

**Getting the Most from  
Your Graduate Education  
in Communication**

# **A Student's Handbook**



**Sherwyn Morreale  
Editor**



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**Getting the Most  
from Your  
Graduate Education  
in Communication:  
A Student's Handbook**

***Editors***

*Sherwyn Morreale and Pat Arneson*

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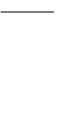
## **Foreword**

I was so pleased when Sherry and Pat asked if I would write the Foreword for this wonderful new volume, not only because of its superb list of authors and editors, but also because of the importance of its message for graduate students in our discipline. It is a real “plus” that all communication graduate programs will receive a copy of the Handbook from the National Communication Association (NCA).

Always an enthusiast as well as an administrative participant in the Preparing Future Faculty Program (PFF) as Associate Vice President for Research and Advanced Studies at my home institution (the University of Cincinnati), I also had the privilege of helping in the development of and chairing NCA’s Leadership Team for PFF.

This volume, like the Program that preceded it, is focused on preparing communication graduate students who envision careers in the academy or careers in business or industry for the variety of professional options open to them by emphasizing the importance of gaining experience in teaching, research, and service. Beginning with a chapter on making the decisions to go to graduate school and selecting the program that “fits,” through all of the decisions that have to be made while working on Master’s and doctoral degrees, the fifteen chapters that follow are well conceived, well written, and highly informative. They are, like the PFF Program, each designed to prepare communication graduate students to be successful not only as productive scholars but also in the areas of teaching, service AND research. I recommend it highly.

Judith S. Trent





## ***Acknowledgments***

The editors, Sherry Morreale and Pat Arneson, gratefully acknowledge the contributions of all of the authors of the wonderful chapters in this handbook. Their words of advice for graduate students in the communication discipline will provide good counsel for years to come. We also thank our own campuses, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and Duquesne University, respectively, and the colleagues in our departments for their support as we worked to make this handbook a reality in a timely manner. We respectfully acknowledge the publisher of this handbook, the National Communication Association, its staff and leaders, who had the vision to see the need for it in our discipline. We are particularly indebted to Celeste Grayson who, while still a doctoral student, gave her time to edit and proof the final manuscript. Many thanks to all of our colleagues and friends who supported us in the creation of this very special book. We dedicate this project to the future generations of communication graduate students.



# ***Greetings from the Editors***

*Sherry Morreale and Pat Arneson*

Welcome to the National Communication Association (NCA) handbook for graduate students in communication developed for you by outstanding researchers, teachers, and administrators in the communication discipline. While there are a number of publications and resources on graduate education in general, this handbook is the first national publication planned and written by experts in the communication discipline specifically for communication graduate students.

We invite you to think of this handbook as a conversation with these expert authors—a communicative act rather than a written volume. You are sitting in Bill Eadie's office and he is telling you what he knows about communication's colorful history and evolution. Betsy Bach and Dawn Braithwaite are helping you decide on the right graduate program for yourself. John Greene, an experienced journal editor, is giving you insider tips on getting your next study published.

Before you engage in these conversations with the chapter authors, as the editors we would like to give you some advice about how this handbook can be most useful. You need to know why NCA produced it, how it is organized, and how it can help you succeed in graduate school and beyond, regardless of your professional or academic career track.

## ***Why This Handbook?***

The communication discipline is growing rapidly. In tandem, graduate education is expanding. New Ph.D. programs in communication are being established, such as the applied program at North Dakota State University and the rhetoric and philosophy of communication program at Duquesne University. M.A. programs also are flourishing, as witnessed by their presence at graduate events at the NCA national convention and electronic discussions occurring about these programs. All of this development is good news and, at the same time, the discipline may appear to be getting more complex since it is made up of a variety of foci or areas of study. In addition to the various foci, communication scholars and sometimes academic departments embrace or favor different research methods or approaches to examining human communication.

Sorting this out and finding your right place in this discipline, which has been described by M. Scott Poole as “complex, consequential, and ubiquitous,” is quite the challenge. Scholars in the discipline recognized this challenge faced by potential graduate students in communication. The idea for a handbook to help communication graduate students began during meetings of NCA's “Preparing Future Faculty” (PFF) initiative, a national program directed for NCA by Judith Trent.

The PFF program provides support and guidance for graduate students to help them succeed in their careers, primarily in jobs in the academy and in

higher education. NCA received grant funding over several years from the Council of Graduate Schools to help develop PFF in communication. NCA leaders made a commitment to their funders that we would create a resource, such as this handbook, to help graduate students in our discipline. Over several years, NCA's Doctoral Education Committee, Educational Policies Board, Research Board, and Publications Board worked to develop a plan for this handbook that would make it a valuable resource for our graduate students. Graduate students themselves commented on the possible topics to be covered and members of the NCA graduate community critiqued and enhanced all aspects of the handbook.

