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**The Academic Divide: Graduate Students With Funding And Without**

**By Morgan D. James**

In many university departments, it seems like there are two separate groups of graduate students:

those who have grants and assistantships, and those who don't. Is it worth it to continue your education if you aren't one of the select few?

In a word: yes. If you have been offered admission to a graduate program, but have not been offered funding, it is not a crisis situation. You should begin your school regardless.

If you have started graduate school without funding, you can always apply each year. You should apply for grants and assistantships (both research and teaching) each year. Some grant applications are due in early fall, so be sure to check out the deadlines of any to which you are going to apply. It might seem that you have only started school before you have to get your funding applications in.

Once you have begun your studies at a school, you have an advantage over those applicants who will be entering next year. You will know professors and be able to get references that count. Applying for funding twice will help show the department and the granting organizations that you are dedicated.

Remember that your school isn't the only organization that can offer you funding. Check out your government websites (municipal, provincial or state, and federal) to find grant applications. Look at other organizations such as businesses, charities, and social groups that fund scholarships and grants each year.

Even if you can support yourself and pay your tuition by working during school, take the time to apply for grants and assistantships. It looks great on your resume, and will help you in the long run.

For the meantime, when you are trying to fund your first year of studies without help from the school or from outside sources, consider getting a loan to pay for your studies. You can get specialized loans designed for students, for graduate students, and sometimes even designed for particular fields of study!

Having a loan instead of working long hours will ensure that you have the time to complete the applications (which is very time consuming: it will take you days to get all of the materials written, your references gathered, your transcripts and other supporting documents). It will also mean that you are free to devote yourself to your studies. Demonstrating a keen attitude and enthusiasm for school will help you stand out in your professors' minds. You want them to notice you, to respect you, and to help you get the teaching assistant or research assistant position that you are looking for!

In the end, if you truly want to go to school, you will be able to do it. Just carefully assess your funding options, and never give up on applications. Apply each year, and apply faithfully. It might not be fun, but in the end it could be what ends up paying the bills.

For information on getting student loans, visit

[http://www.theguideto-studentloans.com/graduate\\_school\\_loans/](http://www.theguideto-studentloans.com/graduate_school_loans/)

. This site has information on grad

school loans, and how to properly budget.

### **The Misplaced Academic Values**

**By Kadence Buchanan**

Based on endless discussions upon the usefulness of University degrees, it seems obvious that undergraduate and especially graduate students around the globe constantly wonder what the outcome of their efforts will be. Since perceptions and goals differ, so does the interpretation of the word outcome, especially when the complex issue of knowledge and academic performance is evaluated. Inside the realm of a University's environment, the outcome for most students is the actual value of their academic performance, the product of their intellectual exchange. Monetary or spiritual, the discussed value is usually interpreted as a product ready to be consumed by the private or public sector after the completion of the academic effort by the subject. But, is this interpretation a misconception, or the only outcome of contemporary Universities? Are students misusing the term or have they misplaced some of the values that used to govern the intellectual world?

In fact, making more money and reaching a desired social status are the main reasons that drive prospective students to pursue a degree. Future gains are considered to be the basic motivation that urges people to strive for superior academic performance. Moreover, the fierce competitive environment of every discipline forces the individual to identify new ways of excelling and increasing his/her bargaining power before facing an interested employer. This capitalistic notion of today's reality has forced institutions to recognize the power of monetary gains and has made the academic world a microcosm of this obvious shift in values. Under this social transformation and having to deal with these strong socioeconomic forces, Universities are challenged to survive as intellectual entities. In this altered environment, the academic changes that many scholars have identified have transformed modern Universities into corporate agents.

Moreover, the meaning of excellence has been altered. Nowadays, it is considered a synonym with quality of studies and is used as a basic marketing tool. Through this generic term, prospective students can be attracted and applications collected. A change has occurred to the initial intention of an application. Students do not enter an institution in order to acquire the intellectual pleasure of a degree, to elevate their knowledge, and increase their critical understanding regarding the world, but rather to acquire the intangible asset of a University's name as later this intangible asset will be translated in totally tangible outcomes. The most promising institution is the one which is most attractive to companies who wish to employ its alumni, since corporate managers have shifted their focus from what is taught inside a classroom to the physical location of that classroom. Thus, students who compete for the same corporate position tend to value differently the outcome of their studies. By evaluating their institutions' after-graduate appeal, as well as the rating scores issued by academic journals, students tend to consider their degree as a commodity rather than a reward for their intellectual struggle.

But the fact still remains that students enter a classroom ready to discuss, listen and share their beliefs. Depending on whether the existing academic environment promotes this intellectual exchange, students will shape their characters and value systems. There is no misconception of the role Universities play today. As different values penetrate an academic institution, its stakeholders integrate academic and social roles. These global citizens can give birth to the altered University's role, by accepting or rejecting the proposed changes during their time.

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