# Beyond the Bachelor's Map Your Next Move

Start with the work you want to do, not the degree title. Compare work, fellowships and further study, then choose one next step you can test.

**START WITH A GOAL**

I want to contribute to

_____

I need to learn how to

_____

## THE GOAL

**Name it**
What work do I want to do?

**Find evidence**
Read real role descriptions.

**Test the fit**
Talk to someone doing that work.

## THE ROUTE

**Name it**
Which path builds the skills I need?

**Find evidence**
Check whether a degree is required or preferred.

**Test the fit**
Compare time, cost and learning before committing.

## Try this before you apply

Find two roles you would like to explore, such as student support or public policy work. List their required skills and credentials. Circle what you need to build next.

# Compare Four Routes Without Ranking Them

Your next move can build experience, test an interest or deepen a specialty. These routes can connect; none is automatically the best choice.

## Work

Practice in a role. Check supervision, pay, benefits and room to learn.

**ROLE EVIDENCE**

**STUDENT SUPPORT ROLE**

Skill: listening + documentation

Ask: Who trains new staff?

## Fellowship

Try a structured experience. Verify duration, duties and funding.

**PROGRAM TERMS**

Start — Placement — Finish

Ask what happens after the program.

## Graduate study

Build advanced knowledge. Check curriculum, advising and outcomes.

**LEARNING DESIGN**

- Seminar
- Research
- Practice

## Professional study

Prepare for a field. Verify credential and licensing rules where you will work.

**CREDENTIAL CHECK**

- [x] Program requirements
- [x] Professional authority
- [x] Location-specific rules

PROGRAM RESEARCH

# Compare Evidence Not Just Reputation

Choose two programs. Use their current official pages, then ask about gaps. Save the source link and date for every important claim.

## Read the details

- **Curriculum and learning in practice**
- **Advising, access and daily schedule**
- **Outcome claims and missing context**
- **Total time and cost for your situation**

**PRACTICE PROGRAM EXCERPT**

Fictional example, not a real program.

1. **Learning**
   Community Research seminar; field placement by application.
2. **Support**
   Faculty advisor assigned. Evening courses available.
3. **Outcomes**
   Alumni stories published; no cohort outcome report linked.
4. **Commitment**
   Two-year sequence. Summer fees and funding not stated.

## Ask a question tied to your goal

**Higher education:** Which placements let students work directly with advising or student support teams?

**Law-related work:** Does this program prepare me for my target role, or is another qualification required?

Do not treat an alumni story or an average salary as a promised result. Ask who is represented and what is not measured.

# Understand the Funding Offer

CHECK 1

## Name each type of support

A grant generally does not need repayment, but conditions matter. A loan is borrowed money you must repay, usually with interest. Ask what is actually offered. [1]

### Get the terms in writing

Who is eligible? What is confirmed rather than estimated? Could withdrawal or unmet conditions create a repayment obligation?

CHECK 2

## Separate the award from the payment

A stipend is a living allowance, not proof that tuition is covered. Assistantships link support to duties. Graduate fellowships may fund study without those duties. [2-4]

### Ask what comes with it

What work, hours or progress is required? Which fees and insurance are included? Is summer covered? When are payments made?

CHECK 3

## Compare the full commitment

List tuition, fees and living costs for each year. Record confirmed support separately from loans. Do not count the same stipend twice if it is part of an assistantship.

### Check the gaps

How long is support offered? What must renew? Who confirms future-year costs? Include travel, moving and income you may give up.

General planning, not financial advice. Funding varies by program. Sources [1-4] on page 6.

# Build Your Timeline From Verified Dates

Requirements vary. Check each official application page for your entry year. Work backward from real deadlines, not a generic calendar.

### Confirm

Check prerequisites, tests, transcripts and eligibility before paying.

### Prepare

Read essay prompts. Request references. Check writing samples, fees and fee waivers.

### Track

Record admissions and funding deadlines separately. Check the portal for missing items.

### My deadline record

Program / entry year

Application due

Funding due

Time zone + source

**ASK EARLY**

"Do references and transcripts have the same deadline as my application? Where can I confirm receipt?"

In your notes: assign an owner and a personal target date to every required item.

# Choose a Next Move You Can Actually Test

You do not need to decide your whole future today. Use your notes to choose one route to investigate and one concrete action.

**NAME** →

My goal is: _____

The route I want to test is: _____

**TEST** →

I will read, ask or try: _____

The person or office to contact is: _____

**REVIEW** →

My check-in date is: _____

I would reconsider if: _____

## Keep, pause or change course.

Use the evidence you collect, not pressure to pick the most impressive title.

### MY DECISION CHECK

- ☑ It serves a clear goal
- ☑ I understand the trade-offs
- ☑ I know what to verify next

OFFICIAL FUNDING SOURCES
[1] Federal Student Aid: Financial Aid Dictionary | Cornell Graduate School:
[2] Financial Support [3] Assistantships [4] Fellowships. Checked Oct. 25, 2026. Cornell illustrates terms, not universal offers.