

Graduate Connections



University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Navigating Graduate School

Advice and strategies to help you succeed in Graduate School at UNL

GRADUATE SCHOOL: WHY ARE YOU HERE?

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD this more than once as you prepared for graduate school: It's a job! But it's not that simple. Graduate school is more than a job. In graduate school you learn to be a professional in your field. You extend your professional understanding of your discipline through independent reading and study, and you learn to communicate that understanding through the development of important teaching and research skills. In short, you learn to think and act like a physicist or a sociologist or an economist.

So it's more than a job. It's your future. And because it's your future, you need to be clear about why you're here, what you want to achieve and your plan for achieving your goals.

Why Are You Here?

If you're a degree-seeking student in graduate school, your objective is either a master's or a doctoral degree. Here's a brief explanation of the differences, based on information from Kaplan Test Prep (2001) available at [All About Grad School.com](http://AllAboutGradSchool.com).

Master's Programs: Two Tracks. Master's programs are generally two years long and focus either on research and scholarship (Master of Arts / Science) or on professional training that qualifies the degree holder to enter or advance in a field such as architecture or education. If you're following the first path, you'll be required to write a 50- to 150-page thesis demonstrating your grasp of scholarship and research in your field before you can graduate. If you're on the applied track, you won't need to write a thesis, but you will be expected to take additional coursework and quite possibly complete an internship or a practicum.

Doctoral Studies. A doctoral program is an entirely different matter. If you've been admitted to a doctoral program, you

should expect to become a scholar “capable of independent research that will add new and significant knowledge” to your field. As Lee Schulman (2008) explains, the Ph.D. signals that “its recipient is now ready, eligible, and indeed obligated, to make the most dramatic shift in roles: from student to teacher, from apprentice to master, from novice or intern to independent scholar and leader. The Ph.D. marks its holder as one charged to serve as a steward of the discipline and profession” (p. x).

So what does it take to be a steward of the discipline? Chris Golde (2006) identifies four key strategies:

- Ask interesting and important questions, formulate appropriate strategies for investigating these questions, conduct investigations with a high degree of competence, analyze and evaluate the results of the investigations and communicate the results to others to advance the field.
- Develop an understanding of the history and fundamental ideas of the discipline while learning how to determine which ideas are worth keeping and which have outlived their usefulness.
- Represent and communicate ideas effectively, through teaching in the broadest sense of the word.
- Appreciate other disciplines and the differences between disciplinary views of the world, and learn how to appreciate and communicate across traditional boundaries.

During your first two or three years in a doctoral program you'll focus on coursework, delving deep into the ideas of your discipline. Once you complete your coursework, you'll take comprehensive exams to demonstrate a wide-ranging understanding of your chosen field. Then you'll move on to “candidacy” and begin independent research that will culminate in your doctoral dissertation. At some point during your doctoral study, you may be assigned to teach an undergraduate course, lead a lab or mentor undergraduate students. Through these processes and experiences you'll become an independent scholar and a steward of your discipline.

Whether you're a master's or doctoral student, graduate study is serious, hard work. You can expect more reading than you were assigned in undergraduate studies. You'll also write more. You'll be expected to maintain at least a B average and make progress toward your degree objective at a satisfactory rate.

Graduate study also is exciting and challenging. If you don't believe us, talk to a master's student who has just completed her second semester of study. Talk to advanced doctoral students. If you listen closely, you'll hear them describe with passion how rewarding it is to discover new ideas, how graduate school has changed them, and how exciting it is to share their subject knowledge with undergraduates.

Where Are You Going?

To paraphrase Yogi Berra, if you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you get there?

How's Your Connection?

You can read **Graduate Connections** on the Office of Graduate Studies Web page, receive notification of the latest issue from your department, or have issues delivered directly to you via e-mail. To subscribe, send a message to gsapd2@unl.edu with [subscribe GC] in the subject line and your name and e-mail address in the body of the message.

We invite your feedback and comments about **Graduate Connections**. Can you use the kinds of information you find in this issue? What else can we include to help you make the right connections in the course of your graduate career? Are you engaged in research or other scholarly activity that you want to share with readers of **Graduate Connections**?

Please share your thoughts with us so we can bring you a relevant, lively and useful quarterly publication. Send e-mail to gsapd2@unl.edu.

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This wisdom applies to graduate school, too. What are your professional goals? Will you pursue a tenure-track position at a large Research I institution? If so, you'll need to focus on developing your research skills and building a research agenda. If teaching at either a liberal arts college or a community college is for you, then you'll want to build your classroom teaching skills. Perhaps you're seeking a career in government, business, or industry.

Whichever path you wish to follow, you'll need to develop the knowledge, skills and abilities that will make you a competent and confident professional. If you haven't explored the various employment options available to graduates in your field, get started now. Talk to your faculty adviser, do some Internet and library research or visit with a career adviser. Once you've identified some possible career paths, you'll be ready to develop the major skills needed to be a successful professional.

How Are You Going to Get There?

Alexes Harris (2009) notes that you need a "solid game plan" for getting through graduate school: understand the process, learn what is expected of you, develop a plan of study and, finally, map out a professional development plan.

Understand the process. Graduate school is very different from undergraduate studies. Most of what you learn in grad school will come not from classes, but from other activities. You'll work closely with a faculty member on his or her research, learn to design research projects, develop hypotheses, gather and analyze data, interpret results, and share your knowledge at professional conferences. The goal is to move from being a student to becoming a scholar.

Graduate study is a process; you'll need to achieve milestones and meet requirements while making progress toward the degree. Milestones include establishing a supervisory committee, completing qualifying exams and filing required paperwork.

Learn what is expected of you. Consult UNL's online [Graduate Studies Bulletin](#) to familiarize yourself with policies for course requirements, preliminary and qualifying exams and admission to candidacy. Your department also may have specific expectations, requirements and deadlines regarding academic performance, progress toward degree completion, teaching and/or research

assistantships, graduate examinations, etc. These may be spelled out in a detailed student handbook.

