Tips for Grad School Success

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Welcome to graduate school!
Overview

• Two traps to avoid
• Good habits for
  – Reading effectively
  – Key relationships
  – Research
• Networking
• Get to know your department
• Develop yourself professionally
• Avoid burnout
Undergraduate

- Packed Schedule
- Clear timelines
- Many extracurricular activities
Graduate

• Fewer classes
• More ambiguous timelines
• Thesis or Dissertation usually required
“Just because you’re going back to school, doesn’t mean that graduate school will closely resemble college. In fact, graduate school relies far more on self-structuring and self-motivation and the most successful graduate students are most often those who are the drivers of their experience.”

--www.phds.org
Two traps to avoid

- Frantic Workaholism
- Immobilization
Frantic Workaholism

- Immersed in work
- "Good work ethic"
- Result: burnout
Immobilization

I'm very busy doing things I don't need to do in order to avoid doing anything I'm actually supposed to be doing.
Drive Your Experience

• Start small
• Think big-picture
• Have a plan
Good Habits Begin Now

• Reading
• Relationships
• Research
Read Effectively

• Be organized
  – Keep electronic files
  – Keep paper files
Read Effectively

• Be efficient
  – Start with reviews
  – Read for argument
  – Read only what seems important
Read Effectively

• Take notes
  – DON’T write down everything!
  – Answer specific questions
    • What are the main ideas?
    • What concepts do they introduce/ use?
    • What critiques, praise do you have?
  – Keep a journal
Your Advisor Relationship

- Meet regularly
- Prepare for meetings
- Take initiative
- Communicate clearly
Managing Your Research

• Set SMART goals
  – Specific
  – Measurable
  – Achievable
  – Relevant
  – Time based
Managing Your Research

• Create strategic to-do lists
  - Write items down immediately
  - Group similar items
  - Add time estimates
  - Use action words
  - Break down large projects

• Don’t isolate yourself

• Avoid distractions
Department Life

- Find out what they expect of you
- Read the website
- Make an effort to attend events
- Reach out to students, faculty, and department staff
Networking—not just for MBA’s

- Makes you part of the research community
- May lead to opportunities for research, collaboration, long-term friendships
Networking

• Make criticism your friend
• Present your work as it progresses
Networking

• Have an answer to, “So, what are you working on?”

• Follow up
  – Send an email
  – Ask to see their work
  – Give thoughtful replies
  – Be thankful and helpful; they will remember you
Becoming the Professional You Are

- Your career starts now
- Develop a wide range of skills
- Don’t be afraid of “failure”
- Plan ahead for multiple career options
Professional Resources

Workshop: Est. Your Scholarly Identity
G.R.A.D. Aggies
Professional Development Portal
Departmental Resources
Avoiding Burnout

• Commit to the basics:
  – Sleep
  – Healthy eating
  – Exercise
  – Time for “play”
Avoiding Burnout

• Keep a schedule
  – Give yourself structure
  – Put the most important things first
  – 8 X 8 X 8 method
Avoiding Burnout

• Have a “stress plan”
  – Don’t compare yourself
  – Reward yourself when goals are met
  – Re-evaluate your schedule
  – Find a listening ear
    • TAMU Student Counseling Services
Conclusion

• Avoid workaholism and immobilization
• Create good habits in your reading, advisor relationships, and research
• Get to know your department
• Don’t be afraid of networking
• Develop yourself professionally
• Choose a balanced lifestyle
Questions?