These stakeholders decided that the handbook should cover every aspect of graduate education from start to finish. They determined that the authors should not write in the academic voice that they typically use in most journal articles; rather they wanted the book to read as a series of conversations with experts on the chosen topics of each chapter. They also recognized that a graduate education in communication prepares students for careers in educational institutions K-12 and higher education and also for jobs in businesses and organizations outside the academy. So they recommended that the authors try to discuss both career tracks—academic and non-academic. With those guidelines in mind, we the editors refined the table of contents and issued a national call for chapter authors. In addition to the topics listed in the table of contents, authors were encouraged to submit topics and outlines for other chapters that the editors may have overlooked. The result of this development and editorial process is the handbook you are now reading.

### *How is This Handbook Organized?*

The handbook tracks the entire graduate school process from learning about and understanding the complexities and structure of the communication discipline, to choosing and then succeeding in a graduate program, all the way to what you need to know about how to find and succeed on your first job.

In Chapter 1, Bill Eadie, a nationally recognized historian of communication studies, tracks the evolution and development of our discipline. Some of our graduate students who have already read this chapter said that now they understand why our discipline is structured as it is today.

Betsy Bach and Dawn Braithwaite found the time to write Chapter 2 while they were both serving as presidents of NCA. If you are trying to decide which graduate program is right for you, they discuss how to choose a graduate program, the structure of different types of graduate programs, and how to manage the application process and apply for financial aid.

Once you have been accepted in a graduate program, your next challenge is socializing yourself into graduate studies. Scott Myers and Matthew Martin do an excellent job in Chapter 3 discussing how you can successfully make the transition from the undergraduate educational experience to a Master's-level degree program or from the Master's-level degree program to a doctoral program or from employment in the private sector to a graduate program.

In Chapter 4, David Worley, Larry Hugenberg, and Michael Elkins discuss how you can gain credibility through research, teaching, and service. This chapter sets you up for success by covering effective performance in research, suggestions

for success in teaching, and recommendations for how service can enhance opportunities for employment following graduation.

Karen Foss and Sonja Foss wrote Chapter 5, sharing their longstanding interest in how to create the best partnership with your advisor. Their chapter covers the abilities that you need to create a constructive relationship with your advisor, in addition to gaining knowledge about the communication discipline.

In Chapter 6, Paul Nelson, Judy Pearson, and Anastacia Kurylo draw on their extensive academic and administrative backgrounds to provide practical advice for succeeding in graduate school and developing your own intellectual community. They describe best practices for developing an intellectual community, getting involved in professional associations, and using online networking opportunities to advance your intellectual fortunes in graduate school.

Richard Cherwitz and Johanna Hartelius, in Chapter 7, talk about why and how graduate students should become “intellectual entrepreneurs.” Intellectual entrepreneurship is premised on the belief that intellect is not limited to the academy and entrepreneurship is not restricted to or synonymous with business. An exemplar of intellectual entrepreneurship at University of Texas at Austin is described.

Chapter 8 addresses the process of writing a thesis or dissertation. Sonja Foss and William Waters draw upon their extensive experience as authors to overview this writing process. They offer practical suggestions on everything from identifying a topic to revising the document for possible publication.

In Chapter 9, a former editor of a leading communication journal, John Greene, describes the intricacies and some successful strategies for getting your studies and other work published. His advice is applicable for graduates who stay in or choose to leave the academy to pursue careers in profit or non-profit sectors.

Jon Hess and Sarah Tracy, in Chapter 10, provide suggestions for finding your first job and advice on surviving the exhausting process. They skillfully cover the process of developing a curriculum vitae/résumé, writing effective cover letters, developing a teaching and research portfolio, and preparing for the interview process. Questions that candidates might be asked and questions the candidate should ask are included.

Chapter 11 addresses how to succeed in your first job. Pat Arneson, Sherry Morreale, and Phil Backlund provide suggestions on understanding the organizational culture, determining and meeting expectations for workplace success (including tenure and promotion), and developing a positive reputation in your area of expertise.

In Chapter 12, Patrice Buzzanell and Dawn Braithwaite address a challenge communication graduates increasingly are facing—getting funding for research projects. Over the past years, these two authors have met personally with potential national funders for communication scholarship, and they share what they have learned. They also surveyed communication faculty who are expert grant getters and provide practical advice, strategies, and common mistakes that successful grantees told them about.