Develop a plan of study. If you've been admitted to a master's degree program, you'll eventually be required to complete a [Memorandum of Courses](#). Doctoral students will complete a [Program of Study](#). The study plan serves as a contract between you and your graduate committee and the graduate dean and spells out requirements for completion of your degree. Both forms are available online. Download the appropriate form and begin thinking now about how you want to build your graduate program. It's never too early to start planning.

Write an individualized professional development plan. An IPDP outlines your career goals and the steps you need to meet them. Think of it as a road map or action plan. What skills, knowledge or abilities do you need to teach effectively? To conduct research responsibly? To serve your campus, professional organization or community? For more information on developing an individualized professional development plan, see the [February 2009 issue of Graduate Connections](#).

How Will You Know When You're "There"?

Your ultimate goal, of course, is to graduate. When you receive your degree, you'll know you're "there." You'll be prepared to think and act like a member of your academic discipline or profession, conduct innovative research, teach effectively, work collaboratively with diverse groups and behave ethically.

If you understand from the start why you're here, where you want to go and what you need to get there, you'll be able to tailor a graduate degree that meets your specific abilities and career goal.

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TAKING THE “RESENT” OUT OF PRESENTATION

GRADUATE STUDENTS need to be able to present their material at times or give talks as needed. Here are a few tips to help you overcome a dislike of public presentation, allay fears about presenting and develop the confidence to present without resentment.

Preparation

Being well prepared is one of the best ways to be sure you give a good presentation. When you are well prepared, you minimize the chance of getting mixed up and forgetting important points. You will feel more relaxed and sure of yourself because you have everything ready to go. Confidence in yourself and your material will show through while you are presenting.

The Material

You need to know exactly what you are going to talk about. Instead of memorizing what you are going to say, clearly outline your information and facts. Reading the material over a few times before the presentation will help keep the information fresh in your mind.

Asking the audience a few questions during the presentation helps make the information you are giving more memorable to them. Be ready with answers to potential questions from your listeners.

Know Your Audience

Find out what type of people you will be speaking to. You can adjust the tone of your speech to suit the audience accordingly. If you are presenting to some important people (like the dean or your department chairperson) or at an important event, you might have higher anxiety, but if you are well prepared for that audience, you will be able to speak with confidence and greater ease.

Conditions

If possible, you should check out the room you will be presenting in to see where people will be sitting and where you will be standing while talking. Checking out the microphone and any multimedia to be used will relax you and boost your confidence when it's your turn to talk.

Plan what you are going to wear. Make sure it will be comfortable and that you feel it looks nice on you.

Practice

You should practice your speech before you give it, out loud and in front of a mirror, not only to help you concentrate, but also to give you an idea of how you look when speaking. It might help to audio or videotape yourself so you can see if you need to change anything in your presentation and/or your presentation style.

Have a Backup

Be prepared if the multimedia you are planning to use fails somehow. You should never let your PowerPoint presentation substitute for your speaker notes, so even if the computer malfunctions or the projector lamp burns out, you will be able to continue delivering your talk from your prepared notes. If your visuals are critical to the presentation, you can make printouts of your slides and hand those out if the technology fails. (Even if it doesn't fail, you still can distribute the handouts at the end of the presentation as a useful take-away.) And you can always go “old school” by rendering your illustrations on the chalkboard or whiteboard.

Relax before Speaking

When you are introduced to come forward and speak, take three breaths before you even stand up. When you get to the front of the room, thank the person who introduced you and try to count to 10 before you begin. The audience will then get a chance to get ready to hear what you have to say.

Other Relaxation Tips to Try:

- *Practice deep breathing.* By breathing deeply your brain will get the oxygen it needs to help you breathe regularly and will help control a quivering voice, which can happen when breathing is irregular.
- *Drink water.* Nervousness can cause a dry mouth and make you tongue-tied. Have a glass of water handy and take sips occasionally.
- *Smile.* A smile is a natural relaxant that can send positive chemicals through your body.
- *Just before you start talking, pause, make eye contact with the audience and smile.* This is very relaxing and gives you time to adjust to being the center of attention.

- *Speak more slowly than you would in a conversation*, and leave longer pauses between sentences. This slower pace will keep you calm and make you easier to hear, especially if you are speaking in a large room.
- *Move around during your presentation*. This will expend some of your nervous energy.

Toastmasters

A good place to practice your speeches and to get helpful guidance in giving presentations is your local Toastmaster Club. Toastmasters is a well-run organization that helps millions of people hone their speaking skills and overcome any fears they

have in speaking. UNL has a Toastmasters chapter on [East Campus](#), and a group is currently in the process of establishing a chapter on City Campus. If you have any questions about this group, please contact Diane Sullivan at 472-6077.

Check the Toastmasters website to find another club in your area: <http://www.toastmasters.org/>

Sources:

<http://www.school-for-champions.com/speaking/fear.htm>

Dianna Podmoroff. Managing Presentation Nerves: Coping with the Fear Within.

<http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/PresentationNerv es.htm>

Good Practices in Graduate Education

Advice and strategies to strengthen ethics in graduate education

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY PLEDGE

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY is an important part of being a scholar, and at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, we are committed to the highest level of academic integrity among our faculty and students. This fall, we are asking graduate students to take this academic integrity pledge. Please remember this pledge as you conduct research, write papers and teach during your career as a scholar.

As a scholar at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and a member of the academic community, it is my responsibility to conduct the whole of my academic career with unwavering integrity.

I do this because I value integrity and because the entire scholarly enterprise is balanced on the assumption that we can trust one another.

Therefore, I pledge to act with academic integrity by:

- Identifying the source of the ideas or words or images that I borrow.
- Accurately and fully describing the methods and results of my research.
- Creating original work that is an honest representation of my own ideas and research.
- Protecting the rights of the participants in my studies.
- Dealing honestly with the content of my courses and fairly with the students in my care.

