

Thoughts on Professional Practice and Education

Article 13: Pursuit of Graduate Education

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This is the thirteenth article I have prepared in the series offering thoughts on professional practice and education. In this article I am going to give my thoughts on obtaining graduate education. I will define graduate education as any education earned beyond the undergraduate bachelor degree.

I will start with the premise that graduate education is not necessary for a rewarding and successful surveying career. I would even go so far to state that for many surveyors, obtaining graduate education will not gain an economical return on the investment. Finally, I will readily admit that there are numerous surveyors without a graduate education or even an undergraduate degree that are far more intelligent than many people with graduate education including more intelligent than me. In other words, three graduate degrees does not make me more intelligent than many surveyors without a degree. If you are content with your position in the profession, your future, and your prospects, you do not need to consider graduate education.

There are three reasons to embark on graduate education. The first is to expand the depth of your knowledge. This would be accomplished by obtaining advanced education in surveying. The second reason is to expand the scope of knowledge. Expanding the scope of knowledge would occur by obtaining advanced education in a discipline other than surveying such as business administration, law, public administration, civil engineering, or forestry, as examples. The third reason is to qualify for other employment or licenses. For example, a graduate degree is generally required for a tenured college faculty position.

As a consequence, a person with an undergraduate degree in philosophy that decides to pursue surveying, may wish to consider getting a graduate degree in surveying rather than an undergraduate degree in surveying. A person with a surveying degree may wish to obtain a graduate degree in business administration.

The first graduate degree is generally a master's degree (e.g., Master of Science, Master of Arts, Master of Business Administration). The master's degree tends to focus on a specific discipline. There is little, if any, requirements when obtaining a master's degree for earning non-discipline specific courses to provide for a 'rounded' education. Thirty credits are generally required for a master's degree. Some of the credits may be awarded for research and thesis. The thirty credits may be composed entirely of surveying or surveying related coursework.

For the person interested in graduate study, there are two decisions that must be made. The first decision is to decide the focus of graduate study. The person must decide if studies will be in surveying or another field such as civil engineering, business, law, etc. The next decision is to decide the intensity of study. What I mean by intensity of study is the goal of graduate education. The easiest route for graduate education is to obtain a graduate certificate in a certain field. A graduate certificate at the University of Maine requires 12-15 credits of study, depending on the field of study. The next level of intensity is a master's degree that generally

requires around 30 credits of study. Finally, a doctorate requires 42 to 90 credits of study beyond the bachelor's degree. In some cases, a person can achieve the ultimate goal of obtaining a graduate degree by taking smaller steps. For example, the credits used to obtain a graduate certificate can later be used to obtain a master's degree. The credits obtained in a master's degree can often be used toward a doctorate. There are exceptions such as a law degree where there are no intermediate goals toward obtaining a juris doctorate (law degree).

A student that seeks to embark on graduate education should be aware that many graduate programs will not accept or only accept a limited number of credits from another university. For example, a university that requires 30 credits of graduate study to obtain a master's degree may only accept six credits from another university. The program would require 24 credits be obtained at the university awarding the graduate degree.

† Other books and articles by Knud can be found at <https://umaine.edu/svt/faculty/hermansen-articles/>