Kim LeDuff identifies challenges and opportunities faced by minority students in Chapter 13. There is no better way to help minorities who are considering or currently enrolled in graduate school than to allow them to hear from those who have been there. Kim shares results from a research project which serves as a refreshing reminder that rarely is anyone alone in their experience. The reported

list of unspoken rules, coping strategies, and advice for getting through the dissertation or thesis process is designed to help you succeed in the academic process.

In Chapter 14, Charu Uppal addresses topics of interest to international students who are interested in graduate study in the United States. As an international student, Charu completed all of her graduate coursework in the United States. She discusses the need for social and cultural adjustment as well as academic adjustment, funding for graduate education in communication, legal considerations and professional options, and participating in the international communication community.

Chapter 15 includes seven reflections on the graduate school experience, offering advice from recent graduates. With an eye toward supporting future generations of communication graduate students, each reflection provides suggestions for success. A variety of topics are addressed, including Andrew Ledbetter's discussion about being organized, Matt Koschmann's advice on learning to think, Karla Bergen and Chad McBride's recommendations for forging collegial scholarly relationships, Maria del Guadalupe Davidson's advice on being an Other in graduate school, Amanda Porter's recommendations for becoming your own advocate, Karin Tidgewell's advice about returning to graduate school, and Martha Fay's comments on graduate school following employment in the business sector.

Finally, in the appendix to our handbook Lucinda Davenport provides an excellent annotated bibliography describing additional sources and resources you can turn to for advice about graduate education in communication.

### *How Can You Use This Handbook to Enhance Your Professional Development?*

There are several good ways that you could use this handbook. You could read it straight through to prepare yourself for eventualities you may encounter as a communication graduate student. Or, you or your graduate director may choose to put a copy of the book in a prominent location on the bookshelf in your department and use it as a reference manual. You could read selected chapters as their content becomes relevant to you. During our work in the PFF program, we learned about how important it is to provide graduate students with relevant information exactly when they need it and not before. For instance, you do not need advice about writing a thesis or dissertation when you are more concerned about identifying the best program for you or getting to know other people in your department. Keep this handbook nearby and consult it when you need it. Finally, there one more option for using this resource: consider adopting this handbook as an ancillary text in an introductory graduate course in your graduate program.

However you choose to use this handbook, we the editors, on behalf of the authors and the National Communication Association, offer it to you as a personal resource to promote and encourage your success in graduate school. We particularly thank the authors of all of the chapters that you are about to peruse. And we thank the leadership of the National Communication Association, including the Finance Board, who voted to give a free copy of this handbook to every graduate program in the NCA database. Our hope is that we have provided a critical resource to support you, our graduate students, as you work to help us to deliver on the promise of communication, in which shared understanding is central.

# 1

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## ***Understanding the Communication Discipline and Deciding to Go to Graduate School***

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**WILLIAM F. EADIE, Ph.D.**

*San Diego State University*

The decision to go to graduate school in communication is not always an easy one. Graduate school can be an expensive proposition, and the results might not meet one's expectations. Graduate school can also be a time and place where one gains a better understanding of one's field of study; it can be an experience that helps understandings that were scattered to become focused. However, if one is to embark on this journey, knowledge of what one might study and how one might study it is important. Is communication the right field of study for you? If so, on what parts of the communication discipline do you want to concentrate? What are your goals following graduate study? How can you determine which graduate programs are potentially right for you?

This chapter will attempt to respond, at least to some degree, to these questions. It will outline how the communication discipline emerged, provide a sense of the shape of the discipline today, discuss the various academic and professional specialties in the discipline, provide some idea of the employment outlook for graduate degree holders, and close with a discussion of some of the innovations that are influencing the future of graduate education in communication. Combined with the chapter that follows, this chapter provides guidance about how to select an appropriate graduate program for your interests.

### **THE EMERGENCE OF THE DISCIPLINE**

The communication discipline is simultaneously both old and new and has been created through the combination of several strands of tradition and study.

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The term “strand” is an important one, because it represents one of at least three bodies of knowledge about communication that may or may not be present in any particular communication graduate program. The section that follows will trace the development of these strands historically.

Concern about effective communication can be found in a variety of ancient writings, and fragments of ideas about communication can be found in many of the world’s major cultures. The oldest systematic writing on the subject that survives is that of rhetoricians in Ancient Greece. Conflicts between philosophers and the more pragmatic teachers (see, in particular, Plato’s *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*) helped to establish some of the conflicts that have puzzled thinkers and writers across the ages. Questions such as, can “good communication” be reduced to a set of easily-learned techniques, and, when does style matter more than substance, were formulated by Plato, among others, and remain debated to the present day.