- Discussing academic integrity and clearly stating expectations of my students.
- Expecting the same level of honesty and integrity in myself that I expect of my students.
- Becoming familiar with types of plagiarism and accurately using my discipline's reference guidelines.
- Conducting the whole of my academic career with unwavering integrity.

When I have concerns about academic integrity, I will talk with a trusted faculty member and if necessary, use established procedures to address the issue.

Learn more about academic integrity at:
<http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/plagiarism.shtml>.

Teaching Tip

ASSESS AND EVALUATE are words closely enough related to be used in defining each other. However, there are differences in educational assessment and evaluation processes.

When **assessing** students, instructors gather, summarize, and interpret data to determine which strategies to implement to further enhance the learning experience. They assess students' readiness to learn, preferred learning styles, past experiences with content and barriers to learning.

Assessment sources may be both subjective (self-assessment checklist) and objective (pretest). Assessment may be structured (interview) or informal (questions during lecture). Through assessment, the instructor understands the cognitive, psychomotor and affective learning needs of the student in order to determine the next educational steps.

When **evaluating** students, instructors gather, summarize, and interpret data to determine the student's mastery of content and the effectiveness of the teaching strategies. They evaluate students' understanding of new concepts, ability to perform certain skills and the evolution of values.

As a formal process, evaluation occurs at preset time intervals throughout the course and curriculum. Evaluation criteria are set and agreed upon by all instructors before implementing educational activities. Students must know in advance when to expect evaluation and what criteria will be evaluated. Through evaluation the instructor determines the effectiveness of the educational activities. The process of evaluation provides the instructor with valuable information to guide feedback to the student.

The difference between assessment and evaluation lies within the intent of use. Choose **assessment** when you wish to determine educational strategies. Use **evaluation** when you want to understand your students' performance so you can shape knowledge, belief and behavior.

Source:

[Rea, Jean B. You Say E-e-ther and I Say Eye-ther: Clarifying Assessment and Evaluation](#)

Professional Development Network

Tips and strategies to give graduate students a leg up in launching a professional career

ASSESSING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT KNOWLEDGE

YOUR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS come from a variety of different backgrounds, regions, secondary school experiences and belief systems. These are just a few factors that contribute to the prior knowledge in your classroom. Research shows that outside of socioeconomic factors, prior knowledge is the most influential predictor of student learning (Ausubel, 1993; Angelo & Cross, 1993).

Prior knowledge isn't necessarily a bad thing. Students with a solid background understanding of your course material have the proper foundation for learning new knowledge in your class. But what about the students with misconceptions about the material in your course? How can you assess the effect prior knowledge has on your students?

Two techniques designed for gathering information on student knowledge include the background knowledge probe and the misconception /preconception check (Angelo & Cross, 1993). Using these tools can help you assess student knowledge and address misconceptions directly.

Background Knowledge Probe

The background knowledge probe helps you understand which concepts and terms your students understand. You can approach the background knowledge probe in several different ways. The probe can consist of open-ended questions, multiple choice questions, short answer questions or a combination of the three. Be sure to tell students the questions are to gauge what they know and won't be graded.

Create a short background knowledge probe before you start a new unit or introduce a new topic, and be careful about how you phrase questions. Unfamiliar vocabulary can result in inaccurate answers and obscure your results.

Misconception/Preconception Check

The misconception/preconception check is an anonymous survey designed to uncover prior knowledge that could get in the way of student learning.

Take time with other graduate student teaching assistants in your program or with your faculty adviser to brainstorm the most troublesome misconceptions related to your course material. Use your list to create a short questionnaire in multiple choice or short answer format for your students. Then think through how you'll respond to the different types of misconceptions. If you aren't prepared to address a

particular misconception, it's best not to ask that question. When you administer the misconception/ preconception check, let students know how you plan to address their feedback.

You can't simply tell students to start thinking in a different way. You also need to help them understand the inaccuracy of their previous thinking by dealing directly with their misconceptions. Both the background knowledge probe and the misconception/preconception check

are simple techniques that provide you with the information you need to help students understand why something they believe is incorrect – and lead them to a new way of thinking.

Sources

Ausbel, D.P. (1968). *Educational psychology: A cognitive view*. Troy, MO: Holt, Rinehart, Winston.

Angelo, T.A., & Cross, K.P. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques*, 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

FIVE MISTAKES TO AVOID WHEN WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER

IN MANY DISCIPLINES, publishing is an important part of being a graduate student. Students who go on to secure tenure track faculty positions find that publishing is a vital part of achieving tenure. However, the process behind writing a research paper is not natural to most of us (Hudelson & Perneger, 2004). Learning the rules and a few mistakes to avoid will go a long way when you're ready to publish your research. Here are five common impediments to getting published.

1. The research question is too vague, too broad or not specified. A clearly stated research question helps you organize the information that should be included in your paper. If your research addressed more than one question, write more than one paper. Think in terms of "optimally publishable units" rather than "least publishable units."

2. The structure of the paper is chaotic. It can be easy to unintentionally include methods in your results section or results in your discussion section. Take the time to clearly outline your research paper before you begin to write, keep in mind what each section needs to accomplish.

- Introduction - state your research question
- Methods - describe how you answered your research question
- Results - explain what you observed
- Discussion - discuss what you think your results mean

3. Limitations of the study are not acknowledged. Your discussion section tells readers what you think your results mean, both for moving your research forward and to indicate ways your research can be improved. Readers will want to learn more about your limitations, ways you can

improve your research and implications the limitations have on your research question. Including limitations shows a thorough evaluation of your methods and result.

4. The research question is not answered.

Because the discussion section allows for the most freedom, it also can be the most difficult section to write. Before you start this section, go back to your research question and think about how you want to answer it. Revisit your research question frequently while writing the discussion.

5. Grammar and use of language are poor. The Writing Center (<http://www.unl.edu/writing/>) provides free consultations for graduate students with graduate students who can help you at any point in your writing, especially when you're polishing and finalizing your research paper. Use resources such as *Elements of Style* by Strunk and White to become familiar with the proper use of grammar.

Books and articles about publishing research articles are available from a number of sources. Here are just a few.

