



## Decision Matrix Analysis Worksheet: Grad School

• For information on decision matrix analysis, visit [www.mindtools.com/rs/GridAnalysis](http://www.mindtools.com/rs/GridAnalysis).

Factors:	Cost	Geography/Climate	Professional Opportunities in the Area	Length of Program	Area of Interest/Rotation Focus	Close to Family	Total
Weights:	5/5	4/5	3/5	4/5	5/5	3/5	
Patton State Hospital MSNS/DI (PSH)	4/5 4x5=20	3/4 3x4=12	2/3 2x3=6	3/4 3x4=12	2/5 2x5=10	2/3 2x3=6	66
University of Arizona PSM (UofA)	2/5 2x5=10	2/4 2x4=8	2/3 2x3=6	4/4 4x4=16	4/5 4x5=20	0/3 0x3=0	60
VAECHCS-MS/DI (Co-VA)	4/5 4x5=20	4/4 4x4=16	2/3 2x3=6	4/4 4x4=16	4/5 4x5=20	0/3 0x3=0	78
VAGLAHS-MS/DI (LA-VA)	3/5 3x5=15	2/4 2x4=8	3/3 3x3=9	3/4 3x4=12	4/5 4x5=20	2/3 2x3=6	70
CSU-Sac MS/DI (Sac State)	3/5 3x5=15	3/4 3x4=12	3/3 3x3=9	3/4 3x4=12	3/5 3x5=15	3/3 3x3=9	72

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### Decision Making Assignment

*(use as much space as needed in each box for your answers & discussion)*

#### Decision/Problem Identification (6 pts):

My problem is choosing which graduate school and program to attend, given I get accepted into multiple or all of those that I applied to. I am not sure where I want to go the most, while being mindful of the different factors that affect my choice. I also want to have a more solid idea of where to go if I do get into multiple of my choices, and have to make a decision in a week or two time limit.

#### Options/Alternatives (10 pts):

I have the option of Patton State Hospital MSNS/DI (PSH), the University of Arizona PSM in nutrition (UofA), VA- Eastern Colorado Health Care System MS/DI (Co-VA), VA-Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System MS/DI (LA-VA), and CSU Sac State MS/DI (Sac State). PSH is unique program, with in state tuition, a stipend DI, and is 2 years long. The UofA is only 12 months, fast paced, and I know a dietitian who took it (she's very knowledgeable and liked it). It is also in phoenix, providing some professional opportunities in the area once I complete the program. The Co-VA is a 12-16 month long program, in a beautiful area, and has a stipend DI. The LA-VA has a stipend DI, lots of opportunities in the area, closer to Nor Cal (home), but is in LA, which is not somewhere I want to live. I also have a friend who lives there and is applying to the CSUN program. The Sac State program is a new program, has cheaper tuition, and lots of professional opportunities in the area. I am not sure if I want to explore another area for a change rather than stay in the greater Sacramento area however.

#### Factors (10 pts):

Cost is one factor. I am funding my education myself, so cost is very important to me. I also am not interested in taking out student loans, so that makes it even harder to find good programs that aren't super expensive. I want a program that offers opportunities for growth and depth of learning, but also doesn't leave me in debt once graduated.

Geography and climate is another factor. My quality of life and how much I enjoying the area I live in is also very important to me. I don't want too many weather-related issues (flooding, extreme heat, tornados, tsunamis, fires) or deadly animals I have to interact with frequently (snakes, alligators, scorpions). I also care about how safe I feel in the area (crime rates).

Professional opportunities in the area is another factor. If I live there for a few years, I want there to be a good number of nutrition-related opportunities available to participate in or work on. Working in nutrition in an area with little nutrition opportunity or advocacy can be difficult.

Length of Program is my next factor. I don't want to be in school for much longer than 2 years. I have already been in college for 6 years, and I am excited to launch my career, and accomplish some of the other goals I have in life that are non-school related. I may go back to school later, but I want to start my career as a dietitian as soon as possible, and gain professional experience.

Area of interest and rotations are another factor. Since I will be in these programs for about 2 years, what I am studying and the exposure I get to my areas of interest are also very important. I want to feel engaged and love what I am learning.

Being close to family is my last factor. Although this is not as important to me, it is always nice to be close to friends and family for support and social life.

#### Weights/Importance (10 pts):

Cost is a 5/5. It is very important, given I am paying for the program. I cannot go to a program that I cannot afford.

Geography and Climate is a 4/5. It is fairly important for quality of life and ease of commute. However, the program is only a couple years, so not ranked a 5/5. I can make some sacrifices because it is a temporary portion of my life.

Professional opportunities are a 3/5. It is fairly important. I like to have opportunities in my studies; however, I am not permanently where my program is located once I complete it. Thus, not as highly ranked. I would like to have extracurricular opportunities, but I will also likely be very busy in my program.

Length of program is a 4/5. I do not want to be in school for another 3 or 4 years, so a 2 year or less program is very important to me. I will still pursue nutrition regardless; however I want to save time and money. A program that is faster paced, but can be completed in 2 or less years is ideal for time and finances.

Area of interest is a 5/5. it is very important that I am studying what I am interested in. I want to feel engaged in what I am learning, and this is ranked so high because it is what I will be doing for the 2 years I am in a program.

Close to family is a 3/5. I would like to be close to family, however, it is only for social needs. I like to visit with my family, but being far away makes that difficult. I rank it lower because it is not a necessity for me, but a nice plus.

### **Analysis results (10 pts):**

Highest → lowest

The Co-VA program really hits most of my desires and was already my top choice. I love the area the rotations are in, the program is a little under 2 years, the DI is stipend, and the coursework is online. It ranked a 78.

Sac State is the most realistic and cost effective considering I wouldn't have to move or uproot my life. It is also cheaper. The areas of interest are in health promotion and disease prevention, which is something I am interested in following my minor in public health. It ranked a 72.

The LA-VA ranked a 70. This program is also close and cheaper, but the area and cost of living in the area is not ideal. This one was already not the top of my list but ranked higher than I thought.

The PSH ranked a 66, which makes sense. The main appeal is the unique program and stipend; however, the program isn't really my interests or in an area I like. Although Psychiatric and mental health is very important and interesting to learn about, it is not my top choice of program material and focus. It is also in the greater LA area, which is not my top area of living.

UofA ranked a 60. I was surprised this rated so low. I think this program is fast and engaging, but the weight of my factors has revealed it ranks much lower than I thought. It doesn't have a super specific area of interest either, just focusing on evidence-based practice and some research methods with experiential learning.

### **Decision (4 pts):**

My decision is the Co-VA MS/DI. It satisfies my desire to live in a beautiful area, the VA offers rotations closer to what I am interested in, it is stipend, the coursework is online (more flexibility), and the program is 2 years maximum. I doesn't meet everything I want, but the factors that matter more to me are met. If I don't get into that program, sac state would likely be my next option, However, University of Arizona is still appealing as a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> option despite its lowest ranking. I love that the length is short, and it's in a new area.