“Going to grad school alters your career path and personal life. Before you invest, it’s imperative that you think critically about how the program will impact you.”

**Dwight Jackson, M.Ed.’14**

**My heart was in education, but not the classroom**

After receiving my bachelor’s degree, I was a high school teacher for two years. Although my heart was in education, I didn’t want to remain in the classroom 100 percent of the time, so I researched different careers within the field. Once I talked to a former high school counselor, I felt this career path was a better choice for me because the focus is on building relationships. As a teacher you see the same students day in and day out. But as a counselor, you approach students through a different perspective.

**Teaching while going to school was very demanding**

My experience was unique because I taught throughout the first 1.5 years of the program. I was one of the few students teaching full-time, so my experience was very intense. While I was able to adjust my course load, it took three years instead of two to complete my degree. After receiving a graduate research assistant position towards the end of the second year, I stopped teaching and held other part-time jobs to make ends meet. Working full-time while going to school proved to be too demanding, however the faculty was very supportive during my transition.

**Assess your situation before you invest**

One of the benefits of spreading the program out was receiving my state certification for school counseling one year before graduating. This gave me a leg up during interviews, which led to me being hired at the largest high school in Georgia one week before completing the master’s program. Looking back at my journey, I would encourage applicants to assess their situation and needs. Going to grad school alters your career path and personal life. Before you invest, it’s imperative that you think critically about how the program will impact your finances and lifestyle over two to three years.