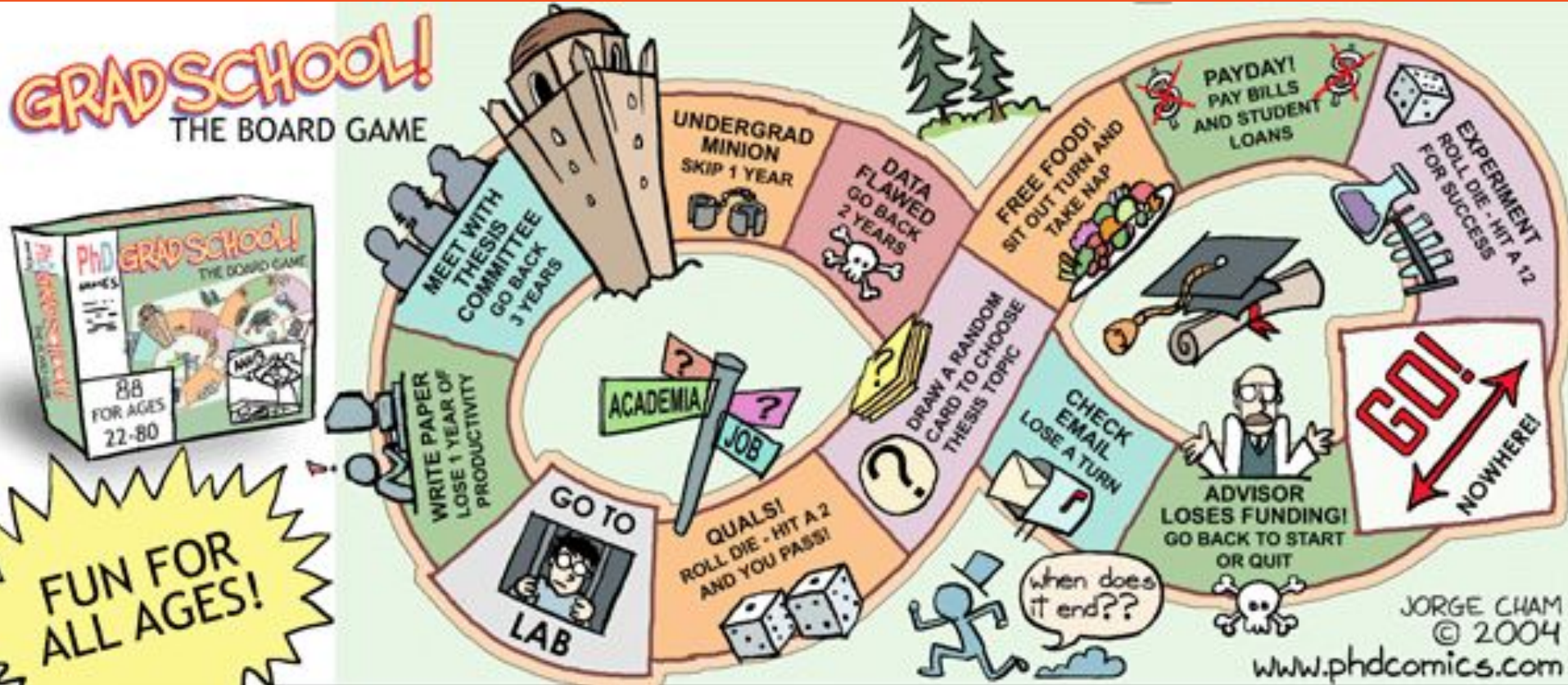


LIFE AS A RESEARCH GRADUATE STUDENT: THRIVING IN GRAD SCHOOL

Aimee M. Surprenant, PhD
Dean of the Graduate School
Virginia Tech

Grad School Success



Grad School Success

- Make a plan
- Be flexible and adventurous
- Communicate
- Take advantage of resources

