I’m about to get my diploma... and everyone is asking me...
“...what’s next?”

Grad School vs. Job
Exploring Careers & Making Choices

David Ortendahl, Assistant Director
Intro

• This session is intended to cover 3 things:
  ▫ Provide key questions to consider when deciding on a graduate school program or a job
  ▫ Provide resources to guide your decisions
  ▫ Offer you time to reflect on your current and future priorities

Good decisions come from experience, and experience comes from bad decisions.
~Author Unknown
So where do I begin?

- Four keystones to deciding on Graduate School
  - Self-Assessment
  - Research Jobs/Careers
  - Researching schools and programs
  - Application/Acceptance

- Review:
  - Personal obligations- timeline, budget, etc
Self-Assessment: Key Questions

- Go ahead- start writing down your own answers!
  - What are my short and long term goals?
  - Will an advanced degree help me to obtain these goals?
  - Will work experience help me to obtain these goals?
  - Is another degree required to enter your profession?
  - Am I willing to invest the time, effort, and expense required for graduate study?
Self-Assessment: Key Questions

Whatever you do, do not pursue graduate school because you are unsure of what else to do with your life and career.

• Ask Yourself:
  ▫ Will you be able to focus on one topic or a narrow range of topics for the next 2-7 years?
  ▫ Are you comfortable initiating and carrying out independent research? (Most Ph.D. programs are highly academic and research oriented.)
  ▫ Are you prepared to spend the majority of the next 2-7 years studying while living on a limited budget?
  ▫ Do you need a break from school?
Self-Assessment: Compare Careers

• What jobs are you qualified for with a Bachelor’s degree from WPI? (Check out WPI JobFinder)

• Which jobs will a Master’s degree make you eligible for?
  ▫ Will programs take you right out of college?
Research is VERY Important

- Researching for Grad Programs
  - Using CDC Resources, Online Resources, Networking
  - Meeting benchmarks (tests), visiting, etc
- Researching for Jobs
  - Using CDC Resources, Online Resources, Networking
  - Tracking and evaluating progress
Job Search Strategies

• Schedule Your Time

• Make Yourself Accountable

• Make a list of target companies (2 tiers)

• Keep Accurate Records
Job Search Strategies... Cont.

- WPI Career Development Center Resources-
  - Career Fairs
  - Card-Scan Database
  - Corporate Information Sessions
  - Counselors
  - Resource Library
  - On-Campus Recruiting
  - Job Finder
  - Career Search
Research:
Exploring Careers & Programs

- WPI CDC – Search for graduate programs
  ▫ more on next slide!

- Sloan Career Cornerstone – explore career paths
  ▫ [www.careercornerstone.org/](http://www.careercornerstone.org/)

- Occupational Outlook Handbook – explore forecasts
  ▫ [www.bls.gov/oco/](http://www.bls.gov/oco/)

- Professional Associations – explore industry
Online Resources for the Sciences

**Biochemistry**
- American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
- Biotechnology Industry Organization
- Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
- NIH (National Institute of Health)
- NSF (National Science Foundation)

**Biology**
- American Institute of Biological Sciences
- American Physiological Society
- American Society for Microbiology
- Interdisciplinary Plant Research
- PreHealth Center
- Career Corner Stone Resources

**Biotechnology**
- American Institute of Biological Sciences
- American Physiological Society
- American Society for Microbiology
- Botanical Society of America
- Interdisciplinary Plant Research
- PreHealth Center

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**Groups**
- Mass Bio Council
- Biotech & BioPharma Professionals
- Bio Careers
- The Official WPI Alumni Group

**Hash-tags**
- #Bio
- #Biology
- #jobs or #careers
  - in TweetDeck search Bio Jobs
- #MassBio
- #digPharma
- #BioMed
Research:

Finding Schools & Programs

- Resources on: http://www.wpi.edu/Admin/CDC/grad.html

  ▫ Some online resources include
  - Petersons - Peterson's is a leading search provider of colleges and universities, graduate schools, online degrees, private schools and study guides to students
  - Graduate Guide Home - US graduate schools, masters, doctorate, law programs - Search for graduate school, law school, doctorate and MBA programs by major and state, university contact details and email forms. Sections cover admission tests, financial aid and more
  - Best Graduate Schools—US News and World Report - U.S. News has collected data from more than 12,000 graduate programs to bring you this year's rankings. Start by selecting a discipline for access to our top program rankings.
    - US News You Tube Video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUtxtqPIxow
Applications: Resources

- WPI CDC webpage:
  - [www.wpi.edu/Admin/CDC/application.html](http://www.wpi.edu/Admin/CDC/application.html)

- WPI Programs:
  - [http://grad.wpi.edu/Prospective/degrees.html](http://grad.wpi.edu/Prospective/degrees.html)
Choices: When Choosing Graduate School

- Is the school accredited?
- Who is the competition?
- Does geographic location play a role for you?
  - Cost of living?
- **What are your research interests?**
  - What have the faculty pursued at the institution?
- Is there Financial Aid/Research Fellowships?
- What Academic resources are at your disposal?
- What is the profile of a successful student in the program?
Choices:
When Choosing Graduate School

• For Master’s students- do they offer Ph.D. programs?
• For Professional programs- What are the Career Prospects after graduation?
• For Doctoral Candidates:
  ▫ Average length of time
  ▫ Previous Dissertation Topics
• Possibilities of funding for research/previous grants awarded?
Choices - Job Search

• Who has given me an offer?
• What are my responsibilities?
• Is there room for growth?
• Will I learn something?
• Will I work well with the people there?
• Is location important?
• What are the benefits?
Choices: Jobs vs. Grad School

- What is my financial situation?
- Am I absolutely certain about an advanced degree?
- What are the pros to each? ... the cons?
- What do I feel comfortable with?
The combined search: Grad School vs. Job

• Similarities:
  ▫ Cover Letters & Personal Statements
  ▫ Resumes & Applications
  ▫ Interviews & Interviews 😊

• Differences:
  ▫ Timeline
  ▫ Cost of application
Upcoming Career-Related Events

Graduate Student Options: Industry vs. Research
11/29  3pm   SL 406

Federal Jobs
12/1  5pm   SL 407

How to Find an Internship
12/7  5pm   AK 116
Final thought...

**Choices are the hinges of destiny.**

- Pythagoras -

...Do great things!