

Gradaute Panel Recap:

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How did you know you wanted to go to grad school:

- Some didn't know! Started doing research during undergrad with Dr. Perry and was encouraged to join a masters program
- Started by working for labs and doing research
- Some took many years (like 10) between undergrad and grad school
 - Thought it was worth it monetarily to go to grad school
- Some always wanted to go grad school
- Some wrestled with the fact of going to teach vs. going to grad school
- Payment was normally a good waver for going to grad school

Overall summary, the grad school journey is different for everyone but that's what makes it so great. Anyone can go to grad school at any time, whether it's because you want to make more money in a specific field or because you were encouraged to join by peers.

What was the application process like?

- Can be really daunting
- Helpful to talk to people about what the process is like
- How the process goes: 1. start in the spring if you want to in the fall, (funding tends to be a top priority when it comes to these programs, so keep that in mind), start to contact professors via email (you want to like your advisor, so find people you think would be nice to work with), normally includes: academic statement, personal statement, three letters of rec, your CV, and your transcript
- PhD students can help vouch for you
- Cold emails are hard but are a must in order to get interviews
- It can be hard to find a professor that would be a good fit for you
- Every school has different requirements, be careful when filling them out, different deadlines, etc
- Have to take GRE
- At MSU it's pretty informal, go about interviews/ talking with professors
- Some processes are with scholarships, these scholarships can help walk you through the applications and the processes
- Professors don't always respond

Can be difficult at times because it's scary to reach out to professors and sometimes they don't respond back. Overall the process seems really daunting but by talking to professors and people in grad school, you get more familiar with the process and more comfortable emailing professors. There is heavy emphasis on finding an advisor/professor that you believe you will work well with and also the funding options when it comes to grad school. It's also important to pay attention to the different requirements and deadlines of each school because they all tend to be different.

What does your day look like, work/life balance

- 40 hr week (sometimes is 20 dedicated to research and 20 to classes)
- Many times they are more research heavy
- Normally 8 hour days, tend to treat it a lot like a job
- Can be hard to make your routine
- Pretty flexible schedule
- Having worked before grad school helped with time management and personal life balance
- Treat it like a job, 9-5
- Try to get work done during the week
- Helpful to use planner to schedule out the entire semester
- Depends on who your advisor is and how flexible or rigid your schedule is
- You have to be able to manage yourself and have to find the motivation to do the work
- VERY IMPORTANT WORK/LIFE BALANCE
- Have to make time for yourself which can be a challenge

In grad school it's important to treat it like any other job, as much of the time you will spend 40 or more hours a week on school work and research. However there was a HEAVY emphasis on maintaining a work life balance and creating a routine to follow. With that being said, everyone's schedule looks different based on the program they're in and the advisor they have.

What was something you learned but you didn't expect to?

- A lot more about the discipline from class and other grad students
- Learning work life balance
- Helped to learn more about the industry (this is helpful if you go straight from undergrad to grad school)
- Sometimes you have to figure out what to do because no one is telling you what to do
- Sometimes it helps to work before to find out what you like and don't like, many times those skills you gain are valuable in grad school
- There's so much to learn and so much work to be done
- Learning how to fine tune your work and research
- You're always learning new things, always something new that comes up

- Be open to learning and new experiences
- Things are complex
- Everything is so intertwined, and was helpful to learn how it connects to the bigger picture

Something the grad students didn't expect to learn was how complicated many things actually are. Along with that, they learned a lot more about the discipline they were studying and that working before grad school can also be very beneficial for a multitude of reasons.

Piece of Advice to Undergraduate Students

- Your experience is valid
 - The clubs you are apart of, the experiences you've had throughout undergrad are valued by the advisor and should be talked about
 - There is always someone with more but you still deserve spots
 - Everyone has done it before you and THAT'S OKAY
- You're smarter than you think you are
- Your experiences bring in a unique perspective and it's important
- You are good enough to be in grad school NO IMPOSTER SYNDROME
- Working can help a lot, (especially if you don't have a lot of research experience)\
 - Can help give you confidence
 - Can help if you graduated with a low gpa, after a few years of working, GPA didn't matter
- Apply to things, even if you don't meet the qualifications
 - You can still get in, you can still get the job
- Don't sit back and quit
 - Sometimes things don't go as planned, KEEP TRYING
 - You can accomplish anything you set your mind to
- Figure out your why? Your purpose? Figure out what you want to get out of life?
 - Helps to prioritize what is important and valuable to you

Some big pieces of advice the grad students gave was to apply to everything and never give up. They encouraged applying to things you may not even be qualified for because you just never know who else is applying. Along with that don't give up in the grad school process no matter how daunting or how stressful it can be. They stressed that imposter syndrome is very real in grad school but it's important to remember that you deserve to apply and you deserve to be in grad school.

Who decides your curriculum, what you take, who teaches them, etc?

- You make your schedule
- Some required classes but your job to fill most of the other credits

- Your group of researchers work together to find best course approach
- Pretty few requirements
- Normally does not take more than 3 classes
- Varies by department
- May have to create a tentative grad plan
- Very flexible
- Go by the school's grad handbook
- Can get credits for doing research
- Sometimes it can be hard to get into classes (this is based on the department)
- Many different professors
 - A lot of different people from different backgrounds
 - Can be your advisor

Much of the curriculum is taught by professors that primarily do research and you put your schedule together pretty much on your own or in collaboration with the students you work with. Most grad students take few classes during the school year, no more than 3 a semester and many times you can count lab work as credits.

GRE

- Common grad school test
- Graduate Required Exam
- People take months to prepare
- Many terms to learn and how to use them (qualitative part)
- Math (quantitative part)
- 2 or 3 hours
- Very daunting
- LOTS OF PREP
- \$230
- Can look for programs that do not require GRE or it's optional
- Apply without GRE
- Buy the big book
- More of a check mark thing, scores are not normally the make or break for grad school, normally a formality

This is a test that requires lots of prep and can be very expensive. Before you take this test, make sure you have studied adequately and check to see if the program you apply for even requires a GRE. Many programs are straying away from the GRE and use it as more of a formality.

What are you most excited to do after your program?

- Looking forward to getting the jobs you want

- Some jobs require some levels of education
- Hoping to be qualified for certain jobs
- Excited for all the experiences you gain throughout the program
- Excited to apply what you have learned
- Excited to take a break
- Grad school (MAKE SURE THEY ARE PAYING YOU FAIRLY)
- Hoping to get better paying jobs
- Looking forward to PhD