Becker, H.S. (1986). *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis book or article*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Choi, K. (2002). *How to publish in top journals*, available at: <http://www.roie.org/howi.htm>.

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Source

Hudelson, P.M., & Perneger, T.V. (2004). Writing a research article for beginners. *Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 16, 191-192.

TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK

By Heath E. Harding and Courtney Quinn
Graduate Teaching Assistants in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication

Used by permission

IF TEAMS ARE STRUCTURED PROPERLY, most students end the semester liking them. Many report having made new friends. That is certainly not their feelings at the beginning of class when they find out they will be working in teams all semester long.

Here are some tips and strategies that we use to make teamwork – well – work! They are based on our research, our observations and student comments.

Same Teams for the Semester

Keeping teams together accomplishes a couple of things. Students get to know each other and this relationship results in better quality projects. Not to mention they are more likely to do their share of the project if they know the people they are working with. The better you know someone, the better you can work together. Work quality typically goes up as the semester progresses. If students move between groups or only do one project together, they often engage in, or put up with, poor behavior because they know it is only for a short time.

Team Decisions

Design projects should require a team decision before they divide up the work. Too often, projects are assigned so that the only team decision is who's doing which part. This structure only teaches them to divide and conquer, not how to make team decisions, which they will need later in life.

Example: What is the most important/appropriate/best use of... This requires them to process through the other options before making their choice.

Same Project

Every team should do the same project. When teams all do the same project they can evaluate the work of other teams. This makes the teams accountable to others in the class. Plus, teams can debate decisions when they arrive at different solutions. Teams will have to be able to present their solution and their reasoning.

Developmental Peer Evaluations

Give students multiple opportunities, typically after team projects, to review their teammates' contributions. An easy way to do this is to ask them to assign a percentage score (55%, 93%, etc.) to each team member and justify the score: what they contributed and how they can improve their teamwork. The first two reviews are developmental; they don't count as an official score. The evaluations help students develop new behavior before the final evaluation at the end of the semester, which does contribute to their grade.

Conversation Maps

These are great tools to help keep individual students accountable to the team learning. They come in a variety of formats. They typically have three sections. 1) a section for individual work that can be required prior to coming to class; 2) a section for students to record their peers' perspectives and thoughts; and 3) a section for a team decision. Any or all of these sections can be turned in and graded.

Teamwork Skills

Help the teams work better together. Most of our students got to college working alone. They don't come preloaded with teamwork skills. And if they do, it is probably because they have figured it out on their own. Sink or swim is a risky strategy at best, and a poor one if we are committed to preparing students to succeed after they graduate. Plus, it makes our graduates incredibly more employable if they are experts both in their field as well as in teamwork.

Help students get to know each other. They know they should, but often don't do it. Help them learn more than their favorite ice cream flavor. Have them share their strengths and weaknesses. It can also be helpful to have students share their expectations of team behavior or grade for the course. *Examples:* If you are going to meet at 2ish for a team project, what is the expected range? I work best when... I am anxious about working in a team because... Share the best experience working in a team and why.

Shared expectations. Help students get on the same page before they get down to business. Concept maps are an easy way to help students get on the same page visually. Have the teams submit a concept map of their project. It also helps them plan ahead and you get to see if they are in the ballpark for your expectations.

Harness difference. Multiple perspectives typically result in better products and solutions. This diversity of opinion can also create conflict. Help students understand that diverse perspectives can lead to a better grade. Give them tools to negotiate conflict. A good place to start is to help them identify conflicts with ideas and conflict with people.

Trust. Trust is critical to effective teamwork. Usually high achieving students don't trust that others will do the work it takes to get an A. Slackers trust that the high achievers will pick up the slack to keep from getting a poor grade. Trust is created from a combination of getting to know someone and follow-through. One strategy to

build trust is to help students with follow-through. Give students a contract matrix that has a column for name, task, check-in date and completion date. This provides the team structure and a concrete artifact for their peer evaluations. Also ask teams to turn in a self-review of their teamwork. Make their teamwork as transparent as possible to all involved. Sunlight is the best disinfectant.

Teaming is not effective for every situation. If you do decide to use teams in your course, we hope these ideas can make the experience more enjoyable for everyone involved.

Sources

Michaelsen, L., Knight, A.B., & Fink, D. (2004). Team-based learning: A transformative use of small group in college teaching. Stylus: Sterling VA.

Novak, J. D. & A. J. Cañas. The theory underlying concept maps and how to construct and use them. Technical Report IHMC: CmapTools 2006-01 Rev 01-2008, Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, 2008, available at: <http://cmap.ihmc.us/Publications/ResearchPapers/TheoryUnderlyingConceptMaps.pdf>

Team-Based Learning: <http://teambasedlearning.apsc.ubc.ca/>

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Fall Campuswide Workshops for
Graduate Teaching Assistants

Institute for International Teaching
Assistants

Preparing Future Faculty Program

Professional development workshops

Professional development courses

Teaching Documentation Program

Assistance gathering student feedback

Individual consultation on teaching,
careers, job searches

Advice on creating an academic career
portfolio

Funding Opportunities

A sampling of information on fellowships, scholarships, competitions and other funding prospects

NOTE: UNL's Office of Research and Economic Development sends out weekly announcements of funding opportunities, several of which relate to fellowships in a wide variety of fields of study. If you are interested in receiving these announcements, you can subscribe to the listserv by sending an e-mail to Nathan Meier at nmeier2@unl.edu. Funding announcements archives also are available at <http://research.unl.edu/sp1/oldfa.shtml>.

SPENCER FOUNDATION DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

THE SPENCER FOUNDATION will award approximately twenty \$25,000 fellowships to support individuals in any academic discipline or professional field whose dissertations show potential for bringing fresh and constructive perspectives to the history, theory, or practice of

formal or informal education anywhere in the world. Information about the next award cycle will be available in August for fellowships that can begin as early as June 2011.