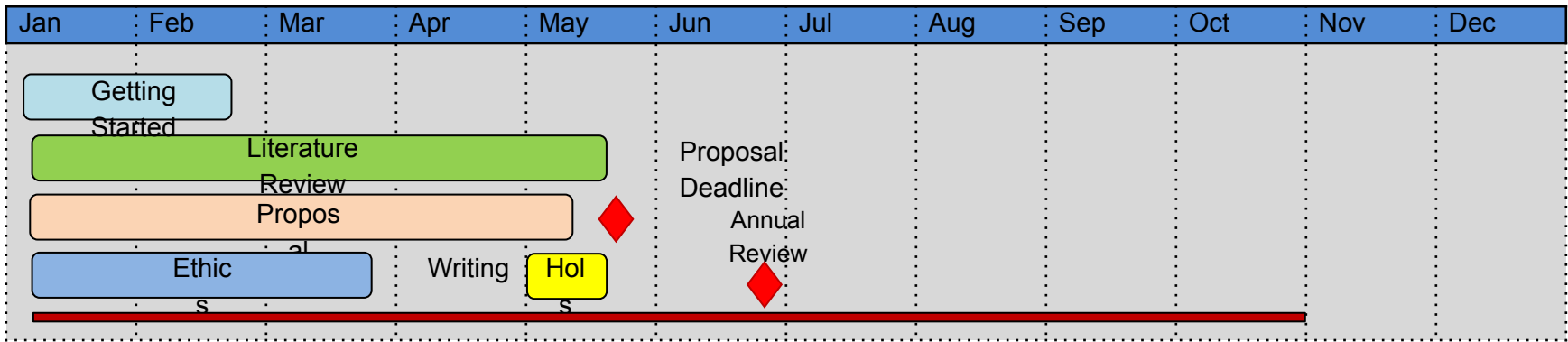


Source: <http://highperformanceadvocates.com/great-projects-start-with-great-plan/>

