

To Grad or NOT to
Grad:
Faculty Feedback on
Continuing Education
Right Now

We have heard Berry students ask: given everything going on in the world, is it a good time for me to go to graduate school right now?

Continuing your education could be a good decision for you at the moment...or it might not be...so, how can you know? Good news: we've asked several Berry Faculty members to weigh in and here is what they said students should be thinking about.

As you read through their feedback in the lists below, check off all of the boxes that reflect your current perspectives on and experiences with going to graduate school right now.

Reasons "TO Grad" Right Now.

■ The graduate program **aligns with your personal and professional goals, and opens doors for future career options and opportunities** that interest you.

■ The graduate program helps to accelerate you towards your goals, offering **opportunities for training and credentials that are not available at the undergraduate level.**

■ The graduate program makes **financial sense for you** and your future goals. Does investing in your talent, time, and treasure in grad school outweigh the earnings you will lose by not being employed?

■ You are awarded **scholarships or graduate assistantships**, both of which help to reduce the cost of graduate school.

■ The graduate program **deepens your scholarly interests** and offers you access to wise and influential mentors.

■ The graduate program you are considering is **challenging, well respected and known** by people in the fields you want to move into.

Reasons "NOT To Grad" Right Now.

You think you really **need an "academic break"** and are not sure you have the stamina to take on the additional burden of challenging graduate-level coursework at this time.

You have **no idea which graduate program to apply to, or why you are pursuing an additional degree.** Although some people choose to go to graduate school as a 'fallback' when their other future plans fall through, please remember that continuing your formal education is a big investment of your time, talent, and treasure. It is much wiser to view graduate school as option to help you move closer to your future goals, as opposed to a 'fallback' plan.

You **don't get into** a respected **graduate school that aligns with your academic interests and professional goals.** Since applications to graduate school often increase during times of economic uncertainty, be aware that **may be more competition and less funding opportunities** for applicants right now.

The graduate program **does not offer you a scholarship or graduate assistantship,** and you **will have to incur additional debt** to continue your study. If you are concerned about incurring additional debt, or will need to work in addition to graduate study, consider how these will test your health, stress management skills, and work-life balance.

You found the pivot to remote learning to be extremely unpleasant or difficult. Since **remote learning is to be extremely unpleasant or difficult,** consider if you want to extend your time in graduate school where prolonged periods of remote learning could be a reoccurring reality.

You need to **remain close to home** and/or to your **support networks.** Often, students have to relocate when attending an in-person graduate program, so moving away would **test your resiliency and independence right now.**

Takeaways

Reflect on the boxes you checked above. Do your responses give you more insight into your decision “to grad or not to grad?” right now? Or do they create more questions than answers?

Graduate school is an incredibly valuable experience for many people. Anyone who is wanting to apply for graduate school should explore all options and to weigh them seriously when considering offers of admission. Be smart and be proactive. If you decide to do it, go all in on producing excellent applications and do your homework!

Schedule a Virtual Viking Career Advising Appointment to talk about your questions regarding graduate school options. Please feel free to bring this checklist to your appointment to help guide our discussion.

Special thanks to Dr. Matthew Stanard, Dr. Jordan Rowan Fannin, and Dr. Casey Dexter for their time and words of advice.