<http://www.spencer.org/content.cfm/dissertation-fellowships-in-education-program>

AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION DISSERTATION GRANTS

AERA INVITES education policy- and practice-related dissertation proposals using [NCES](#), [NSF](#), and other national databases. Dissertation grants are available for advanced doctoral students. Applications are encouraged from a variety of disciplines, such as (but not limited to) education, sociology, economics, psychology, demography, statistics and psychometrics.

Deadlines: 9/1/2010, to be reviewed in October; 1/6/ 2011 to be reviewed in February; 3/16/2011 to be reviewed in April

Award amounts: up to \$20,000 for one-year projects.

www.aera.net/grantsprogram/res_training/diss_grants/DGFly.html

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF HISPANICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION OUTSTANDING DISSERTATIONS COMPETITION

THIS COMPETITION IS OPEN TO ANYONE WHO HAS completed a dissertation that focuses on Hispanics in higher education **or** to any Hispanic who has completed a dissertation in the social sciences between June 1, 2007 and Aug. 1, 2009. Dissertations are eligible if they are in domains related to the Educational Testing Services (ETS) corporate mission, including education, linguistics, psychology, statistics, testing, and so forth.

Dissertations in the humanities, sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics are **not** eligible.

Deadline: 09/7/10

Award amounts: \$5,000, \$2,000, and \$1,000

www.aahhe.org/OutstandingDissertationsCompetition2008.aspx

EWING MARION KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

THE KAUFFMAN DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM is an annual competitive program that awards up to fifteen Dissertation Fellowship grants of \$20,000 each to Ph.D., D.B.A., or other doctoral students at accredited U.S. universities to support dissertations in the area of entrepreneurship.

Deadline: 9/15/10

Award amount: \$20,000

<http://www.kauffman.org/research-and-policy/kauffman-dissertation-fellowship-program.aspx>

AMERICAN WATER WORKS ASSOCIATION ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD encourages academic excellence by recognizing contributions to the field of public water supply. All master's theses and doctoral dissertations relevant to the water supply industry are eligible. The manuscript must reflect the work of a single author and be submitted during the competition year in which it was submitted for the degree.

Deadline: 10/1/10

Award amounts: Doctoral dissertation: First, \$3,000; Second, \$1,500; Master's thesis: First, \$3,000; Second, \$1,500

<http://www.awwa.org/Membership/Content.cfm?ItemNumber=3501&navItemNumber=13974>

HENRY LUCE FOUNDATION AND AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIPS IN AMERICAN ART

ACLS INVITES APPLICATIONS for the Henry Luce Foundation/ACLS Dissertation Fellowships in American Art designated for graduate students in any stage of Ph.D. dissertation research or writing.

Deadline: 11/10/10

Award amount: \$25,000

<http://www.acls.org/programs/american-art/>

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIPS IN EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

THE AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES will offer support for writing dissertations in East European studies in all disciplines of the humanities and the social sciences. Funding is offered for two types of support: research fellowships for use in Eastern Europe to conduct fieldwork or archival investigations and writing

fellowships for use in the United States, after all research is complete, to write the dissertation.

Deadline: 11/10/10

Award amount: up to \$18,000

<http://www.acls.org/grants/Default.aspx?id=532>

ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION AND AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES DISSERTATION COMPLETION FELLOWSHIPS

ACLS INVITES APPLICATIONS for the fourth annual competition for the Mellon/ACLS dissertation completion fellowships for graduate students in the humanities and related social sciences. Applicants must be prepared to complete their dissertations within the period of their fellowship tenure and no later than August 31, 2011.

Deadline: 11/10/10

Award amount: \$25,000, plus funds for research costs of up to \$3,000 and for university fees of up to \$5,000

<http://www.acls.org/grants/Default.aspx?id=512>

The Graduate Student Writer

Tips to make the writing process work for you

WRITING ABOUT YOURSELF

THE TOPIC ABOUT WHICH YOU KNOW THE MOST may be the hardest one about which to write: yourself. The biggest hurdle to overcome is the nagging, uncomfortable feeling that saying nice things about yourself somehow oversteps the bounds of humility.

Despite that discomfort, there are times you'll be obliged to write proudly and confidently about yourself. You've already had some experience in this regard if you were required to write a personal statement in your graduate school application. Your future professional advancement will require more of the same, in fellowship applications, self-appraisals, cover letters and job applications, grant proposals and bios. In all these cases, you'll need to learn to blush and bear it and write about your accomplishments, experience and skills.

These ten tips may help you overcome your reluctance to write about yourself.

1. First Decide What You Want to Achieve.

Why are you writing about yourself? Be honest but not overly ambitious. Once you've clearly identified your objective, keep it in the front of your mind as you write – what you want to achieve should guide what you say.

Also bear in mind that in some cases, your readers may not care as much about what you have done as they do about what you can do for them. Where possible, identify the readers who will be seeing your text and tell them how you and your experience are relevant to their purpose.

If you're writing a cover letter or personal statement as part of a job application package, be careful that you don't simply reiterate factual information about background and experience that appears in your CV or resume. Strive for depth, not breadth.

2. With Your Objective in Mind, List Your Relevant Strengths

What are you proud of in your work? What accomplishments give you joy? Often these things – mentoring students, working as part of team, solving problems, organizing projects – will help you identify your accomplishments.

3. Write a Short but Convincing Description of Each Strength, Skill or Accomplishment

Describe not just what you did, but how you did it and the outcome. Lynn Gaertner Johnson of Syntax Training suggests you use the STAR method. Briefly describe a situation (S) or task (T), the action (A) you took to accomplish it, and the results (R) you achieved.

Teaching example

In my first semester teaching basic composition, I quickly discovered that at least 75 percent of my students had trouble editing and proofreading their own work (S/T). I implemented a “writing partner” program, coached students in systematic strategies for editing and proofreading, and made time in class for 15-minute intensive proofing sessions (A). As a result of these efforts, by the end of the semester, almost all students had developed more effective proofreading skills (R).