In fact, the debate between style and substance was directly responsible for the first strand of thought, which is represented by the “speech tradition” in the United States. Rhetoric, which had focused on one’s style of speaking and writing to a great degree, began to shift toward understanding how the substance of messages both enlightened and energized individuals and groups who were exposed to those messages. This shift was first announced in a book published in 1776 by the Scottish philosopher George Campbell titled *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, and it was elaborated by Richard Whately’s 1828 book, *Elements of Rhetoric*. It was probably not coincidental that Campbell’s book was published in the same year that the British colonies in America declared their independence, as philosophers such as John Locke and Francis Bacon influenced both Campbell and the leaders of the colonists.

The recognition that turning ideas into arguments and constructing messages was as important, if not more important, than learning to write and speak eloquently influenced how rhetoric was taught in U.S. colleges and universities in the nineteenth century. In the first half of this century, institutions of higher education were dominated by children of the wealthy, whose parents wanted them to be exposed to classic and contemporary intellectual ideas as a prelude to assuming the positions of leadership in society that one’s station demanded. While the principles of rhetoric were often used to analyze literary style, students and faculty were also exposed to the rhetoric of substance through participation in debating societies. Debates on current issues of the day were major forms of entertainment for college students and faculty alike, and while the college might not have offered formal coursework in rhetoric and argumentation, learning to evaluate arguments, construct persuasive messages, and think on one’s feet were skills that were important to both academic and social success.

The clash between the rhetoric of style and the rhetoric of substance continued into the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As debates moved away from being exercises in constructing good arguments on contemporary topics and toward being competitive contests where winning and losing mattered greatly, debaters began to pay attention to the style of delivery they used. They drew on principles of elocution, which focused on understanding the effects of diction, posture, and body movement on audience judgments of the speaker’s credibility. The study of oral rhetoric, or speech, as it was commonly known, had moved from being done informally to being part of an education in English language and literature,



while principles of elocution were often taught more informally. The advent of large public universities in each state, whose missions included educating a larger percentage of the populace, meant that the capacity to speak as an educated person could no longer be assumed. So, speech programs continued to grow, and by the early part of the twentieth century separate academic departments of speech had begun to form. Speech professors began to be discontented with their status in English programs, and in 1914 some of those professors broke away from the National Council of Teachers of English to form what is now called the National Communication Association (NCA).

In the meantime, the development of technology, combined with the shift toward interest in issues of the day, led to the development of the second strand of thought, which is represented by the tradition of the study of journalism. The ability to mass produce printed documents inexpensively had contributed to the importance of literacy, and local printers took on publishing newspapers and magazines as integral parts of their businesses. New journalists were trained as apprentice printers and learned how to gather and write news that would attract customers as an important component of any successful printing business. With the emergence of public universities, it became clear that professional, unbiased reporting would be in the interests of the development of effective participation in the democratic process, and so the public universities led the way in forming professional journalism programs to replace the apprenticeships. Despite being large institutions, public universities lacked the intellectual prestige in the late nineteenth century to make journalism a viable area of academic study. It took a substantial financial contribution to Columbia University from the publisher, Joseph Pulitzer, before journalism gained some claim to academic respectability. In many universities, journalism was also taught in the English program, and dissatisfaction similar to that of the speech faculty, as well as a desire to improve professional education in journalism, led to the establishment in 1912 of the organization that is now called the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). AEJMC and NCA were similar, however, in that they consisted mostly of refugees from English programs and that their early memberships considered themselves to be teachers, rather than scholars.

A third strand arose in part from the formation of the University of Chicago in the late nineteenth century. This university was established with funds provided by the industrialist, John D. Rockefeller, and was deliberately placed in an urban area with many social problems. The university's mission included attempting through research and scholarship to develop an understanding of how urbanization was affecting society. Sociology became a central discipline at Chicago, and through a unique collaboration between sociologists and scholars from fields such as philosophy, linguistics, and education, a focus on how citizens interacted, both face-to-face and through media, generated some of the first influential theories of communication, as opposed to rhetoric. While rhetoric focused on messages, communication focused on interaction and its effects on societies. The development of communication theory was undoubtedly helped by the rise of cinema and radio as mass forms of entertainment, and potentially, societal influence.

The focus on communication was also taken up by a group of immigrant scholars who were fleeing the rise of fascism in Europe. Concerned with how they had seen media used for purposes of propaganda, these scholars began to

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study influence processes. These scholars were prolific in publishing their results, and both the academic community and the U.S. government began to take notice. During World War II, the federal government brought scholars together in Washington, D.C., to work on preventing propaganda from influencing the resolve of U.S. citizens to fight. The working relationships that developed among this group set the stage for an explosion of communication-related research following the war.