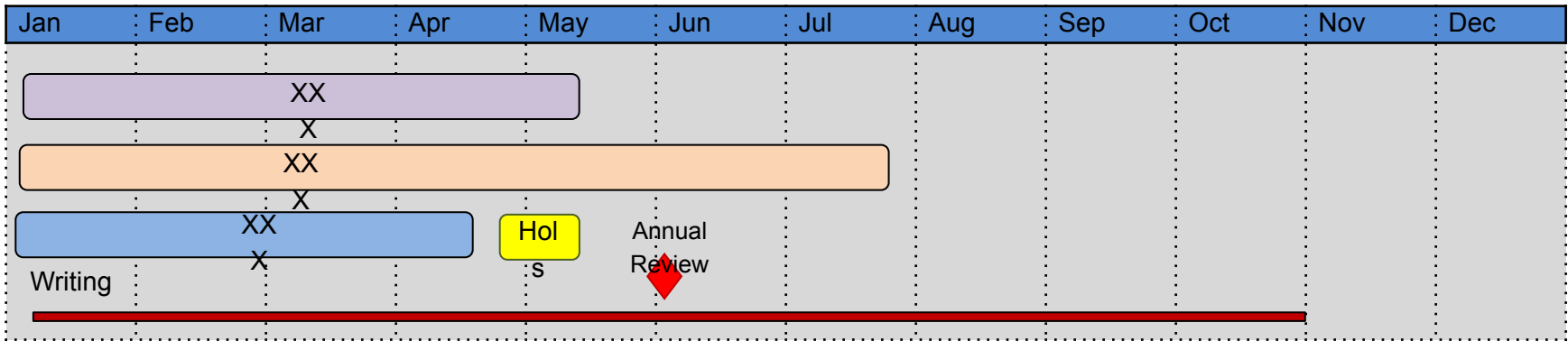
Make a plan



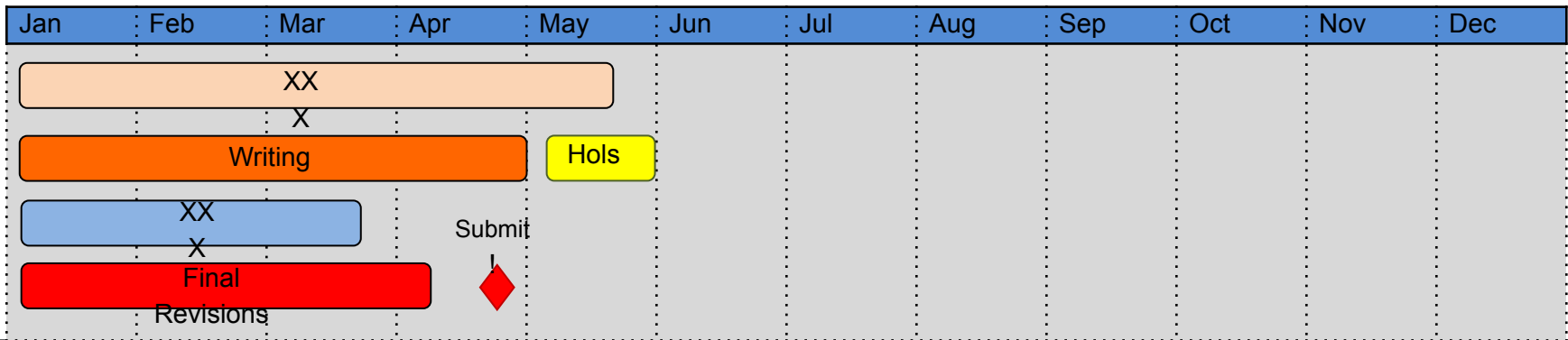
Year 1



Year 2



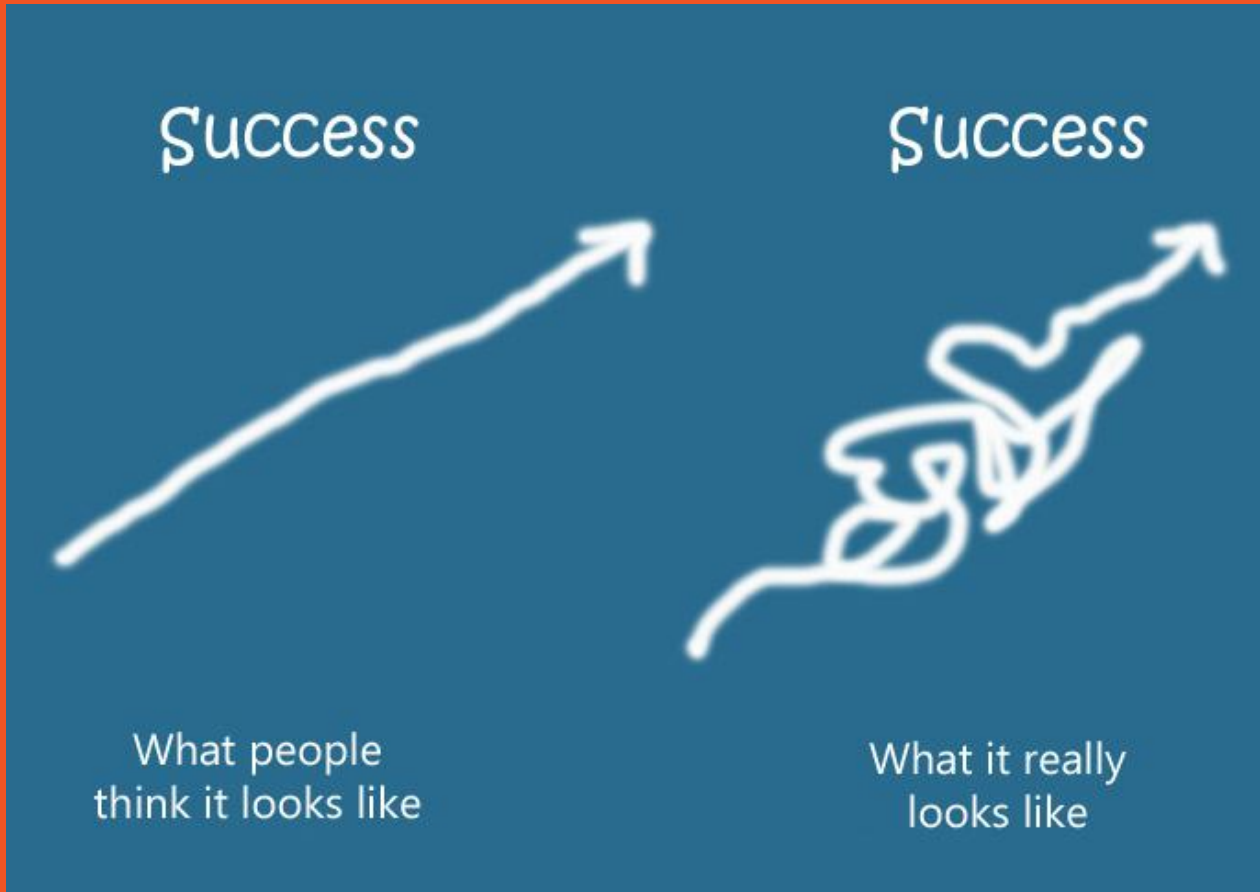
Year 3



Create an Individual Development Plan

- <https://myidp.sciencecareers.org>
- <http://www.imaginephd.com>
- <https://research-tools.mun.ca/rpm/process/plan-project-execution/plan-data-management/>

