic illnesses. Helping to improve the lives of people with chronic illnesses, like cancer, is one of my goals post-graduation.

What is your best advice for financing graduate school at Kent State?

BUDGETING! Living on a graduate student stipend is, at times, a struggle; however, with budgeting you can make a little go a long way. Make sure to figure out the bare necessities and understand your own spending habits to estimate where your money will go.

Additionally, KSU has a lot of financial resources to help you along the way. For example, the Graduate Student Senate offers awards for research and travel-related costs. These have helped me tremendously in the time I've been in graduate school. GSS has also just created a Book award to help offset the toll of purchasing books for classes or research.

What is the one piece of advice you would give to an undergraduate student considering Kent State for grad school?

Understand that transitioning from undergraduate to graduate school requires some major mental changes. It's a heightened way of critical thinking and a lot more is required of you. Make sure to celebrate every success along the way — no matter how big or small. Whether getting your MA or PhD, graduate school is a long journey. Trust in your dreams, keep pushing, and lean on your support systems. Before you know it, you will see the light at the end of the tunnel!

Tips for Applying to Graduate School at Kent State

Admission to Kent State University's graduate programs is competitive, but we're here to make the admissions process as easy as possible. Please review the steps below and visit our admission pages to assist you as you complete your application.

1 **Browse Graduate Programs**
Explore over 350 degree and certificate options available on-campus or online, view application requirements and available start terms, and find departmental contact information.

2 **Choose Application Type**
Determine which application type meets your personal needs and review tips and requirements for applying. **Review Frequently Asked Questions.**

3 **Review Admission Criteria**
Review university-wide minimum application requirements and admission policy.

4 **Review How to Submit Application Materials**
Find information about how to submit your transcripts, test scores, letters of recommendation, and more.

5 **Submit Your Application**
Start your 2021 application or check the status of an existing application.

6 **View Your Admission Decision**
View your decision letter in your application portal. Visit the Application Review Process page for more information.

7 **Accept Your Offer of Admission (Admitted Students)**

We are here to support you through the application process and beyond. If you have not already done so, we encourage you to **begin the application process by clicking here.**

Learn to craft a remarkable graduate school application with Kent State's recorded webinar:

Nurture Your Spirit of Ambition at Kent State University

As a graduate student at Kent State University, you will have the opportunity to work with leading experts in your field of study. At Kent State, the focus is on helping you to meet your goals.

If you are ready to reach your highest potential by pursuing a graduate degree that will enhance your skills and make you marketable and competitive in the workforce, we invite you to connect with us!

Connect with Kent State University today.

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

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