

# To Grad School or Not To Grad School, That Is The Question...

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Congratulations! You did it! You made it through four years of design school. You stayed up late to develop your concepts and campaigns, tweaked your typography and layouts, you have written your project manifesto and copy, developed and refined your portfolio, and you found an internship that you actually wanted. You also have the scars to prove it through the long hours of mounting your work for a presentation, thanks to your exacto knife, but no more band aid wearing for you because despite all these adversities, you did it... now what?

Its true, you have finally gotten your Bachelors of Arts in Advertising Design and Graphic Arts, so much of your time and efforts have been geared and focused to this one momentous point and now that you have achieved it do you feel fulfilled or uneasy as to the next step? For some of us the transition from collegiate career to professional career can be scary.

## Confidence

Although the newly minted degree with your name on it signifies that you have done what is required in your respective field, more and more of us may not feel the confidence to actually go out into the professional business world and apply our talents. Still, some others feel ready and find work at companies where we are simply doing what we are told, design this brochure look this way or that image slightly to the right or this type doesn't work so well. And although this is all good and part of the business, don't we want more.

## Is There Any Value?

As communication design students we are told that good design is good design is good design. Largely because this is exactly true. Work in our field is strictly chosen by how well it works or doesn't, by how much magic it is or isn't, and whether or not its fire. A portfolio that has work where you are constantly pushing the boundaries is electric and will get you a job and the ability to keep it. But in a day and age where jobs are a premium and we are constantly pushing ourselves, is stopping at a Bachelors degree smart? Shouldn't we keep pushing these boundaries, not only in our designs but also our minds? Graduate school may be the answer, but not such an easy one. The decision to go to graduate school isn't easy but may be an important one. With so many designers in the world and in NYC, a graduate degree may be just the leg up you need to not only advance yourself but to further your design abilities. The choices for grad school are challenging though.

## What Are My Options?

First, as important communication design is there isn't a central place or site where you may begin your search and inquire about the different schools locally, nationally, and even internationally. The advantage is that if you have come this far chances are you have heard of some of the major schools for graduate degrees such as Pratt, SVA, and NYU. There are other schools not as commonly known but prestigious nonetheless and in some cases ranked even higher. In the US News & World Reports 2013 annual ranking of best graduate schools under media/visual communications, Virginia Commonwealth University ranked #14, with Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh ranking

#4 and #1 Respectively.

## An Arm and A Leg

Second in considering a graduate school is of course price. The average cost of graduate school is costly in comparison to the cost of tuition at a CUNY college. Should Price be the determining factor? The cost of tuition for Pratt is roughly \$32,000 a year for their 48 total credit MS in Communication Design compared to the equivalent in the CUNY network of \$0... because at present there is no CUNY equivalent for communication design. The closest MS program in CUNY is a MS at Baruch College in Marketing with more of a focus on consumer behavior and market research. That program description may not be in your ballpark but the \$13,000 a year tuition for full-time students certainly might be.

## Decisions, Decisions

The decision to go to grad school isn't to be taken lightly but if anything the recent economic times has taught us is education is a good thing and more of it can only benefit you and your career to gain more confidence or to give you a leg up on your competition when you are in an interview vying for the same position.

## Price Of Success

The investment on which grad school to attend is also another decision to make and as financial circumstances are varied as much as our student body, it shouldn't be a deterrent. It is an investment... after all, how much are you worth?