

Surviving and Succeeding in Graduate School at UMBC

Graduate Student Seminar
September 23, 2009

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Outline

- Surviving the first year; tips for coping with grad school stress
- Preparing for the comprehensive examination
- Thinking about research
- The student-advisor relationship
- The road from writing your thesis to job hunting
- Tips for graduate student success

Surviving the first year

- Start building relationships with other students: they are good sources for
 - information about faculty,
 - information about classes, books, campus, etc.,
 - academic and social support,
 - career opportunities.

Surviving the first year (cont'd)

- Make a good *reputation*
 - be focused and respectful in classes;
 - don't be afraid to ask questions during the class;
 - submit assignments on time;
 - do more than the bare minimum in your assignments;
 - be punctual in class and at meetings;
 - talk to your professors.
- Don't forget to relax and enjoy the time being a graduate student!

Tips for coping with grad school stress

- “Don’t put off till tomorrow what you can do today!”
- Organize your study time: have a study plan and prioritize your tasks by due dates and importance.
- Participate in social activities.
- Get enough sleep.
- Exercise and eat healthful foods.

How to prepare for your comprehensive examination

- Have a study partner (or work in a small group).
- Solve all previous comps you can get.
- Talk to the senior students in the department.
- If you know who is writing the exam review all his/her course material (homeworks, exams, quizzes).
- Have a study plan and stick to it.

Thinking about research

- For students in the PhD program your research is the most important component in your student life.
- Start thinking about research early.
- Attend local faculty talks.
- Look at faculty publications.
- Important: do not rush the advisor decision.

The student-advisor relationship

- Do what your advisor asks you to do.
- Keep your advisor informed about your career aspirations, changes in your life, etc.
- Consult your advisor when choosing your courses.
- Your research is "your research": you are responsible to ensure accuracy of your work.
- Make your reports or writeups easy to read and follow.
- Ask for help if you are stuck.

The road from writing your thesis to job hunting

- Write up your work as you go along.
- Improve your writing and presentations skills.
- Write papers and get them published.
- Get others excited about your work; give talks about your work at research seminars, conferences, etc.
- Write/update your CV.
- Determine your goals and get informed about available positions.

Tips for graduate student success

(from Dr. Rebekah Drezek, Rice U.)

- Write up your ideas/work all the time.
- Read the new literature in your area.
- Plan, set goals for yourself.
- Talk about your research to your colleagues, at research conferences, etc.
- Meet people in your research area.
- If you waste time surfing the internet don't. Also, don't let your emails control you!
- Pay it forward!