

Is a graduate degree for me?

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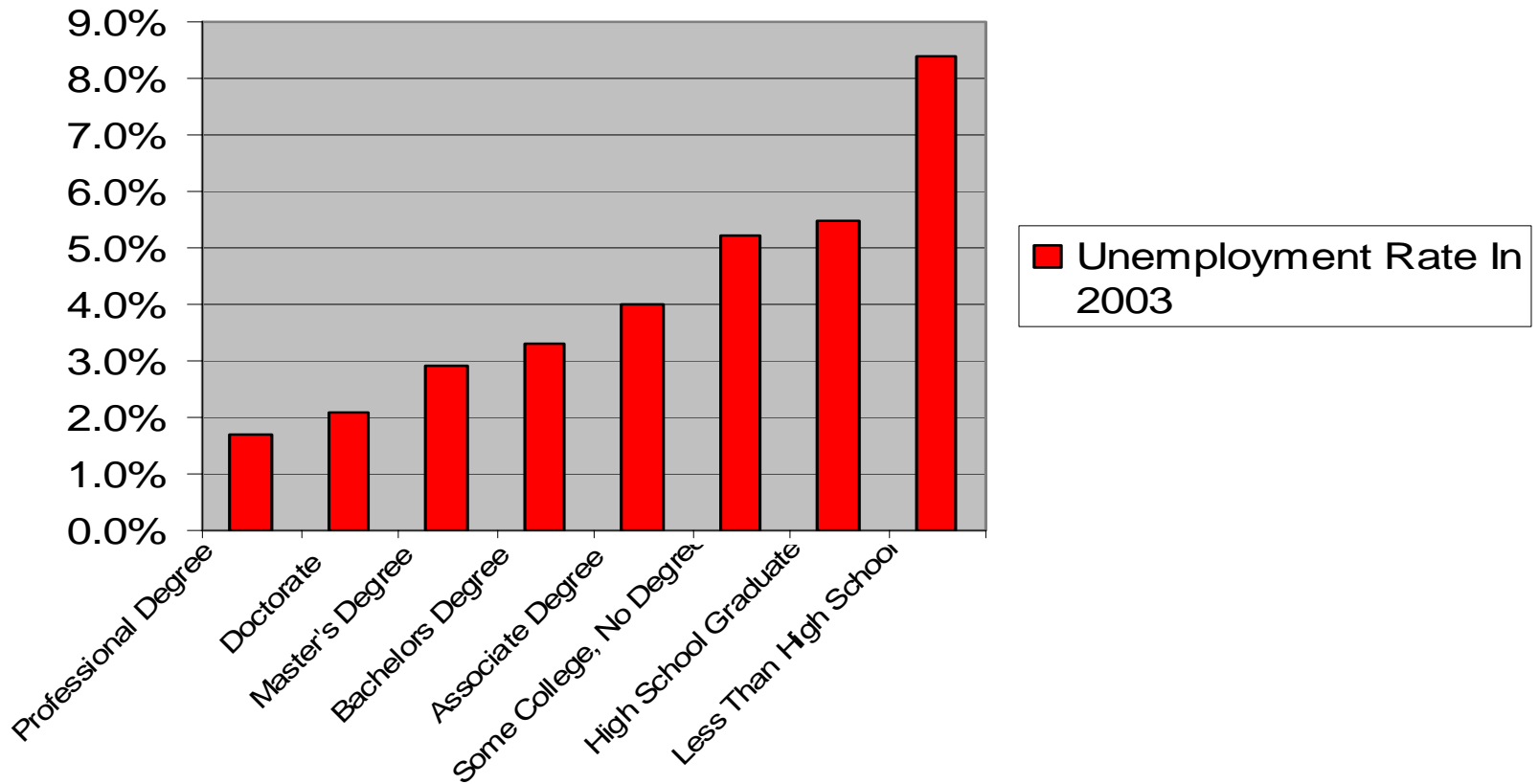
You should go to graduate school

if you want....