Be Flexible



Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/motivational-series-how-turn-failure-success-dorian-tang>

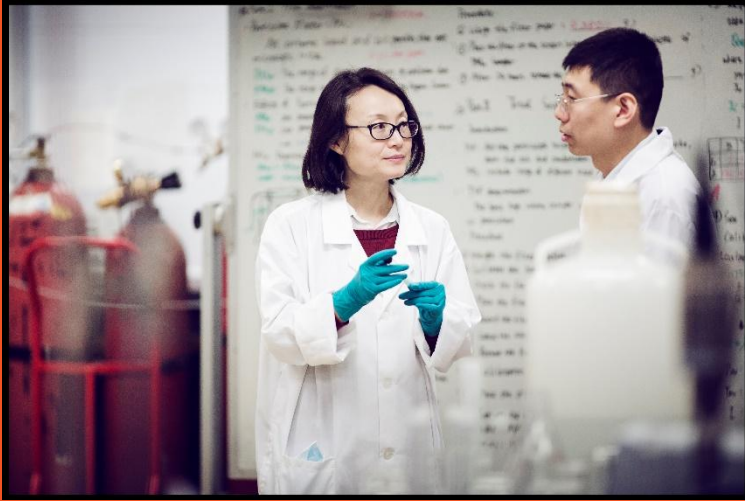
Be Adventurous



Source: <http://www.333photo.com/new-prints-online/>

Communicate





□ With your supervisor

The role of supervisors and supervisory committees, as well as the relationship between students and their supervisors, are key components affecting the success of research-stream students in their programs.



Communicating with your supervisor

1. Within a month of arrival on campus schedule a first meeting with your academic advisor to introduce yourself, ask questions about the program, and get a feel for program and departmental expectations.
2. Initiate an 'expectations conversation' with your advisor—consider a mentoring agreement.
3. Take notes and share them after each meeting.
4. When in doubt – ask for help! This is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Communicating with your supervisor

1. Meet regularly
2. Discuss expectations, roles and responsibilities
3. Become familiar with all appropriate deadline dates and regulations
4. Discuss research/scholarship ideas and ask for guidance
5. Keep apprised of professional development opportunities (weekly email).
6. Discuss and uphold standards of academic integrity
7. Clarify issues of intellectual property, data management, and authorship

What can I expect from a supervisor?

