

What kind of DOCTOR will you be?

inspire

Earning 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.

**"Getting a Ph.D. opens so many doors!
But more importantly, you're making a
difference. You're changing lives by
doing what you love to do."**

— James McKeevor, Ph.D. Student, Sociology



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** Throughout your graduate career, you will be attending local, national, and international scientific meetings. As you continue to do research, you will likely be presenting your work at those conferences, and writing up your work for publication in peer-reviewed journals.
- 5TH** By this time, you've taught a few classes, published some of your research, and are now writing your dissertation. You've almost done and you're ready to explore the job and postdoctoral fellowship 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 social sciences:

- ① The evolution of Chicano identity within M.E.Ch.A. (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan/Chicano Student Movement of Aztlan). *History*
- ② The emerging trends in the spatial distribution of concentrated poverty and concentrated affluence at the nation-state, regional, and local levels of scale during the 1990s. *Geography*
- ③ The experiences of people who self-identify as "mixed race" in the U.S., and how this complicates the Black-White binary of race relations. *American Studies*
- ④ Mexican immigrant transnationalism and political mobilization. *Political Science*
- ⑤ Studies of decision making under uncertainty, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions to terrorism events. *Psychology*

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 geared towards graduate students from underrepresented groups. For a listing of these programs, visit: www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/fellowships.html.