The Few, the Proud….
…those that possess a Graduate Degree.

Although borrowing heavily from the U.S. Marine's theme, this introduction fits well to individuals that have earned an advanced degree. Belonging to an elite and small group of people was one of three driving goals on why I applied to Michigan State for a Master's Degree.

This original goal evolved when an instructor from one of my Bachelor's classes at Northwood University challenged everyone in his class to consider taking the next steps to earn a graduate degree; for it places one into a small class of like people. He mentioned that a Master's Degree is now viewed in the same way a Bachelor's degree was viewed 20 years ago. Reviewing this 2013 report from the US Census, the percentage of Americans over the age of 25 with a Master's degree is about 8.5%, less than half the rate of those with a Bachelor's degree (see Table 1 below). I took this message to heart, and the desire for completing a Master's Degree was established.

Table 1

Detailed Years of School Completed by People 25 Years and Over: 2013
(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutionalized population /1.)

Detailed Years of School	ALL RACES		MALES		FEMALES	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Four or more years of college, vocational/associates	831	0.4	413	0.4	418	0.4
Associate's degree, academic						
Less than 1 year college, academic/associates	221	0.1	94	0.1	127	0.1
One year of college, academic/associates	709	0.3	267	0.3	442	0.4
Two years of college, academic/associates	7,704	3.7	3,191	3.2	4,513	4.2
Three years of college, academic/associates	1,635	0.8	699	0.7	936	0.9
Four or more years of college, academic/associates	1,396	0.7	573	0.6	823	0.8
Bachelors degree only	29,850	14.4	14,601	14.7	15,249	14.2
Graduate school, no master's degree						
Less than 1 year of graduate school, no master's degree	3,254	1.6	1,520	1.5	1,734	1.6
One or more years of graduate school, no master's degree	8,470	4.1	3,738	3.8	4,732	4.4
Master's degree programs						
Master's degree 1 year program	1,340	0.7	602	0.6	737	0.7
Master's degree 2 years program	11,159	5.4	4,930	5.0	6,229	5.8
Master's degree 3 or more years program	4,896	2.4	2,272	2.3	2,624	2.4
Professional degree	3,066	1.5	1,876	1.9	1,191	1.1
Doctorate degree	3,470	1.7	2,192	2.2	1,278	1.2

US Census Report Link [MS Excel and CSV Formats]:
https://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2013/Table%203.xlsx
https://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2013/Table%203.csv

My second goal centered around the fact that I've been a huge Michigan State fan since I was young, and have long had a strong desire to graduate from MSU. But I desired an MSU degree program that suited my technical background and experiences, and something that I could apply what I learned to my MSU employment position as a business analyst and technical writer for software users. I recognized a need to strengthen my understanding on the different ways people learn, how to use different technical delivery methods to effectively communicate information to end users, and best practices to analyze the success or failure of my communication methods.

After researching my options, the <u>Master of Arts in Educational Technology (MAET)</u> was a great match, and I also discovered MSU has an extensive and proven reputation for providing some of the highest educational programs in the nation. Throughout this program I identified how others acquire and retain new information, and which instructional technologies best support their understanding and use of MSU business software that I work with. I was fortunate to be accepted into this program, and In hindsight this degree was the perfect choice for me.

Finally, I have an interest in online teaching, and currently this is still an unfulfilled goal. But there is an area within my larger MSU department that develops and supports many of the online classes here at the University. With my MAET degree I am now qualified if I want to move in that direction. I would also consider working as a technical integrator and liaison for a primary or secondary school, should the right opportunity arise. These are roles that before my MSU classes I would not have been properly prepared to follow.

In summary, I'm proud of the goals I have accomplished; but I also recognize there is much to learn. Not only around student instruction, but the continued introduction and evolution of technologies that directly (and through creative adaption) support deep learning and understanding. While I can't solve every instructional issue that arises, today I am able to provide more effective suggestions on possible courses of action, and better prepared on where to research and recommend long term technology-based learning approaches and solutions.

I eagerly look forward to what my future holds.

Brian K. Jenks
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