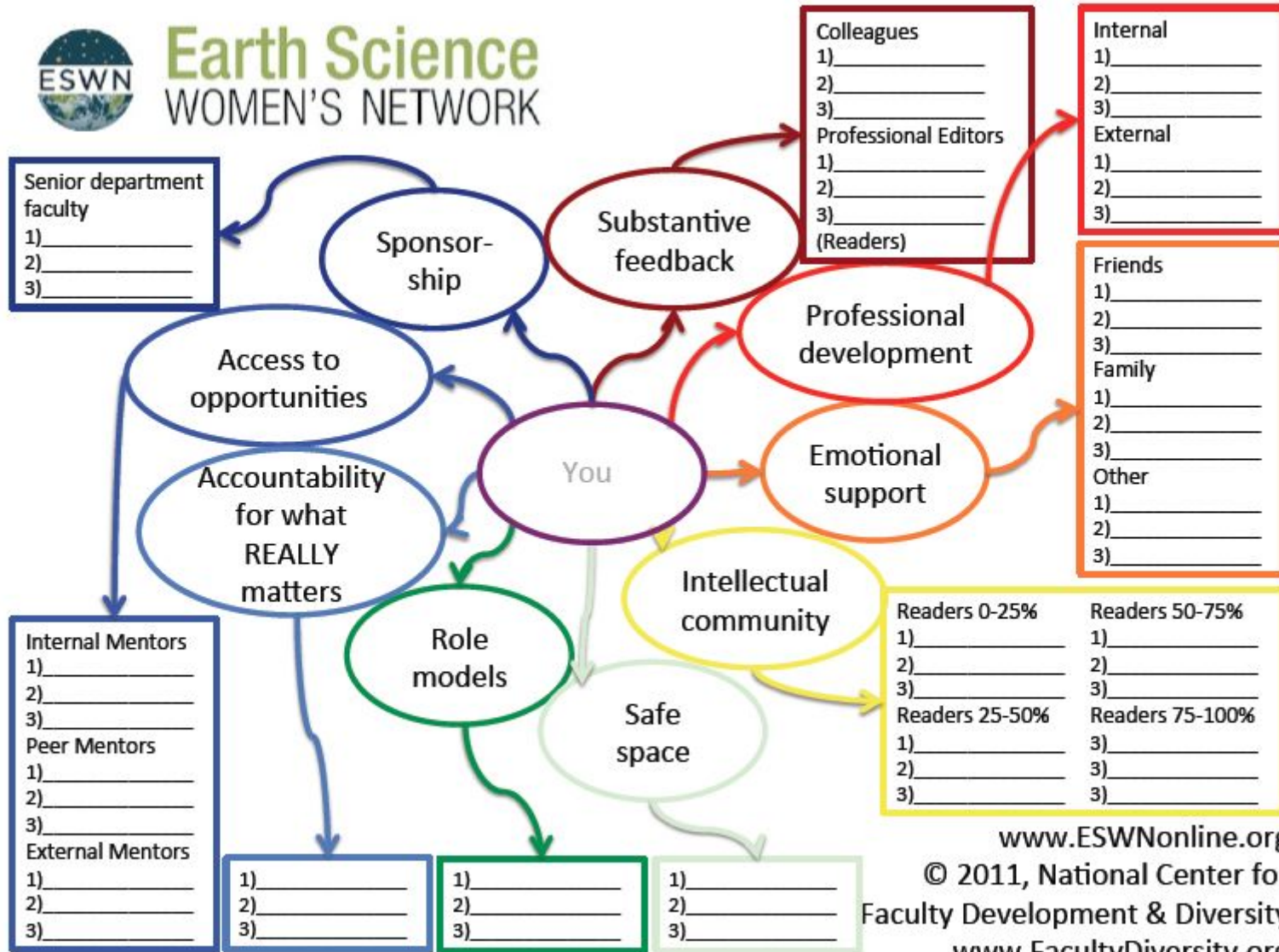
1. Expertise in your subject area
2. Regular supervisory meetings
3. Feedback on work in progress
4. Advice and support
5. Mediation and representation
6. Planning your project and setting milestones

What can I NOT expect from a supervisor?

1. Unlimited attention
2. To tell you what to do
3. To be your best friend
4. To be superhuman
5. To provide professional development outside of the discipline