Lab management example

The challenge was to train students in basic lab safety techniques within the first week of the semester (S/T). I designed, planned and managed an intensive lab safety training program that employed “drop-in” hands-on sessions in the lab taught by all lab RAs, an online learning module and targeted lab safety aids (A). By the beginning of the second week of lab work, 96 percent of students using the lab had been trained in basic lab safety (R).

4. Use Specifics to Enhance Credibility

Positive words like *outstanding*, *dependable* and *creative* sound good, but they don’t paint a convincing picture. Flesh out those words with specific examples. Instead of saying that you “always have excellent rapport with students,” cite student evaluations, assessments from your supervising teacher or notes of appreciation students may have written to you.

5. A Corollary to Tip 4: Avoid Generalizations

The worst generalizations are the ones that have been used so many times they have become meaningless clichés.

Instead of “As a committee chair, I learned many valuable lessons about the importance of teamwork,” say instead: “In my first year as the Graduate Student Association legislative committee chairperson, I made an effort to engage all my colleagues as equal members of the team, soliciting their feedback and deferring to their expertise as needed.”

The second version explains the team dynamic in more detail, showing specifically how you applied teamwork principles. You may wish to elaborate further, perhaps by identifying a particular colleague and discussing your interaction with that person or explaining an instance in which effective teamwork led to a desired outcome.

6. It’s OK to Say *I*

Try to get your high school business writing teacher’s voice out of your head: the first-person pronoun is not verboten, especially when you are writing about yourself. Much worse in this instance would be use of third person, as if describing a colleague who had asked you to write a letter of recommendation.

If a statement is true, tell it like it is: “I designed a new course” or “I wrote the final draft of the collaborative report.” (If you think you have too many sentences beginning with *I*, change the sentence structure a bit. For example: “I won the outstanding graduate student of the year award in 2009” easily becomes “In 2009, I won the outstanding graduate student of the year award.”)

7. When Appropriate, Use Short Clips of Testimonials from Students, Professors or Employers

Avoid the pleasantly banal bits, and use phrases and sentences that have some meaning and bite. For example, “One student commented that he ‘finally realized you aren’t teaching me to write – you’re teaching me to think.’”

8. Be Sure Your Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation Are Correct.

Goofs in these areas make your text, and you, look amateurish. If you don’t trust your own proofing

skills, ask for help from someone whose skills are stronger than yours.

9. Do a Reality Check

Show your composition to friends and colleagues and ask not if they like it, but if they feel it represents you fairly – and if not, why not. Are your examples specific? Are all statements clear and believable? Have you missed any relevant strengths or accomplishments? Listen to other people's opinions, but don't lose sleep over them. At the end of the day you probably know yourself,

and your market, better than anyone else. Don't be afraid to make final judgments.

10. Feel Good about Yourself

You need to believe you deserve that fellowship, that award or that job. If you don't, why should anyone else? Just be sure you don't exaggerate, embellish or invent. If you present yourself honestly and enthusiastically, there's no need to be embarrassed for tooting your own horn. You have every reason to talk about your successes – you worked hard to achieve them!

Events

Campus activities and other events of interest to graduate students

CAMPUSWIDE WORKSHOPS FOR GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS, AUG. 17

THE 20TH ANNUAL FALL CAMPUSWIDE WORKSHOPS for Graduate Teaching Assistants, sponsored by the Office of Graduate Studies, are scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 17, in the Nebraska Union. The program will feature a variety of skills sessions,

topical interest groups and a lunch buffet, compliments of the Office of Graduate Studies.

You can find session descriptions, the registration form and schedule online at the [Graduate Studies website](#).

NEW STUDENT WELCOME, AUG. 20

Meet fellow students and learn more about the resources available at UNL and in the community to help ease your transition into graduate school. Scheduled from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the UNL City Campus Union on Aug.

20, the New Student Welcome features a resource fair, a complimentary lunch and door prizes. [Pre-register online](#).

GRADUATE ORIENTATION FOR NEW AND TRANSFER INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, AUG. 20

FALL 2010 ORIENTATION for new and transfer international students will take place Friday, Aug. 20, at the City Campus Union. Activities begin with check in from 8 to 10 a.m., followed by various presentations and orientation activities, including the new student welcome sponsored by the Office of Graduate Studies.

The day includes several small-group information sessions, followed by a campus tour, picnic and other evening social activities.

More information is available at the [International Affairs website](#).

DOCTORAL GRADUATION INFORMATION SESSIONS, SEPT. 15 & 23

FOR STUDENTS PLANNING TO GRADUATE in December or May, the Office of Graduate Studies is offering information sessions to provide guidance that will help ensure that "all your ducks are in a row."

You will learn about the necessary forms, where to find them and when to submit them in order to graduate on schedule. We'll "walk" you backward from your graduation date, explaining the process

and identifying the tasks you'll need to complete to graduate.

You'll have an opportunity to ask questions about the process for applying for graduation, the graduation ceremony and other graduation-related topics.

[Pre-register online](#) for one of these sessions: Wed., Sept. 15, noon-1 p.m., East Campus Union (includes pizza lunch) or Thurs., Sept. 23, 5:30-6:30 p.m., Nebraska Union (includes pizza

dinner). For more information, contact Eva Bachman at 472-8669.

Some comments from the sessions held last January indicate just how valuable they are:

I feel like I definitely have a surer sense of the pace now than before attending the session.

This was a great learning experience. I learned a lot about the mechanics of graduation.

I appreciate the detailed checklist provided and the instructions given.

NURAMP WORKSHOPS TO BE OFFERED IN FALL 2010

THE FALL 2010 NURAMP (Research Administration Management Program) workshop series for UNL faculty, staff, postdocs and graduate students who conduct, support or administer research projects begins in September.

Topics to be addressed include proposal development strategies, preparing proposals for submission, creating proposal budgets, conducting research responsibly, and receiving and administering an award. Additional elective sessions will focus on UNL's export control policy,

forms and requirements for using Grants.gov, using the report feature in NUgrant, and PARs (Personnel Activity Reports) and effort reporting.

