

SWAN 2004 Student Workshop Graduate Student Success and Survival Strategies

Generally, I plan to make comments to the effect outlined below. I wish to do this initially, while allowing Sarah and Miguel to add comments as well. Then we will open up the floor for questions, comments, suggestions, etc.

Outline

Choosing a program or school

- Know what you are looking for
- Go to meetings
- Network
- Take advantage of potential field trips
- Make opportunities
- Visit the schools to which you might apply
- Get a person on the “inside” to pull for you

Choosing an advisor

- Read potential advisor’s research papers
- Talk to people who know potential advisor
- Email past and present students of the advisor
- Find out what past students are doing currently
- Get to know your potential advisor personally, if possible

Be prepared!

- Anticipate problems and deadlines, with application AND once in your program
- Learn and know that YOU are in charge of your academic career!

Be confident!

- Believe in yourself and your skills
- Believe in your work ethic
- Concentrate on the positive
- Don’t get caught up in the “whining” and “bashing” that are sometimes present among graduate student groups
- Remember that people you look up to usually are not smarter than you; they have just studied more, and learned more along the way
- Be patient!

Set goals for your performance in your coursework

- If you want a 4.0, go get it.
- Learn to balance effort for courses with efforts on your thesis and dissertation

Read primary research articles, both current and seminal

- Work to wean yourself off of text books...they are for beginners

Research Proposals

Read widely!

Seek advice from fellow students, other professors

Get a draft to your major advisor as soon as possible

Benefits of a research proposal

Know why your work is important, see it in the big picture

Visualize the next steps of your work, larger projects in your system

Concentrate on the current step

Learn to balance what you have to do today, with what you have to do next week,
with what you have to do next year, with what you have to do in 3 years....5
years

Seek funding in as many places as possible

Even small grants for research help you formulate proposals

Go for the biggest grants you can, NSF fellowships, etc.

Publishing

If you intend to stay in academia (research) then you MUST publish

Balance those little descriptive papers with larger ones sent to major journals

Aim high, publish high! Reviews can be very helpful

Take control of your own future

Seek advice, don't expect it to come to you

Remember, you will make things happen for yourself!

Learn to become a Professional

When writing notes, memos, or letters, make them formal and complete, do not
make them look sloppy with poor grammar, typos, etc.

Become involved in leadership positions within your department, graduate school,
or scientific societies

Find a hobby to do outside of your schoolwork

This may sound counterintuitive, but it seems that the most productive people are
also busy with other things.

Take trips now and again to get away, reflect, and refresh yourself

Don't take yourself or anyone else too seriously!