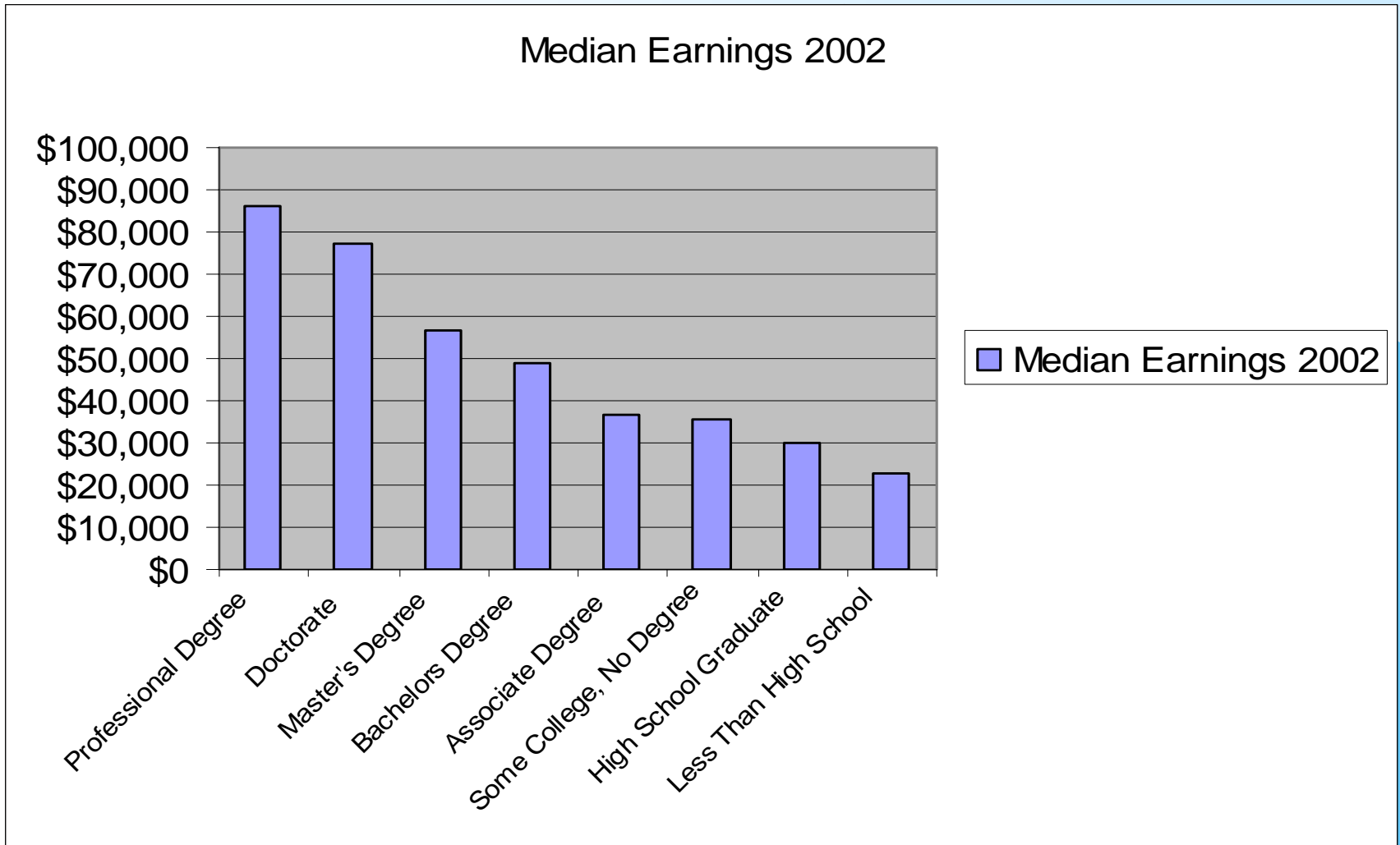
- Higher earnings
- Greater economic security
- Greater upward mobility
- Greater ability to make a difference
- Greater work variety, more independence
- Greater ability to change employers
- Personal satisfaction!

Education and Training Pay

Unemployment Rate In 2003



Education and Training Pay cont...



Graduate School Basics

- Different universities offer different programs or have different names for similar programs.
- Programs differ in terms of requirements, competitiveness, deadlines.
- If you are going to invest in a graduate degree, go to the best graduate program you can.
- Most programs are **ONLY** full-time.
- Few courses taught after 4 PM, some on weekends.
- Very few programs are mostly online.

What do graduate schools want?

- Quality of your undergraduate institution
- Appropriate undergraduate preparation
- Minimum of 3.0 in last 60 units of graduate work
- GRE, Miller's Analogies or GMAT scores
- Work experience or exposure
- Letters of recommendations
- Ability to communicate both orally and in writing
- Motivation
- Demonstrated work ethic

Options

- ***Master's degrees:*** Typically at least 30 credit hours. Thesis/non-thesis options

If you want to teach in community college, advance within the organization, train in a professional area, e.g., MPA, MBA, MSW, MPS, MEng, Nurse Practitioner, Library Science, School Psychologist, Speech Pathologist, lab manager.

- ***Doctoral degrees:*** Typically at least 45 credit hours plus 18 units of dissertation.

If you want to do research, become an academic, required in some professions, e.g., Clinical Psychology

- ***Graduate certificates:*** Typically 9-18 credit hours.

If you want new or stronger skills in complementary area.

- ***Non-degree status:*** Great way to pick up a course, demonstrate ability to do graduate work, increase GPA, or test the waters.

Financial Aid

- Federal aid (loans) for full-time, domestic students: do FAFSA!
- Some states offer state aid (through Office of Financial Aid)
- Private Fellowships, e.g., foundations, companies, private donors, local organizations
- For special groups: GEM, National Hispanic Scholarship Fund, American Indian Graduate Center fellowships, the Ph.D. Project, Ford Foundation
- National Fellowships, e.g., NSF, NIH. EPA
- Institutional (university) aid, mostly for full-time study
 - Teaching and Research Assistantships
 - Some fellowships
 - Tuition scholarships
- Many (most) graduate programs will offer some kind of financial aid. Don't be afraid to ask!!!