A complete schedule of dates, times and locations, as well as registration information, will be available soon at [the NURAMP website](#). Participants may register for the entire series or for individual workshops. For more information contact Liz Banset, NURAMP coordinator, ebanset1@unl.edu, 472-7003.

Announcements

News of note for graduate students

REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL AID

IF YOU ARE USING FINANCIAL AID, be aware of any implications of not being registered appropriately. Withdrawal from any courses may require you to repay financial aid sooner than anticipated. To view more information about financial aid, visit the [Office of Scholarship and Financial Aid website](#).

Also be aware of drop and add deadlines. All enrollment instructions and drop/add deadlines with the refund schedule are posted on the [Registration and Records website](#).

2010-2011 UNL GRADUATE STUDIES BULLETIN

THE 2010-2011 UNL GRADUATE BULLETIN is available online at <http://bulletin.unl.edu>. If you need help navigating the bulletin, please contact

Jane Schneider at jschneid@unlnotes.unl.edu or 472-8670.

THE UNL HEALTHY OPTION STUDENT INSURANCE PLAN

UNL'S GRADUATE STUDENT INSURANCE PLAN provides excellent coverage at an affordable price. You can find more information at the [Graduate Studies website](#).

Coverage Highlights

- Medical expenses for accidents or illnesses up to a total of \$250,000 are covered from Aug. 14, 2010, to Aug. 13, 2011.

- A well-baby benefit of \$250 per policy year is available for children covered by this policy.
- Medical evacuation and repatriation benefits are included without additional cost.
- Dental care is a covered service.
- Prescriptions are covered by the UHC Prescription Program.

Premium Costs

The total cost of the insurance premium is \$1503 (\$592 fall; \$911 spring/summer). Graduate assistants will contribute about 21% (\$315) of the total annual cost.

	Fall	Spring/summer	Annual
Student pays	\$124	\$191	\$315
University pays	\$468	\$720	\$1188
Total	\$592	\$911	\$1503

Enrollment

You can enroll at the [University Health Center's \(UHC\) website](#). If you are a graduate assistant or

international student (F1 or J1 visa holder), you will be automatically enrolled in the health plan, and your student account will be charged for the premium. You should NOT fill out the enrollment form. However, all students who wish to secure coverage for dependents will need to complete an enrollment form.

Waivers

Graduate assistants or international students who have their own insurance and wish to opt out of the plan must complete an [online waiver request form](#) each semester (by Sept. 10, 2010 for fall and Jan. 28, 2011 for spring/ summer).

For more information

- [Health insurance brochure](#)
- [Dental insurance brochure](#)
- For questions about insurance coverage and enrollment forms, contact insurance coordinator Bev Heiserman at 472-7507.
- For questions about graduate assistant eligibility, contact Jane Schneider at 472-8670 or jschneid@unlnotes.unl.edu.

CALL FOR AWARD NOMINATIONS

THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES requests nominations for two annual award programs.

Graduate Recognition Awards

The *Dean's Award for Excellence in Graduate Education* honors UNL faculty members whose dedication to graduate students and commitment to excellence in graduate mentoring have made a significant contribution to graduate education.

The *Outstanding Graduate Research Assistant Award* recognizes excellence in graduate student research at UNL. The *Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award* recognizes graduate teaching assistants who have demonstrated special effectiveness in teaching undergraduates at UNL.

You can find last year's [call for nominations for graduate awards](#) online. The 2010 on-line nomination form will be available on Sept. 10, and the deadline for submission is Oct. 6. Nominees will be asked to submit materials by Oct. 27.

Folsom Awards

The annual *Folsom Distinguished Master's Thesis and Doctoral Dissertation Awards* recognize the outstanding research and creative accomplish-

ments of UNL graduate students. These awards are made possible through a generous gift from the family of Lowe R. and Mavis M. Folsom to the University of Nebraska Foundation.

The recipient of the distinguished master's thesis award will receive a \$500 honorarium. The recipient of the distinguished doctoral dissertation award will receive a \$1,000 honorarium.

We are grateful to the Folsom family and the University of Nebraska Foundation for providing this opportunity to showcase the important scholarly contributions made by graduate students.

Last year's [call for nominations](#) is available online; 2010 nomination forms will be available Sept. 10, and the submission deadline is Oct. 6

More Information

Award recipients will be honored at a reception in the spring semester. See a [list of past recipients](#) on the Office of Graduate Studies website.

For more information about award nominations, contact Jane Schneider at 472-8670 or jschneid@unlnotes.unl.edu.

LINCOLN COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER OPPORTUNITIES

THE LINCOLN COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER is seeking tutors for a program that offers expanded individualized and small-group instruction to support and enhance learning that occurs during the regular school day. Tutors receive \$10-\$30 per hour, depending on their education, experience and certification.

Lincoln CLC also accepts after-school volunteers and/ or paid club instructors who can work well with students in an environment designed to promote hands-on learning experiences.

For more information about either program, contact Kathie Phillips, kphilli@lps.org, 436-1971, or LeaAnn Johnson, ljohns2@lps.org, 436-1964.

NEW RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH TRAINING – COMING SOON!

The Office of Graduate Studies and the Office of Research Responsibility have developed an exciting new training program in UNL's Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) toolbox, and it's arriving this fall.

Covering subjects like mentor & trainee roles, authorship and collaboration, the program applies to all students and postdoctoral researchers at UNL. It's not meant to *replace* any existing training but rather to provide all mentored researchers with the baseline knowledge they need to continue the study and practice of RCR. The training is offered completely on Blackboard (listed as GRDC 098) and can be completed in about an hour.

All graduate students and postdocs in NSF-funded academic units are required to take this new training. Check the list below to see if you're affected. If so, you'll be automatically enrolled in GRDC 098, and you'll need to complete the training by Nov. 15, 2010. If you aren't automatically enrolled but are curious about the program, you may enroll yourself on Blackboard.

to check it out. More details will be announced soon.