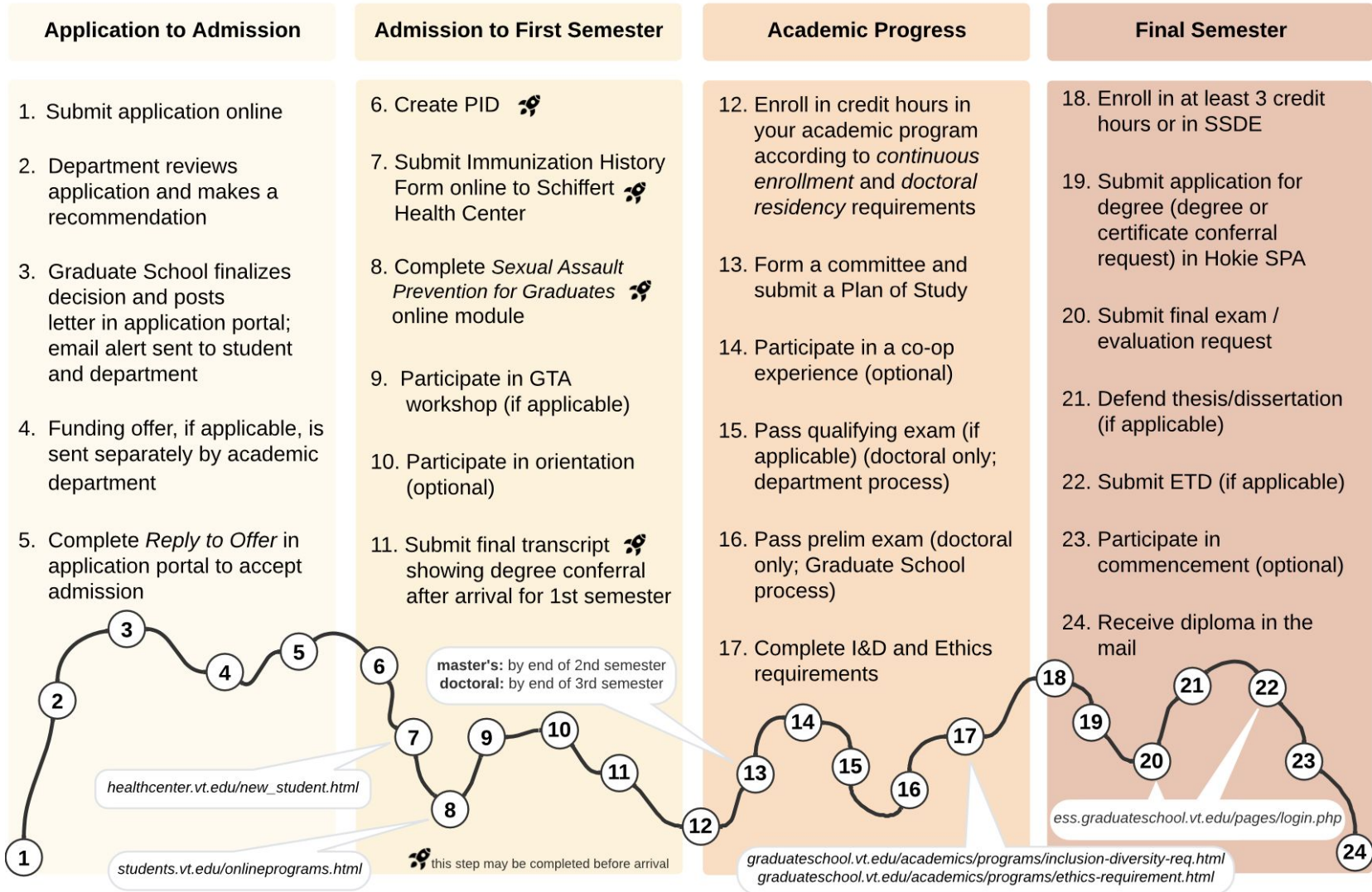
Earth Science WOMEN'S NETWORK



www.ESWNOnline.org

© 2011, National Center for
Faculty Development & Diversity
www.FacultyDiversity.org

