

## What kind of DOCTOR will you be?

### *inspire*

Getting a Ph.D. is more than just a few years in school. It has a real impact on the lives of real people. From the first years of your intellectual enrichment, to writing a dissertation that inspires students, faculty, and colleagues alike, to teaching and researching what matters to you, becoming a doctor means you can actively shape the future. This brochure contains answers to some frequently asked questions about graduate school and important information and links to look into if you are interested in pursuing a Ph.D.

"Having previously been a law student, I particularly appreciate graduate school because of the freedom I have to explore my personal interests and shape those interests into a career that is both meaningful and fulfilling."

— Terison Williamson,  
Ph.D. Candidate in  
American Studies & Ethnicity



### WHY GRADUATE SCHOOL?

Though you may be a freshman or sophomore, you're likely thinking already about what you'll do after you graduate from USC. While options like law school, business school, or medical school may sound familiar, a possibility you may not have thought about is earning a Ph.D. Perhaps you've taken a course that you really loved, worked on a research project that sparked your interest, or would like to make a career of studying and teaching in a field of your choice — if so, earning a doctorate degree may be for you!

## What kind of EXPERIENCE will you have?

### *community*



No matter what your professional, political, or cultural interests, there is likely to be a group of like-minded intellectuals with whom you can share your thoughts.

### HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

Graduate schools want you to take your time, but they also want you to start your career. Most programs take about 5-7 years.

### WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT EACH YEAR?

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 1ST | The primary focus of every first year student is mastering the curriculum and finding out what you want to study.   |
| 2ND | After a productive summer, the second year begins another year of coursework and research. By the end you should have an idea for your dissertation topic.                        |
| 3RD | This year you prepare for qualifying exams in your field. You'll probably take exams at the end of this year.   |
| 4TH | Now that you've taken exams you'll be considered ABD ("All But Dissertation"). Now the real work begins!  |
| 5TH | By this time you've taught a few classes, researched a topic thoroughly, and written chapter of your dissertation. You're almost done and you're ready to explore the job market. |

## What kind of OPPORTUNITIES will be available?

### *explore*

### WHAT DO PEOPLE STUDY IN GRAD SCHOOL?

If you're wondering what sorts of things people study in graduate school, here are some sample dissertation topics from current USC graduate students in the humanities:

- The practice of cyphering—inspirational dancing in circle formation—in Hip Hop dance circles as a form of knowledge production impacted by cultural legacies, individual histories, and racial and gender politics. *American Studies*
- Chicana domesticity and domestic expressions as a critical discourse in contemporary U.S. literature, art, and theater. *English*
- Audience reception of police brutality in movies. *Critical Studies*
- Iconography of the Virgin Mary in Mexican Art, and its implications for gender constructions within Mexican culture. *Art History*
- The relationship between fashion and gay male masculinity, particularly the changing visions of sneakers as masculine or feminine over 50 years as a case study in the social construction of gender. *Aronson School for Communication*

### HOW WILL I PAY FOR GRAD SCHOOL?

Many prospective Ph.D. students are unaware that **graduate school pays!** Graduate school will be your life's work for 5-7 years, and you can earn a salary as a graduate student. Most doctoral programs offer competitive funding packages that cover the cost of tuition as well as provide students a stipend for living expenses while in graduate school. These funding packages commonly consist of fellowships, teaching assistantships, and/or research assistantships, which enable you to both pay for graduate school and make a living as a grad student. Additionally, most include health care!

You can also apply for fellowships and other outside funding. There are a number of national fellowships granted towards graduate students from underrepresented groups. For a listing of these programs, visit [www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/fellowships.html](http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/fellowships.html).