

NAVIGATING GRADUATE SCHOOL: ACADEMIC SUCCESS STRATEGIES FOR FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

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What is the Hidden Curriculum?

- In the grad school context, it's things you are expected to know but are never explicitly taught
 - How to find an advisor or choose a grad program
 - How to get funding and what are the different types of funding sources available
 - What expectations you should have for your advisor
 - How to submit a journal article
 - How to pick a dissertation committee

Talk to your advisor

- It is important to set shared expectations (more details in handout).
 - How will you communicate with each other (slack, email, google chat) and how quickly are you expected to get back to each other?
 - How often will you meet and for how long; do you have to attend other meetings (e.g., lab meetings)?
 - What will be your roles on established projects, or will you create your own project ?
 - What papers will you be included on?
 - How will you receive feedback and how quickly can you expect it?
 - What funding and professional development (e.g., conferences) opportunities are available?
 - What goals do you have for your time in grad school and what skills do you want to develop?

Ask for help

- If you have questions about a process, application, writing document, ask others who have gone through it
 - Other grad students, advisor, collaborators, writing center, twitter
- Writing a new document (fellowship essay, CV, prospectus, dissertation etc.)? Ask for examples.
 - Grad students in your program will be happy to share their previous documents with you
 - Some departments have a repository of examples
 - GWC has samples of successful extramural fellowship essays

Stay organized

- Use a Calendar (google calendar can integrate with your UCLA email)
 - Useful for tracking deadlines for classes, research projects, writing goals, applications, and program requirements
 - Can help you build in writing time to your schedule
- Find ways to keep track of your assignments/projects/work
 - To-do lists (on paper or online, e.g., <https://todoist.com/>)
 - Note/project organizers (OneNote, <https://trello.com/home> , <https://www.notion.so/product>)
 - Microsoft Suite is free to UCLA students:
<https://it.ucla.edu/news/microsoft-office-proplus>
 - Citation Trackers (<https://www.zotero.org/> , <https://mendeley.com>)
 - Document Management System with **folders** (google drive, dropbox, box)

Write

- Create scheduled times to write and protect that writing time to create a habit
 - Writing can be a lot of different things!
 - Looking up articles to read for a paper
 - Making outlines to organize your ideas
 - Creating a CV or other job materials
 - Writing down article summaries or taking notes on readings
 - Completing an IRB or formatting citations
- Set achievable writing goals
 - Goals can be a set time (30 min per day), words (250 words per day), or sections (method section)
 - Find a goal type that works for you and don't be afraid to change something that no longer works

Publish*

- Ask your advisor questions about the publishing process
 - What journals do they typically submit to?
 - Look up author guidelines for these journals
 - How do they determine authorship?
 - How quickly can you expect feedback on drafts you send them?
 - This can also be addressed in a conversation about setting expectations (see Developing Shared Expectations handout)
- Look up recently published articles from target journals and analyze their structure
 - Can use a backwards outline (see handout)
- You will get rejected A LOT (and that is ok)
 - Your advisor should help you respond to reviewers and find other journals to submit to

* Publications needed will depend on your field and/or target career

Network

- Most common place to network is at conferences
 - Ask grad students for advice on what to wear (the level of how formal might change depending on the size of the conference)
 - Go to people's talks and ask questions or introduce yourself after the talk to start forming connections
 - Present in any way you can (poster, round table, symposium) and talk to people about your work
 - If the conference offers a mentoring opportunity or diversity funding (usually accompanied by a mentor match) apply!
- Conferences are expensive
 - Ask your advisor if they have funding to pay for your registration or hotel
 - Use division of graduate education (grad division) and department funding
 - Check out the conference website for other funding opportunities
 - Ask if you can volunteer at the conference (they often waive the registration cost)

Requirements

- Keep track of what requirements you need to meet and which ones you've completed already
- If you are in a PhD program, you usually will have requirements to get your Masters
- Some departments will require a comprehensive or qualifying exam (this will vary greatly)
- Your final project will likely be a Master's thesis/capstone or a doctoral dissertation
 - Choose a topic/area of research that can be done in the timeframe you need to finish (i.e., keep it feasible)
 - Your dissertation doesn't have to be groundbreaking or completely novel
 - The best dissertation is a finished dissertation

Track your experience

- Most grad students have a CV although a resume might be common in some fields
 - Start on your CV/resume early and update it at least once per quarter (if not more)
 - Keep track of every presentation you give
 - Conference presentations
 - Invited class or brown bag presentations
 - Maintain a list of all the undergrads you have mentored (and try to keep track of their achievements: going to grad school, completing an honors thesis etc.)
 - Obtain CV/resume examples from other grad students in your program and visit the writing/career center for feedback on your document
- If you are interested in non-academic jobs, create both a CV and a resume

