

## **Top-Ten Tips for Succeeding in Graduate School**

Submitted by graduate students in the Odum School of Ecology. When multiple students made similar or overlapping suggestions, they were combined and edited to minimize redundancy.

- 1) Seek the advice and support of your peers. The transition into graduate school can seem overwhelming, but building rapport within and outside of your cohort can help you adjust socially, professionally, and academically.
- 2) Challenge your mindset of independence. Most “big picture” research endeavors are collaborative, so embrace the opportunity to learn and study across disciplines.
- 3) Prepare and follow a (highly) organized schedule of your classes, research, and teaching obligations. A consistent schedule can be very helpful in completing multiple responsibilities while ensuring work-life balance. Make sure that you schedule time to include a hobby that is unrelated to graduate school.
- 4) Solicit feedback on your ideas early and often. It's tempting to rely exclusively on your advisor's feedback in the beginning stages, but your work will be enriched by many perspectives.
- 5) Volunteering for your discipline's scientific society is a great way to make professional connections. One-off networking events will only get you so far. Sustained engagement is necessary to develop lasting connections, and society service can help you develop those connections naturally.
- 6) Look for opportunities to do internships. They provide clarity on your career goals and motivation for finishing your degree. Internships provide excellent contacts beyond academia.
- 7) Prioritize relationship building and invest in social capital. These include relationships with your mentor, your committee members, and other graduate students. Having strong connections with peers is particularly important for when you need help with field work, lab work, or feedback on your writing. Likewise, investing in others when they are in need will come back around for you.
- 8) Embrace opportunities provided by the School, like travel support for conferences, classes in other departments, weekly seminars, and discussion groups. The more you engage with what's on offer, the more rewarding your experience will be.
- 9) Find a trusted confidant outside of your lab, peer group, and department. This might be a mentor in another unit, a member of a spiritual organization, or a therapist. Be proactive about supporting your mental health by finding someone who will listen to your concerns and who can offer objective advice and support.
- 10) Seek as many opportunities as you can to write grants. Start early and continue writing and submitting grants throughout your program. In addition to financial support, writing grants is great practice for writing papers, reports, and project plans both within and beyond academia.