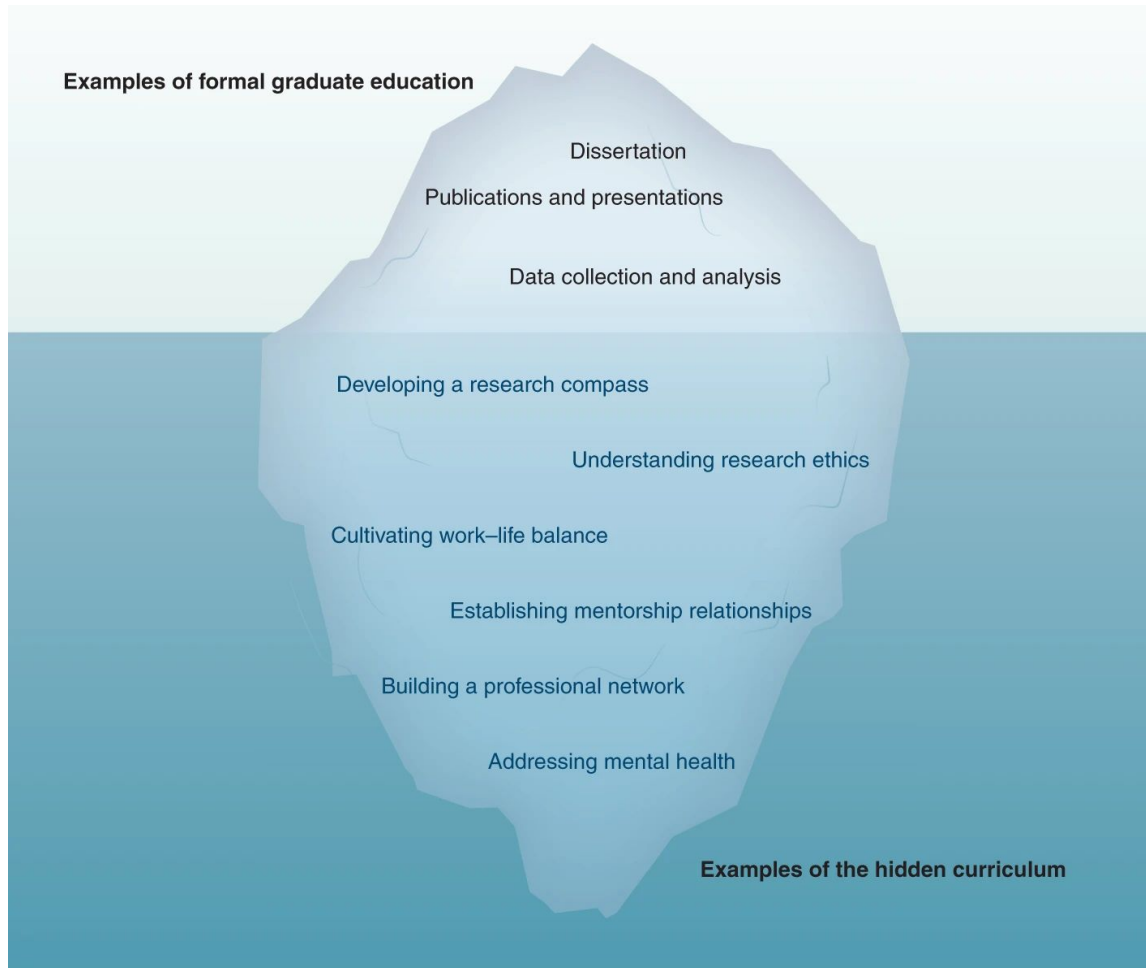
Graduate Student Academic Journey Map



Other advice

1. Eat right
2. Get proper sleep
3. Create community and support networks
4. Maintain mental and physical health

The hidden curriculum



Pensky, J., Richardson, C., Serrano, A. *et al.* Disrupt and demystify the unwritten rules of graduate school. *Nat. Geosci.* **14**, 538–539 (2021).
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41561-021-00799-w>

There's a hidden curriculum in the academic, social, cultural, and funding environment of the university/ department/ field/ lab/ group/ dyad

EXAMPLES OF THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

- Finding mentors
- Building social networks and community
- Time management
- Understanding academic and disciplinary jargon
- Publishing and presenting
- Navigating the job market
- Knowing departmental expectations and milestones

Academic hidden curricula

You must find out:

- 1.** the conventions of the discipline and
- 2.** the practices of the department.

Source: Margolis, E. (2001). *The Hidden Curriculum in Higher Education* (1st ed.). Routledge.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203901854>

Academic questions to ask

- Who holds the knowledge? Who does the paperwork and keeps track of deadlines/requirements?
 - Get to know your graduate coordinator.
 - Find the handbook and read it!
- What are the milestones and when should you complete them?
- What is the currency (publications, grades, research, teaching, mentoring, conferences)? How is “excellence” measured?
- What is expected in terms of contributing to the lab/team/relationships? What to say yes or no to?

Social/cultural questions to ask

- What kind of formal and informal support networks exist in the department, the graduate school, and the university?
- Posture, dress, accent, word choices, eating, drinking, etc.
- Nonverbals.
- Expectations around self-advocacy, i.e., individual development plans, setting your own goals, how much to speak up.
- Multiple mentors, lines of research/scholarship, encouraged, discouraged, neutral?

Funding questions to ask

- Where is my funding coming from?
- What is the plan for funding for the entirety of my program?
- Is there summer funding?
- Which fellowships should I be applying for?
- Is there support for me to attend conferences?

Communicate

- **With the broader community.... look around!**



- Peers
- Graduate School
- Communities in and beyond campus
- Take advantage of opportunities!

