Survey Says:
Undergraduates and the
Prospect of Graduate School

Council of Graduate Schools
Summer Workshop and New Deans Institute

Jeff Allum, EdD | Director of Research
Association of American Law Schools

July 14, 2019
-45%
$116,900 (public)
$122,600 (private)
ADJUSTED MEAN = $79,091

MEAN = $83,797
One of these things is not like the others.
Before the JD Sponsors

Plus more than 18 leading law firms and corporate legal departments
Research Questions

1. What factors contribute most to the intention/decision to pursue an advanced degree or not?

2. What factors contribute to the intention/decision to pursue a JD or not?

3. What are the sources of information for making these decisions?
Survey responses exceeded Gallup targets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Type</th>
<th>Institutions &amp; Law Schools</th>
<th>Student Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Actual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Student Survey</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Student Survey</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44</td>
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</table>
Five Takeaways

• There is a high level of interest in graduate school
• Passion is a leading factor for considering graduate school
• Students value their time & money
• They acquire advice from real people, but not in the same way
• Evidence of educational inheritance permeates the study
Study Parameters & Limitations

- Master’s and/or PhD degree preferences
- No citizenship
- Undergraduate majors, but not field of graduate study
- Selective colleges & universities
There is a high level of interest in graduate school.
71% Likely to go to graduate school

- 52.3% Female
- 47.7% Male

- White: 63.8%
- Asian: 15.6%
- Black: 8.1%
- Hispanic: 12.5%
Likelihood of graduate school increases with GPA.

- Extremely/Somewhat Likely
- Extremely/Somewhat Unlikely
- Undecided

- <2.39: 12.7%
- 2.40-2.99: 21.0%
- 3.00-3.39: 54.7%
- 3.40-3.79:
- 3.80+: 78.5%
Likelihood of grad school is stable throughout college.

- First-year: 54.1%
- Sophomore: 54.1%
- Junior: 59.2%
- Senior: 59.2%

Extremely likely
Students likely to go to graduate school are more likely to have **parents with advanced degree** ...
Students likely to go to graduate school are more likely to have parents with advanced degree & higher GPA.

**Parental Education**
- Less than Bachelor's: 25.7%
- Bachelor's: 33.1%
- Advanced degree: 41.1%

**Undergraduate GPA**
- <2.39: 26.1%
- 2.40-2.99: 36.0%
- 3.00-3.39: 23.2%
- 3.40-3.79: 12.2%
- 3.80+: 2.4%

59.2% GPA > 3.4
Passion is a leading factor for considering graduate school.
Passion/interest is top reason for graduate school.

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<td>Prep for many jobs</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop analytic abilities</td>
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- Passion/interest #1
- Professional purposes next
- No noteworthy differences by gender, race/ethnicity, parental education, or GPA
Passion/interest is top reason for graduate school.

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- Passion/interest #1
- Professional purposes next
- No noteworthy differences by gender, race/ethnicity, parental education, or GPA
- More pronounced patterns
- Passion/interest especially high for Hispanic, White, and women
- High-paying jobs more important for Black students
- Analytic abilities more important for students with parent with advanced degree
- Be helpful to others 25.4%
Students value their time and money.
Time & money matter ... a lot.

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<th>Cost is too high</th>
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<td>Takes too long</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
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<td>Poor work-life balance</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
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- Potential deterrents are pragmatic
- Women more concerned about cost
- Black & Hispanic students are most concerned about cost
- Cost is less likely to be a deterrent as parental education increases
**Time & money matter ... a lot.**

| MA & MS | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cost is too high | 69.0% | • Potential deterrents are pragmatic |
| Takes too long | 50.4% | • Women more concerned about cost; |
| Poor work-life balance | 27.9% | • Black & Hispanic students are most |
| Grad school too hard | 23.8% | concerned about cost |
| Too few good paying jobs | 21.8% | • Cost is less likely to be a deterrent as |
| | | | | | |
| PhD | | | | | |
| Cost is too high | 66.1% | • Women, Black & Hispanic students are |
| Takes too long | 50.8% | even *more* cost-sensitive |
| Poor work-life balance | 32.4% | • Same relationship between parental |
| Too few good paying jobs | 23.5% | education and concern about cost |
| Grad school too hard | 22.9% | • Grad school too hard: No noteworthy |
| | | differences | | |
They acquire advice from real people, but not in the same way.
Students turn to **real people** for advice, but ...