By the time the explosion occurred, both speech and journalism faculty had begun to recognize the importance of this third strand, and some had begun their own programs of scholarship on communication topics. Speech professors were primarily attracted to the study of the interactions between people, while journalism professors were primarily attracted to the study of media content and the effects of media on audiences, but it quickly became clear that these distinctions were somewhat artificial ones and that overlap was inevitable. Still, it took more than twenty years before the term “communication” became one that was regularly used to cover scholarship in both journalism and speech.

So, “communication” has been a term that has been associated with a number of disciplines over the years. In addition to speech and journalism, scholars in psychology, sociology, linguistics, English, management, marketing, public health, education, and philosophy have all engaged in significant communication research. Yet, it has been communication programs that have, over time, provided the broadest view on theory and research concerning this topic.

### **THE SHAPE OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN THE DISCIPLINE TODAY**

Most communication graduate programs today have the word “communication” somewhere in the program’s title. Programs that evolved from the journalism tradition will tend to have the word “journalism” in their titles as well. Programs that evolved from the speech tradition may have the word “speech” in their title but are more likely to be called “communication studies.” Programs titled “communication” may have evolved from the speech tradition, or they may be an amalgam of areas from the speech and journalism traditions. Programs that include “mass communication” in their titles most likely evolved from the journalism tradition. Programs that include “media studies” in their titles may or may not have evolved from the journalism tradition. Recall that one of the key differences between these traditions is that speech evolved from the study and practice of rhetoric, and scholars in this tradition have generally seen themselves as part of the liberal arts and sciences, while journalism has always regarded itself as a profession and has valued professional education. Journalism programs may contain components that could be classified as being in the liberal arts and sciences, but they will almost always contain a significant professional education component, particularly at the undergraduate level. In fact, the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) directs its activities only toward a program’s professional components; so being an accredited journalism program means that the program meets ACEJMC’s standards for developing professionals in journalism and related fields.

Table 1.1 presents how the U. S. government categorizes the various subspecialties within the communication discipline. Notice that these specialties roughly correspond to areas of graduate study, but confusion can result from reading the major categories and ignoring the descriptions. Categories 09.0101, Communication Studies/Speech Communication and Rhetoric, and 09.0102, Mass Communication/Media Studies, contain the specialties available for *academic* graduate study. Categories 09.04, Journalism, and 09.07, Radio, Television, and Digital Communication, describe primarily *professional* programs of study; if graduate degrees are offered in these areas, they will most likely be geared toward professional education at the graduate level. Category 09.09, Public Relations, Advertising, and Applied Communication, describes areas of study which are professional or applied but which also have a substantial theoretical and scholarly base. These specialties are more likely to be part of academic graduate programs than professional ones. The following sections describe the specialties in more detail.

### **Communication Studies/Speech Communication and Rhetoric**

These specialties are often found in graduate programs in Departments of Communication Studies or Speech Communication.

- *Theory and practice of interpersonal, group, organizational, professional, and intercultural communication.* Scholarship in communication has often been organized by the number of people communicating with each other, so interpersonal (two or three), group (three or more), organizational (communication across complex systems), professional (one-to-many organizational colleagues), and intercultural (most often, interpersonal or group communication where the participants are from different cultures) are labels scholars have used to classify the study of communication that focuses on conveying information and forming relationships. These areas are often studied together in a graduate program, though some Master's programs and many doctoral programs will separate these areas for intensive study.
- *Speaking and listening.* Basic oral communication courses are widely required of undergraduate students, and graduate students are often employed as instructors or teaching assistants for these courses. In a way, graduate students learn in greater depth about speaking and listening by teaching, rather than by studying these activities systematically, though some of the latter also happens.
- *Verbal and nonverbal interaction.* Besides studying the amounts of information exchanged and the kinds of relationships built, communication scholars also study the kinds of interaction in which people engage. They do so in a number of ways, sometimes by studying recordings of real conversations that people have, sometimes by examining transcripts, and sometimes by observing situations and analyzing the extensive field notes that the researcher has compiled of those situations.
- *Rhetorical theory and criticism.* The study of the means we have of influencing each other through construction of messages (written, oral, and mediated) continues as a core focus of the discipline. Rhetoricians also learn how to

**Table 1.1 Classification of Communication Programs****09. COMMUNICATION, JOURNALISM, AND RELATED PROGRAMS.**

Instructional programs that focus on how messages in various media are produced, used, and interpreted within and across different contexts, channels, and cultures and that prepare individuals to apply communication knowledge and skills professionally.

**09.01 Communication and Media Studies.** Instructional content for this group of programs is defined in codes 09.0101- 09.0199.

**09.0101 Communication Studies/Speech Communication and Rhetoric.** A program that focuses on the scientific, humanistic, and critical study of human communication in a variety of formats, media, and contexts. Includes instruction in the theory and practice of interpersonal, group, organizational, professional, and intercultural communication; speaking and listening; verbal and nonverbal interaction; rhetorical theory and criticism; performance studies; argumentation and persuasion; technologically mediated communication; popular culture; and various contextual applications.