Academic Chatter Retweeted



Silvia Naydenova @SilviaNaydenov1 · 12m

How to Find, Apply for, and Win a Fellowship During Your PhD or Postdoc
pfforphds.com/fellowship-app... @AcademicChatter #AcademicTwitter



Inside Higher Ed ✓

@insidehighered

8 motivational tips if you need additional encouragement to write your dissertation in these trying times (opinion)



Advice for how to get (and stay) motivated to write your dissertation

Elisa Modolo offers some help if you need additional encouragement to write your dissertation in these trying times.

insidehighered.com



Thread



Tanentzapf Lab @TanentzapfLab · Aug 29

As a bright bright eyed batch of graduate students are set to start, here are the top 11 pieces of advice NO ONE gave me when i started grad school that I wished they did: 1. ASK LOTS OF QUESTIONS. No one will think any less of you, I've never regretted asking too many questions.

47

1.7K

3.7K



You Retweeted



Tanentzapf Lab
@TanentzapfLab

2. Be friendly, grateful, courteous, professional w/ the support stuff. The heart of science is the janitorial staff, secretaries, admin staff, stores & the workshop, building ops, media cooks, bldg. security. I cannot begin to tell you how many times they bailed me out of jams.

2:50 PM · Aug 29, 2020 · Twitter Web App

43 Retweets

12 Quote Tweets

882 Likes



Tanentzapf Lab @TanentzapfLab · Aug 29

Replying to @TanentzapfLab

3. It's totally OK to not know things. You will meet many people who will know more stuff than you, this shouldn't make you feel intimidated, realise the opportunity! they can teach you new things. You WANT to be in an environment where people know things you don't.

2

36

635



Tanentzapf Lab @TanentzapfLab · Aug 29

4. Be brave & throw yourself into learning new techniques & tools. As the cliched saying goes "Choose to do things not because they are easy, but because they are hard". If you think "I'm terrible at this particular technique" you will never get better at it if you don't practice

1

27

502



Tanentzapf Lab @TanentzapfLab · Aug 29

5. Figure out when to quit things & learn when to let go, w/ your supervisor set general timelines & if things are not working by a certain point decide on alternative options. Time passes remarkably fast in grad school, at a blink of an eye you've spent 4 yrs on a failed project

4

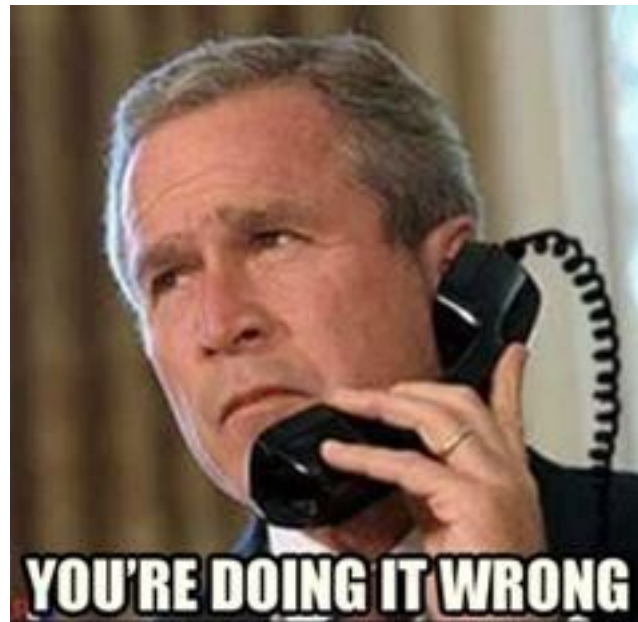
35

506



Some specific advice

- Treat graduate school like a job
- If you don't have anything to do...



Remember that
you are not
expected to face
the challenges of
graduate school
alone.



Source: <http://berkeleysciencereview.com/article/mind-grad-school/>



Source: <https://andydunnblog.com/2014/07/01/awesomeness-experiemnt-takes-off/>



Other Resources

- <https://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/expectations/expectations-for-graduate-education-overview.html>
- <https://lib.vt.edu/find-borrow/grad-student.html>
- <https://www.training.nih.gov/wellbeing/>
- <https://www.ithinkwell.com.au/resources>
- <https://gradresources.org>
- <http://www.phd2published.com>
- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IFbHIN5OOAO0qz-VfCU9nEx4-x6CfArj1-d8ylA2vsU/edit>
- <https://first-gen-guide.com/resources/>
- <https://pfforphds.com/blog/>
- <https://www.mindtools.com/aqqm73t/mentoring-agreements-and-coaching-plans>



***Graduate
School
grads@vt.edu***

Address
street number,
city, state