

Choosing a Graduate Program

TYPES OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS

- **Professional degree** – Think of this as a degree type that requires advanced knowledge in a particular profession. Your learning would be skill and practical analysis driven and will usually require licensing and/or certification. Examples: MBA (Master of Business Administration), BSN (Bachelors of Science in Nursing), MPH (Master of Public Health), etc.
- **Master's degree** – A master's degree is an academic degree where you are gaining a mastery level of understanding in a particular field of study. Your learning would be theoretically driven and require research, critical evaluation, analysis, and complex problem solving. Typically an academic Master's degree is distinguished as an MS (Master of Science) or MA (Master of Arts) in a particular field. Example Master of Science in Counseling or Master of Arts in Criminology.
- **Doctoral degree** – Doctoral degrees are the highest level of academic proficiency in any subject. Doctoral degrees allow an individual to practice and/or teach at the university level. Examples: MD (Medical Doctor) or PhD in Sociology (Doctor of Philosophy).

THE CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Knowing the “types” of universities you can attend may influence your program decisions. Here is a basic breakdown of national research classifications, but please click the link above for further information.

- **Research 1 universities** – Highest research activity (ex. University of Wisconsin-Madison)
- **Research 2 universities** – High research activity (ex. Baylor University-Texas)
- **Research 3 universities** – Moderate research activity (ex. Boise State University)

Being aware of the research rank of universities is important because it shows the dedication the university has for research, how much money is being invested into research, and your ability to find research you would like to be a part of.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

- **Reputation:** When making a graduate school decision, consider a schools ranking and reputation. Has the university or program you are seeking been recognized recently? Does the department have faculty with a variety of publications and/or recognized research? Who received the same degree you are interested in and what are they doing now (are they big names in your field of study)?
- **In-House Funding:** There are many ways to fund your graduate education. Most programs/universities have RA (Research Assistant), TA (Teaching Assistant), or experiential (practical job placement) funding opportunities. Make sure when you are searching for programs you seriously consider funding because loss or lack of funding may be the variable between you earning a graduate degree or not.
- **Faculty:** The faculty that make up a program create an academic culture. Your success in graduate school will rely heavily on your ability to form relationships with these faculty. Visit campus, make contact with the department chair to learn more about the realities and expectations of the program, and take time to look at faculty academic/research backgrounds.

QUICK TIP: *Talk to your current faculty- they are a great resource to gather information about graduate school in your program of interest.*