**09.0102 Mass Communication/Media Studies.** A program that focuses on the analysis and criticism of media institutions and media texts, how people experience and understand media content, and the roles of media in producing and transforming culture. Includes instruction in communications regulation, law, and policy; media history; media aesthetics, interpretation, and criticism; the social and cultural effects of mass media; cultural studies; the economics of media industries; visual and media literacy; and the psychology and behavioral aspects of media messages, interpretation, and utilization.

**09.0199 Communication and Media Studies, Other.** Any instructional program in communication and media studies not listed above.

**09.04 Journalism.** Instructional content for this group of programs is defined in codes 09.0401- 09.0499.

**09.0401 Journalism.** A program that focuses on the theory and practice of gathering, processing, and delivering news and that prepares individuals to be professional print journalists, news editors, and news managers. Includes instruction in news writing and editing; reporting; photojournalism; layout and graphic design; journalism law and policy; professional standards and ethics; research methods; and journalism history and criticism.

**09.0402 Broadcast Journalism.** A program that focuses on the methods and techniques for reporting, producing, and delivering news and news programs via radio, television, and video/film media; and that prepares individuals to be professional broadcast journalists, editors, producers, directors, and managers. Includes instruction in the principles of broadcast technology; broadcast reporting; on- and off-camera and microphone procedures and techniques; program, sound, and video/film editing; program design and production; media law and policy; and professional standards and ethics.

**09.0404 Photojournalism.** A program that focuses on the use of still and motion photography in journalism and prepares individuals to function as news photographers and photographic editors. Includes instruction in photography, journalism, studio procedures and techniques, camera and equipment operation and technique, news editing, print and film editing, news scene composition, subject surveillance, media law and policy, news team field operations, and professional standards and ethics.

**09.0499 Journalism, Other.** Any instructional program in journalism not listed above.

(continued)

**09.07 Radio, Television, and Digital Communication.** Instructional content for this group of programs is defined in codes 09.0701- 09.0799.

**09.0701 Radio and Television.** A program that focuses on the theories, methods, and techniques used to plan, produce, and distribute audio and video programs and messages and that prepares individuals to function as staff, producers, directors, and managers of radio and television shows and media organizations. Includes instruction in media aesthetics; planning, scheduling, and production; writing and editing; performing and directing; personnel and facilities management; marketing and distribution; media regulations, law, and policy; and principles of broadcast technology.

**09.0702 Digital Communication and Media/Multimedia.** A program that focuses on the development, use, and regulation of new electronic communication technologies using computer applications and that prepares individuals to function as developers and managers of digital communications media. Includes instruction in the principles of computers and telecommunications technologies and processes; design and development of digital communications; marketing and distribution; digital communications regulation, law, and policy; the study of human interaction with, and use of, digital media; and emerging trends and issues.

**09.0799 Radio, Television, and Digital Communication, Other.** Any instructional program in radio, television, and digital communications not listed above.

**09.09 Public Relations, Advertising, and Applied Communication.** Instructional content for this group of programs is defined in codes 09.0901- 09.0999.

**09.0901 Organizational Communication, General.** A program that focuses on general communication processes and dynamics within organizations. Includes instruction in the development and maintenance of interpersonal group relations within organizations; decision-making and conflict management; the use of symbols to create and maintain organizational images, missions, and values; power and politics within organizations; human interaction with computer technology; and how communications socializes and supports employees and team members.

**09.0902 Public Relations/Image Management.** A program that focuses on the theories and methods for managing the media image of a business, organization, or individual and the communication process with stakeholders, constituencies, audiences, and the general public; and that prepares individuals to function as public relations assistants, technicians, and managers. Includes instruction in public relations theory; related principles of advertising, marketing, and journalism; message/image design; image management; special event management; media relations; community relations; public affairs; and internal communications.

**09.0903 Advertising.** A program that focuses on the creation, execution, transmission, and evaluation of commercial messages in various media intended to promote and sell products, services, and brands; and that prepares individuals to function as advertising assistants, technicians, and managers. Includes instruction in advertising theory, marketing strategy, advertising design and production methods, campaign methods and techniques, media management, related principles of business management, and applicable technical and equipment skills.

(continued)

**09.0904 Political Communication.** A program that focuses on human and media communication in the political process and that prepares individuals to function as members of political and public affairs organizations, political campaign staffs, and related government and media entities. Includes instruction in media effects, political speaking and debating, political advertising and marketing, image management, political journalism, opinion polling, and aspects of print and broadcast media related to the production and distribution of media messages in political settings.