Funding

- There are Internal and External funding opportunities
 - <https://grad.ucla.edu/funding/#/>
- Common internal fellowship awards
 - GSRM (Graduate Summer Research Mentorship)
 - GRM (Graduate Research Mentorship)
 - DYF (Dissertation Year Fellowship)
- Common external awards
 - NSF GRFP, NIH F31, Ford Foundation
- Ask grad students for examples of their statements & attend writing center workshops
- Generally, try to write your statements using jargon-free language (readers are not always experts) and motivate the importance of your project
- Ask your letter writers for recommendations early

Teaching

- Teaching might be required for your department, or it might be optional if you have other funding sources
- It's easy to procrastinate on your own work because of teaching duties (productive procrastination), try to manage your time to balance both teaching and research
- Your evaluations will be inaccurate (and sometimes rude/mean). Remember you will get to decide what to share when you apply to jobs
- Keep track of all the classes you are a TA for and some examples of activities you led (useful for your teaching statement later)
- You might want to look for opportunities to teach your own course (ask within your department or apply to local Cal States or community colleges)

Service

- You need a few service roles for funding applications and later in your job search
- Types of service
 - National (e.g., organizing for a conference; peer-reviewing for a journal)
 - Institutional (e.g., serving on a GSA committee; serving on campus-wide search committee)
 - Departmental (e.g., serving on search committee; serving as leadership in departmental student org)

Self-Care

- Make sure you are eating, sleeping, and drinking water regularly
- Find activities outside of grad school such as club sports, spiritual groups, fitness classes, hobby groups, grad division events
- Support your mental health by taking advantage of CAPS, practicing mindfulness/meditation, group therapy
 - <https://counseling.ucla.edu/services/our-services>
 - <https://counseling.ucla.edu/resources/community-and-online-therapeutic-resources>
- Be aware of imposter syndrome... You deserve to be here!
- Build your community

What about after Grad School?

- Academic options (Postdocs/Tenure Track positions)
 - Find examples of teaching, research, and diversity statements; visit the grad writing center and career center as you write drafts
 - Graduate career resources and career preparation toolkit:
<https://career.ucla.edu/grad>
- Non-Academic options (user research, research scientist, positions in tech, etc.)
 - Look for internships throughout grad school (Meta, Google, research companies, startups...)
 - <https://www.beyondtheivorytower.com/>
 - Workshops that focus on communicating outside of Academia

How to continue seeking advice

- Academic Twitter
- Grad students in your program, outside your department, and from other programs
- Creating collaborations with other mentors/advisors
- Conference mentoring programs
- National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity
 - <https://www.facultydiversity.org/>
 - 5-year membership paid for by UCLA, organize productivity related workshops, writing buddies, & other resources

NCFDD

Mon, Oct 17, 2022	Fall 2022 14-Day Writing Challenge	14-Day Writing Challenge	View Details
Wed, Aug 17, 2022 2:00pm - 3:00pm ET	Week 4: Making the Case: Preparing Your Dossier for Promotion to Full Professor	Multi-Week Course	View Details
	 Vicki Baker, PhD, Mangala Subramaniam, PhD, Joni Dunlap, PhD & Crystal Chambers, PhD		
Tue, Aug 23, 2022 2:00pm - 3:00pm ET	Equitable, Accessible, and Inclusive Teaching Practices	Guest Webinar	View Details
	 Saili Kulkarni, PhD		
Tue, Aug 30, 2022 2:00pm - 3:00pm ET	NCFDD Discussion Panel: "What I Wished I Would Have Known as a New Full-Time Faculty Member"	Guest Webinar	View Details
	 Teresa Gonzales, PhD, Tilicia L. Mayo-Gamble & Onawa LaBelle, PhD		

Recommended Readings

- **A Field Guide to Grad School: Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum** by Dr. Jessica McCrory Calarco
- **The Writing Workshop: Write More, Write Better, Be Happier in Academia** by Dr. Barbara Sarnecka
 - Full text: <https://osf.io/n8pc3/>
- **Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks** by Dr. Wendy Laura Belcher
- **Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting, Revising, and Finishing Your Doctoral Thesis** by Dr. Joan Bolker

For more help...

- Schedule a writing appointment (in person or online)
 - <https://gwc.gsrc.ucla.edu/Appointments>
- Join us in an online writing group (check if available)
 - <https://gwc.gsrc.ucla.edu/Writing-Groups>
- Check out our workshop schedule
 - <https://gwc.gsrc.ucla.edu/Workshops>

<https://gwc.gsrc.ucla.edu/>

Workshop Handouts: <https://tinyurl.com/NavGradSchool2023>