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
Characteristics of Undergraduate Education

• Packed Schedule
• Clear timelines
• Many extracurricular activities
Characteristics of Graduate Education

- Fewer classes
- More ambiguous timelines
- Thesis or Dissertation usually required
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.
“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
Drive Your Experience

- Start small
- Think big-picture
- Have a plan

A goal without a plan is just a wish.
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: Goal Setting

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

• 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
• Remove 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
Benefits of Networking

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

• Criticism is your friend
• Present your work as it progresses
Networking: Practical tips

• 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

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

- Workshop: Est. Your Scholarly Identity
- G.R.A.D. Aggies
- Professional Development Portal
- Departmental Resources
Simple Steps to Avoid Burnout

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

• Keep a schedule
  – Give yourself structure
  – Put the most important things first
  – 8 X 8 X 8 method
Effective Stress Management

• 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** to avoid burnout
Questions?
Thanks and Gig 'em!

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