**09.0905 Health Communication.** A program that focuses on how people, individually and collectively, understand and accommodate to health and illness and the role of communication and media in shaping professional health care messages and public acceptance of these messages. Includes instruction in the development and use of health-related and care-related messages and media; the goals and strategies of health care promotion; relationships, roles, situations, and social structures in the context of health maintenance and promotion; and applications to disease prevention, health advocacy, and communications concerning treatments.

**09.0999 Public Relations, Advertising, and Applied Communication, Other** Any instructional program in organizational communication, public relations, and advertising not listed above.

**09.10 Publishing.** Instructional content is defined in code 09.1001.

**09.1001 Publishing.** A program that focuses on the process of managing the creation, publication, and distribution of print and electronic books and other text products and prepares individuals to manage the editorial, technical, and business aspects of publishing operations. Includes instruction in product planning and design, editing, author relations, business and copyright law, publishing industry operations, contracting and purchasing, product marketing, electronic publishing and commerce, history of publishing, and professional standards and ethics.

**09.99 Communication, Journalism, and Related Programs, Other.** Instructional content is defined in code 09.9999.

**09.9999 Communication, Journalism, and Related Programs, Other.** Any instructional program in communication, journalism, and related fields not listed above.

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**Source:** *Classification of Instructional Programs – 2000: (NCES 2002-165)* U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

analyze and criticize persuasive texts as a means of demonstrating how their theories work.

- *Performance studies.* The area of performance studies combines the analysis of literature (broadly defined) with a systematic understanding of how we create performances, both for public presentation and as part of our everyday lives. Performance Studies is interdisciplinary in nature, and courses can be found in such diverse places as theatre, English, and women's and ethnic studies programs, as well as in communication.
- *Argumentation and persuasion.* The study of how arguments and persuasive messages can change attitudes and behaviors relates to rhetoric but is often studied through systematic data collection, rather than through criticism of existing texts. At a practical level, many graduate programs have opportu-



nities for coaching competitive speech and debate programs, where these theories are put to use in developing effective communication skills.

- *Technologically mediated communication.* Media have always influenced social interaction, and in many relationships, media have become the primary means of social interaction. Communication studies graduate students tend to focus their study on how media are used in the communication process.
- *Popular culture.* The nature of culture has long fascinated communication scholars, as they see communication as the key means by which culture is formulated, maintained, and changed. In recent years, the idea that one can take a cultural artifact apart, so as better to understand and perhaps change it, has taken hold in the study of communication. A few graduate programs offer work in understanding the nature of entertainment and celebrity.

### **Mass Communication/Media Studies**

These specialties are typically found in Journalism and Mass Communication, or Media Studies programs.

- *Communications regulation, law, and policy.* Media have typically been subject to governmental regulation in some form, but in the U.S., issues of First Amendment rights place tensions on such regulation. This area typically looks at both the history of regulation as well as the current regulatory climate. Media scholars tend to use the term “communications” to define the discipline, while communication studies scholars omit the final “s.”
- *Media history.* Scholars in this area investigate key events in journalism and the people who have influenced those events. There also has been some focus on how the development of technologies has changed society over time.
- *Media aesthetics, interpretation, and criticism.* Media critics focus on content and presentation of specific entertainment or news programming. Students of media criticism learn how to analyze media content and evaluate it in terms of both style and substance.
- *The social and cultural effects of mass media.* Scholars for years have been advancing theories about how media consumption affects public attitudes and private behavior. The goal of these theories is to understand how a variety of people process media and predict how people will respond to specific media content.
- *The economics of media industries.* Media content, in particular, entertainment, is expensive to produce. The production of media has become a major portion of the economy of most developed nations. This area of study attempts to understand how media-producing organizations structure themselves to produce content, either to return the investment or to enjoy profits from it. Studies also examine how media consumption impacts the overall economy of a particular country.
- *Visual and media literacy.* This area of study attempts to understand how individuals can be taught to consume media at more than a surface level. Rather, individuals learn to appreciate and analyze both the construction of the content and the techniques used to communicate the content in a way that produces the desired effects in audiences.

- *The psychology and behavioral aspects of media messages, interpretation, and utilization.* Scholars in this area attempt to understand how individuals use the media that they consume and how that use affects future media consumption.