How to find a graduate program

- Web
- Ask your professors
- Brochures, catalogs, professional guide books
- Contact the Graduate Coordinator
- Contact the Graduate Advisor
- Email professors you are interested in doing research with
- Ask if you can talk to grad students in the program
- Visit (but make appointment first)
- Apply to 5-10 universities: 1/3 overreach, 1/3 very possible, 1/3 sure admission

What do I need to know about program?

- Carnegie classification of university:
 - Doctoral/Research-Extensive or Intensive
 - Master's I and II
 - Specialized institutes: art, music, design, business, teacher's nursing, pharmacy, podiatry, chiropractic, dentistry, theological seminaries
- Is the university or college accredited by a regional accreditation association?
- Is the program accredited by the appropriate professional association?
- Program's national rankings
- Who are the faculty? What are their credentials?
- What courses are required? Do they fit your needs? The same major at different universities may have very different curricula.
- Graduation data
- Placement data

Consider environment

- Am I a city person or like small towns?
- Weather? Seasons? Heat? Snow? Gray skies? Rainy?
- Family or relationship issues: job for partner? close to home? Do I have friends already there?
- Amenities according to my life-style
- Ethnic diversity
- International community?

What are graduate programs looking for?

- Fit of your goals to their program. Knowledge of field and of the graduate program you are applying to.
- Evidence of ability to do graduate level work, e.g., grades, letters of recommendation, grades in couple of grad courses
- Ability to communicate: writing skills
- Maturity & commitment to field: you have thought through what it is that you want to do
- Research and/or work experience
- Initiative, logic, integrity, determination
- Balance: e.g. if your grades are not stellar, your GRE and the rest of application should be very strong
- Ok to ask graduate program how they weigh each component of the application

How do I apply?

- Usually you must apply to the Graduate College and the specific graduate program
- Usually required:
 - Copy of transcripts from all undergraduate schools attended
 - GRE General Test, GMAT or Miller's Analogies scores
 - Sometimes GRE Subject's Test
 - A Statement of Purpose
 - Curriculum vita
 - 3 academic letters of recommendation
 - Application fee
 - Sometimes a personal or phone interview

The GRE www.gre.org

- Given year-round at testing centers (in Old Main at UA)
- Computerized – computer adapted
- Three parts: Verbal, Quantitative, Analytical
- You receive scores for first two tests immediately:
Maximum of 800 if V & Q, and 6 in A.
- Good is 550+ and 4.5-5 in Analytical.
You want to score at least in the 70th percentile
- Subject tests given in November and April
- Study (Use ETS Guide + any Kaplan, Princeton Review, Barron's guide that matches your learning style).
- Take GRE Prep class if you can
- New GRE version comes out in October 2006: promises to be a lot more difficult


The Statement of Purpose:

- Who you are. Short personal history including challenges, influential people or events, skills, motivation.
- How did you first become interested in the general area? Why do you want to pursue this particular program?
- Explain gaps or discrepancies in academic record
- What are your short-term and long-term career goals?
- If selected, who on the faculty do you want to work with, why? Read their books/articles, know their work.
- Overall evidence of suitability for this program and career
- Use specifics, stay away from cliches, check grammar and spelling, adhere to work limits & format restrictions.

Letters of Recommendation

- From faculty who can evaluate your academic performance, researchers who can evaluate your research capabilities. Not from TAs or student services personnel if you can help it.
- In the case of master's or an applied program, one letter may be from someone who knows your work performance.
- Prepare recommenders: give them your vita, statement of purpose, clear addresses of programs you are applying to.
- Remind recommenders of deadlines. Stay on top!

Curriculum vita

- Education
 - Employment History
 - Awards, honors
 - Undergraduate research
 - Internships
 - Posters, presentations, publications
 - Volunteer work
 - Evidence of exposure to the field
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Overall quality of application

- Why choose me? What's special, distinctive or impressive about me?
- Put yourself in the shoes of faculty evaluating your application
- What details will help the committee better understand you and set you apart from the other candidates
- What does the look of the application say about me?

If interviewed.....

- Dress appropriately, e.g., casual in the sciences, professional for business programs, comfortable, neat and tidy.
- Listen attentively, look at people in the eyes, speak clearly
- Ask pertinent but not shallow questions
- Watch your non-verbals: no chewing gum, picking at clothes, rocking in your chair
- Don't act goofy or arrogant at ANY time

How to finally choose

- Most important is fit between you and professors, university and environment
- If doctorate, make sure that there is more than one professor in your area of interest
- Money is important but not paramount
- Between two equal choices, choose the most prestigious university

Get ready.....

Many of us will say that graduate school is one of the most important, valuable, enlightening, life-changing, fun thing we did in our life time!!!!