Note: As of Jan. 1, 2010, NSF requires didactic training in the responsible conduct of research for all graduate, post-doctoral and undergraduate students involved in research. (See the January 2010 NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide, specifically [Part I - Grant Proposal Guide, Chapter II.C.1e](#) and [Part II - Award and Administration Guide, Chapter IV.B](#)) When UNL submits grant applications and accepts awards, it is required to certify that students will receive RCR training in compliance with this federal requirement.

To meet this federal mandate, the Office of Research Responsibility has developed a two-pronged training plan: 1) an on-line RCR training module developed in house (administered via Blackboard) and 2) a catalogue of existing educational opportunities that already occur on campus and within the departments.

College of Arts and Sciences:

Anthropology
Chemistry
Computer Science & Engineering
Earth & Atmospheric Sciences
Mathematics
Physics & Astronomy
Political Science
Psychology

School of Biological Sciences:

Sociology
Statistics

College of Engineering:

all academic units

College of Education & Human Sciences:

all departments
Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources: all departments

Did you know?

Nebraska's UNL Digital Commons

(<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu>) was established in 2005 and has grown to become the second largest institutional repository for faculty research in the United States (trailing only Michigan's Deep Blue). It currently hosts more than 40,000 documents, including

11,000 dissertations and 29,000 faculty articles, monographs, reviews, white papers, technical reports, conference presentations, musical scores and creative works. The repository currently furnishes around 7,000 downloads daily, with the largest sources of traffic being Google (55%) and Wikipedia (10%).

Interactions

Personal achievements of graduate students, research reports, teaching successes, calls for collaboration and student-to-student interaction

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION NEWS

THE GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION is thrilled about several new developments and upcoming events we've been planning for you.

Developments

The first edition of the GSA's *Graduate Gazette* debuts this semester. Make sure your e-mail address is current.

Participate in a *focus group* to help us better assess graduate student needs and the effectiveness of our solutions—and win cool prizes, too. Just fill out 1-2 short surveys a semester to be entered to win. See our [website](#) for more details.

In addition to departmental representatives, GSA [campus representative positions](#) are available. Serving as a representative is a great way to get involved with the GSA and other graduate students. There are numerous perks, plus, it's fun!

Events

GSA is hosting a booth at *New Graduate Student Orientation*. Enter a raffle for gift certificates and other prizes, and go on a scavenger hunt to help you get to know UNL better.

All grad students are invited to join us for *Graduate Student Orientation Night* at the Watering Hole on Aug. 20 at 7 p.m. Completed

scavenger hunts can be redeemed for a free appetizer coupon (up to \$4).

GSA is holding a *Fall Family Feast* barbecue toward the end of September. We'll provide the main dishes and the Pepsi products; you're welcome to bring any sides, salads or desserts. Outdoor games will be available as well. More information will be on our [events page](#) soon.

We are coordinating a *professional development mini-series* with Career Services to help you develop your job applications and professional resources throughout the year. Whether you are looking at a career in academia or industry, or just looking around, we've got plans to please everyone.

As last year's monthly graduate student *ethics lunches* were such a hit (and who doesn't love free food?), we're bringing them back. Suggest topics that we can debate and delight over.

GSA also sponsors many smaller events throughout the semester, including our monthly [legislative assembly meetings](#). To stay apprised of all these opportunities, visit our [website](#) or join our listserv. Your feedback is important to us. Please e-mail us with questions, comments, or concerns at gsa@unl.edu.

Calendar

Keep connected with the Grad Studies Calendar – important deadlines, dates and dealings you need to know about. For other deadlines related to graduation and degree completion, go to www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees.

EVENTS

Aug. 13	Graduate College Commencement
Aug. 17	Annual Campuswide Workshops for Graduate Teaching Assistants
Aug. 20	New Student Welcome and New International Student Orientation
Sept. 15, noon, East Union Sept. 23, 5:30 p.m., Nebraska Union	Doctoral Graduation Information Sessions

DEGREE DEADLINES

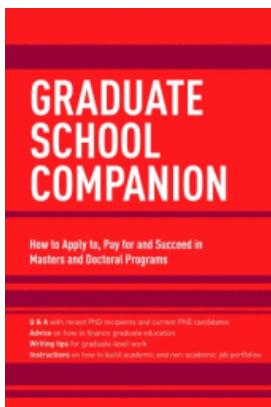
Date	Master's degrees to be conferred Dec. 2010	Doctoral degrees to be conferred Dec. 2010
Sept. 24	Application for advanced degree	Application for advanced degree
Nov. 4	Submit final exam report (or four weeks prior to oral); Incomplete grades must be removed	
Nov. 11		Application for final exam report; incomplete grades must be removed
Nov. 18	Submit preliminary copy of thesis (or two weeks prior to oral); File results of written comprehensive exam and/or option II paper	
Dec. 2	Final day for oral examination	Final day for oral examination
Dec. 2	Deposit thesis and final examination report form; pay binding fee	Deposit dissertation; dissertation grades submitted; final fees; final forms due
Dec. 17	Graduate College Commencement	Graduate College Commencement

Readers' Corner

Interesting reading for graduate students

GRADUATE SCHOOL COMPANION

From The Princeton Review



future graduate students.

From paying for graduate school, to what to expect as a degree candidate, to preparing for a successful job search, the *Graduate School Companion* is a useful resource for graduate students in any discipline. Students pursuing careers in academia

Pursuing a master's degree or a Ph.D. is a major life decision and a process that is intellectually demanding, financially challenging and sometimes emotionally taxing. The Princeton Review's *Graduate School Companion* offers practical advice and support for current and

or industry will find the sections on preparing for the job market and hunting for work helpful. With information on securing tenure track faculty positions, temporary teaching positions and non-academic careers, the *Graduate School Companion* has something for everyone.

It also includes:

- Q & A with recent Ph.D. recipients and current Ph.D. candidates
- Ten writing tips for graduate-level work
- An extensive list of postdoctoral award opportunities
- Instructions on how to build academic and non-academic job portfolio

Find more information from [Random House](#).

