The short answer to when you should start preparing for graduate school is right now.

It really is never too soon to start preparing. In fact, in some ways, you already begun! For example, you have selected or are in the process of deciding on a college major. Your major will, in turn, be a big factor in determining what kind of program you may apply to.

Your career goals, skills, interests, and values are big factors. It is important to think about graduate school not as just more school but as part of your career path, a path you are already on. You should consider questions like: How will graduate school fit in with the your plans? Will the costs outweigh the benefits, both financially and in terms of job satisfaction? Will grad school allow you to follow your dreams and passion?

You have to be very proactive in learning what graduate school is about, what the program requirements are, and how you will go about meeting those requirements. So start researching programs. Ask people—such as your professors, your academic counselor, your advisor—to help guide your search. They’ve been through the process, and are more than happy to share the “secrets” they learned when they were in your shoes!

Grad School Preparation Workshop: Wednesday!

To find out more about graduate school, be sure to attend **Wednesday, April 11, at 4:00, in Kirby 108.** The workshop will help you make more informed decision about the graduate school application process!

A complete workshop listing for the spring semester can be found at [http://www.ic.edu/RelId/622610/ISvars/default/Spring_2012_Workshop_Series.htm](http://www.ic.edu/RelId/622610/ISvars/default/Spring_2012_Workshop_Series.htm)
### TRiO Writing Workshop Series: Research Paper Help!

#### End of the Semester Research Paper Projects are Here!

A research paper is a difficult and time-consuming task. However, it can also be a rewarding experience that not only broadens your understanding of a given topic but is also a source of pride.

But if you put the required work off and don’t seek help, it can become an intimidating task that has the potential to drastically lower your grade.

To help prepare you for your research writing experience, the TRiO program will be offering a special writing workshop series to help you turn your ideas into well-structured research projects!

We would like to make sure the writing workshop times and dates fit your schedule, so please let us know if you are interested and what workshop dates and times each week would work best for you!!

Send your feedback to trio@ic.edu and/or feel free to contact Tammy Hayes with your time preferences at 217-245-3575.

Be on the lookout for email updates and additional queries about these soon to be scheduled Research Paper Writing Workshops!

### TRiO “Hairspray” Night: Thanks for Making the Event Special!

Thank you from the TRiO Staff to all who contributed to making the TRiO “Hairspray” Night a fun and special occasion. It was great to get the chance to enjoy a meal together, watch TRiO students perform, and have the opportunity to interact with each other in a different way and in a different place and setting!

Thank you to all the TRiO students who participated in the musical itself: the stage designers, production staff, performers, and everyone else who spent countless hours and expended great effort to provide the school with a fantastic show!

Thank you also to the students who attended the musical with us. It was a blast! We can’t wait until the next TRiO event when we will get the opportunity to have fun together again!

And a very special thank you to the box office staff who went out of its way not only to save us truly great seats but also arranged for our large group to be able to sit together. We are grateful to Alyson Knapik, Professor Craig Steenerson, and Professor Kate Muchmore!
Financial Responsibility While Studying Abroad

For those considering studying abroad, the prospect of living in a foreign country for six to twelve months can be intimidating. Along with the additional expense, students have to consider how the credits from the experience will fit in with their degree plan, and also attempt to make sure they graduate within the same time frame. However, Illinois College has a great study abroad program that will help guide you through every stage of the process. Study abroad may to be a financial burden, but it is a valuable cultural experience that will force you to learn to spend wisely and balance a budget in order to pursue something you really want to do.

Studying abroad can cost up to $20,000, which can deter many students from pursuing this unique opportunity. However, nobody should rule out the possibility just because of the cost. For starters, any financial aid you are already eligible for, such as the Pell Grant, Stafford Loans, and scholarships, is applied to your study abroad bill. There are also approximately twenty scholarships offered to IC students planning to study abroad, including outside scholarships that many TRiO participants would be eligible for, like the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program that is awarded specifically to students studying abroad who have received the Pell Grant.

After any scholarships and/or other financial aid awards are applied to your study abroad bill, the remaining money is disbursed directly to the student in the form of a check. This is where personal financial responsibility is very important. Yes, when you’re studying abroad it is tempting to splurge, go out to a really nice dinner, or buy a fantastic purse; but if you are not careful, you will run out of money quickly, and you will not have any money left for necessities you will need later, like food! This is why it is essential to create a monthly budget and, more importantly, stick to your budget! A budget does not mean you aren’t allowed to spend money or have fun. It is simply a means to spend your money while also being assured you will have enough to last through the duration of your trip. The ability to create and stick to a budget has been one of the most crucial skills I have gained during my current stay in France!

In addition to budgeting your cash, it is also important to think of your education as an expense and investment. Each credit, like money, counts, and you do not want the money and time you are investing to go to waste. Luckily, Professor Almut Spalding, Director of Study Abroad and BreakAways, will not only help you look into programs that will fit with your major, but she will also help you find classes within those programs that will allow you to graduate on time.

If anyone is interested in studying abroad I encourage you to start the process by first contacting Professor Spalding. Other students who have been through the experience are great sources of information as well. They will be able to attest to what a wonderful experience studying abroad is for a multitude of reasons, including learning essential fiscal responsibility skills.

“Illinois College has a great study abroad program...that will force you to learn to spend wisely and balance a budget in order to pursue something you really want to do.”