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- Women more likely to turn to advisors
- Black students more likely to turn to advisors, less likely to turn to professors
- Black & Hispanic students less likely to turn to family
- Positive relationship between parental education and family as source of advice
Students turn to **real people** for advice, but ...

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- Positive relationship between parental education and family as source of advice
- Black students less likely to turn to professors and family
- Black (and to a lesser extent Asian & Hispanic) students more likely to turn to grad admissions, grad fair
- Positive relationship between parental ed and family as source of advice

Students turn to real people for advice, but …
Information about graduate degrees is not necessarily distributed or received evenly.

83.0% see information on campus

58.3% hear professors talk about

- Sophomore year is a pivotal point in awareness of MA & MS
- Differences are subtle
- Black students (women in particular) are less likely to hear profs talk about MA & MS
- Parental education “stairstep”
Information about graduate degrees is not necessarily distributed or received evenly.

63.6% see information on campus

49.5% hear professors talk about PhD

- Even more pronounced parental ed “stairstep” effect
- Positive relationship between GPA and awareness of PhD
- Black students (especially women) less likely to see info and hear professors talk about PhD
- Hispanic students are more likely to hear professors talk about PhD

Information about graduate degrees is not necessarily distributed or received evenly.
Evidence of educational inheritance permeates the study.
Students with a parent with an advanced degree learn early that some careers require graduate degrees.

When students learn that careers require graduate degrees

- Advanced degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Less than bachelors

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Advanced degree</th>
<th>Bachelor's degree</th>
<th>Less than bachelors</th>
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<td>High school</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade school or earlier</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
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Students with at least one parent with an advanced degree are...

Less likely to be concerned about graduate school cost.

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More likely to turn to family for advice.

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Students with at least one parent with an advanced degree are...

- Less likely to be concerned about graduate school cost.
  - Considering MA/MS: 76.3% (Men), 70.7% (Women) vs. 78.6% (Men), 68.1% (Women)
  - Considering PhD: 63.2% (Men), 57.9% (Women) vs. 71.1% (Men), 64.9% (Women)

- More likely to turn to family for advice.
  - Considering MA/MS: 40.1% (Men), 53.0% (Women) vs. 71.1% (Men), 46.1% (Women)
  - Considering PhD: 34.0% (Men), 46.1% (Women) vs. 64.9% (Men), 46.1% (Women)

More likely to report seeing information about MA & MS...

- Considering MA & MS: 80.7% (Men), 83.6% (Women) vs. 83.4% (Men), 85.4% (Women)
Students with at least one parent with an advanced degree are...

Less likely to be concerned about graduate school cost.

Less than Bachelor’s Degree | Bachelor’s Degree | Advanced Degree
--- | --- | ---
Considering MA/MS | 76.3% | 70.7% | 63.2%
Considering PhD | 78.6% | 68.1% | 57.9%

More likely to turn to family for advice.

Considering MA/MS | Considering PhD
--- | ---
Men | 40.1% | 34.0%
Women | 53.0% | 46.1%

More likely to report seeing information about MA & MS and PhDs.

Considering MA & MS

Men | Women
--- | ---
80.7% | 83.6% | 83.4%
79.7% | 83.6% | 85.4%

Considering PhD

Men | Women
--- | ---
59.7% | 63.5% | 65.7%
57.8% | 63.1% | 68.1%
Echoes in the literature.

• Students demonstrating higher levels of academic performance at the undergraduate level are more inclined to aspire to, apply for, and enroll in graduate programs than peers.

David English & Paul Umbach (2016)
Echoes in the literature.

- Students demonstrating higher levels of academic performance at the undergraduate level are more inclined to aspire to, apply for, and enroll in graduate programs than peers.

- Parental education has direct and indirect effects on pathways to and through graduate education.

David English & Paul Umbach (2016)
Echoes in the literature.

- Students demonstrating higher levels of academic performance at the undergraduate level are more inclined to aspire to, apply for, and enroll in graduate programs than peers.

- Parental education has direct and indirect effects on pathways to and through graduate education.

- Higher levels of graduate school aspiration among Black and, to a lesser extent Hispanic students do not translate into applications and enrollment at the same rates as their Asian and White peers.

David English & Paul Umbach (2016)
• There is a high level of interest in graduate school

• Passion is a leading factor for considering graduate school

• Students value their time & money

• They acquire advice from real people, but not in the same way

• Evidence of educational inheritance permeates the study
• Responsibly manage graduate enrollment & ensure success

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