The Nature of Graduate Study

• Different from the undergraduate experience.
  • Undergrad focuses on mastering what is already known. Graduate focuses on adding to the body of knowledge and discovery.
  • No general education courses
• Very challenging and intellectually rewarding
• Lots of Reading and Writing.
• Practicums and clinical experiences.
• Thesis, dissertation, clinical research project....
• Balance multiple priorities.
• Significant amount of self-direction.

The Nature of Graduate Study

Developing a Professional Identity...

• You will be defining your professional identity through
  • Conference presentations
  • Publications
  • College teaching or advising
  • Developing expertise in your specific discipline
  • Your research or scholarly work

• The people affiliated with your program may become like family. That includes fellow students and your professors. These individuals become the first in your new professional network.

• Career planning and job search begins when you begin your program.
The Nature of Graduate Study

Keys to a successful start:

• Define your program of study
  Know which courses you need to take and when to meet your degree requirements in a timely manner. It is your responsibility to enroll in the appropriate courses, in the right order, at the right time.

• Communicate regularly with your advisor and/or Graduate Program Director. Know the policies, ask questions, know what you are responsible for versus your program director or advisor.

• Identify a mentor(s) (a person or a team of people with whom you feel an affinity and can discuss your aspirations and goals, who can help you professionally.)

• Identify skills that you wish to develop for your professional future. e.g. If you hope to teach at the university level in the future, look to develop teaching skills and experience.

• Be quick to LISTEN and slow to speak.

Key skills to develop and foster early in your graduate career:

• Time management!

• Reading

• Writing

• Communication

• Self Care… find balance, eat well, take time for activities you enjoy that are not school.

• Financial management… create a new budget; for most of you your financial situation changes drastically when going to graduate school.

• Professional demeanor and disposition (Remember – it is important to have fun but the probability of someone watching you is directly proportional to the stupidity of your actions.)
Resources for developing those skills:

- Learning Success Strategies
- Learning Centers:
  - Communication Center
  - Writing Center
  - Multilingual Student Services
- Counseling Center
- University Career Center
- Office of Financial Aid
- Engage with professional and social organizations (GSA, program student organizations, etc.)

Introduce yourself to your tablemates...
- your name,
- your graduate program
- something about yourself that you would like them to know about you

In turns, respond to the questions below.

- What are you most anxious about?
- What are you most excited about and looking forward to?
Graduate School = Stress?

- Many graduate students (if not all) will express that they are stressed. Why might that be?
  - Amount of reading required
  - Writing requirements
  - Balancing school and work
  - Personal life/obligations
  - Finances
  - Expectations about academic performance/grades
  - Transition back to school/ different school / CHANGE!

Good Time Management is Key

How can managing your time help?

- Setting and sticking to goals will increase motivation
- Identify where to focus your energy
- Manage and reduce stress and anxiety
- Relate more positively to others
- Feel better about yourself and what you accomplish
- Lifelong skills developed
Time Management Strategies

#1: Write personal goals

Examples:

Short term goals:
- Complete assignments prior to weekend (not to include all reading)
  - schedule ‘homework’ slots into schedule
  - complete assignments in designated slots

Get/stay healthy
- schedule time at the gym/to exercise (walk/run, ride bike, yoga...)
- eat balanced meals
- drink at least 60 oz. water daily

Long term goals:
- Finish thesis
  - Decide on topic
  - Choose committee
  - Write outline
  - Complete lit review
  - Conduct research
  - Write

- Apply to PhD programs
  - Research programs
  - Review acceptance criteria for different schools/programs
  - Gather application materials

SMART Goals

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time Bound
**Time Management Strategies**

#2: Create and keep to a weekly schedule

- Include non-negotiables such as class, work, study time
- Include family obligations – partner, children, parents, pets
- Include “ME time” – exercise, hobby time
- Include “life necessities” – meals and sleep
- Other – time with friends, therapy, doctor appointments

**Use a Planner**

- Store bought – monthly, weekly, daily
- Online calendar (MS office, etc.)
- Online planners and project management tools
- Create your own from excel or other
**Time Management Strategies**

**#3: Create and keep to a daily To Do list**

Have sections by priority:

- “Must do today”
- If I have time today, I will start/do this...
- Fun or work things that I will begin to think about and plan for

**Time Management Strategies**

**#4: Use Backwards Planning**

- Start with the end (project, research, exam, etc.)
- Break assignments into manageable chunks
- Decide what is familiar versus what will take longer to understand; plan time realistically
Time Management Strategies
#5: Manage Reading

- Decide what to read and how in-depth
- Take notes in a way that is meaningful to you
- Be intentional about what you need to learn

Recap: Time Management Strategies

- Write personal goals
- Create and keep to a weekly schedule
- Create and keep to a daily To Do List
- Use backwards planning
- Manage reading