### **Professional Specialties in Communication**

- *Journalism.* A professional graduate program in journalism will focus on how news is gathered, written, edited, and presented for general or particular audiences. Professional education in journalism will also focus on issues such as legal and ethical privileges and constraints on journalists, as well as opportunities to study, perhaps intensively, aspects such as: broadcast journalism, photojournalism, magazine, and specialized writing, such as on health, science, sports, arts and culture, or investigative journalism.
- *Radio and Television.* A professional graduate program in radio and television will usually focus on producing radio or television content, including scripting, designing the production, casting and directing actors, techniques of shooting the production, and editing the footage and sound. Such a program may also have a track in media management, in which students would learn the economics of media industries, develop a sense of accounting and finance as applied to media production, and learn ways in which to manage production activities and personnel effectively.
- *Digital Communication and Media/Multimedia.* A professional graduate program in this area will teach students how to think about and execute the design of online media projects, from planning to accommodating content, to producing the media particularly for an online environment.

### **Applied Specialties in Communication**

- *Organizational Communication.* Usually found in communication programs, with the occasional exception in business programs, organizational communication focuses on the study of the dynamics of communication within organizations. Sometimes, at the Master's level, an organizational communication degree can focus on *managing* communication processes within organizations and can therefore be a professional degree.
- *Public relations and image management.* This area of study can be found in both communication and journalism programs. It focuses on managing relationships for the benefit of a client's ideas or products. Most graduate courses of study in public relations will include theory and research in the field, though some may focus on professional development as well.
- *Advertising.* This area of study can be found in a number of programs, though it is often part of marketing or art departments. Advertising graduate students learn the theory and practice of creating persuasive messages and images for the benefit of marketing campaigns.
- *Political communication.* This specialization can be found in either journalism or communication programs and studies the theory and research behind the creation of political campaigns.
- *Health communication.* This specialization also can be found in either journalism or communication programs and studies the theory and research underlying



ing the creation of health-related marketing campaigns and the dynamics of patient-provider interactions in health care settings.

- *Publishing*. This area of emphasis is not commonly a part of graduate programs in communication.

## **U.S. EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS FOR GRADUATE DEGREE HOLDERS**

Historically, Master's degree holders from communication studies programs have found work in teaching at high schools or community colleges, human resources-related occupations such as training and consulting, management, sales, and health-related professions such as patient advocacy, and in the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors. For communication studies doctoral graduates wishing to enter the professorate, the number of graduates has roughly equaled the number of available positions over time. Applied specialties such as organizational communication, public relations, and health communication have been more in demand than humanistic and artistic specializations such as rhetorical theory and criticism and performance studies, but employment in these positions is feasible as is the case for positions in other humanities fields of study.

Master's degree holders from mass communication and media studies programs typically have found work in teaching or have used their degree programs to enhance their attractiveness to employers in a field in which they have already been working. Doctoral graduates find a large number of job listings for a small number of qualified degree holders in most areas of journalism and public relations. There seems to be an oversupply of graduates only in the area of journalism history. Advertising doctoral graduates may find their initial hires to be more difficult, because advertising programs are located in so many different departments in U.S. universities; professional experience in advertising besides the degree could prove crucial in landing one's first job. A professional Master's degree may enhance one's job prospects in media industries, but because entry-level media positions are so competitive, Master's degree holders with no experience may have zero to negative advantage over applicants holding Bachelor's degrees.

Graduates of all of the various kinds of communication programs have also tended to be more than a little entrepreneurial, and they have started their own businesses or created their own jobs.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics regularly issues an occupational outlook report. To access it, go to the department's website at <http://www.bls.gov/home.htm>, and click on the link to the "Occupational Outlook Handbook."

## **THE GRADUATE DEGREE EXPERIENCE**

Academically-oriented graduate programs in communication and journalism typically follow a curricular pattern of introducing students to core theories and research methods in the discipline and then tailoring each student's individual program to that student's interests. The student will be asked to master a body

of knowledge as well as to become expert in one or more methods of research that typify that body of knowledge. Generally, this mastery is achieved through participation in small seminars, where the professor leads the students in discussing original works of scholarship around a particular topic. Seminars usually require participants to complete small and large-scale research and writing assignments in addition to the reading that is assigned for discussion at the weekly meetings. Seminars are usually intensive experiences, and students find that they learn as much from each other as they do from the professor or from the assigned readings. The culminating experiences of academically-oriented degree programs are generally a set of exams to demonstrate content mastery and/or a thesis or dissertation project to demonstrate competency as a theorist and researcher.

Professionally-oriented Master's programs typically are also structured around a set of core courses that branch into more specialized courses, depending on the student's area of interest. In journalism, public relations, and advertising, the specialized courses will typically involve learning advanced research, writing, and strategic communication abilities, and course projects will attempt to mirror situations that students could expect to encounter in the professional environment. A professional Master's degree typically will conclude with a large-scale project that demonstrates the student's ability to manage work at a professional level. Besides media-related professional degrees, there are professional programs in topics such as communication economics, communication management, leadership, and conflict management and mediation.

## **INNOVATIONS IN COMMUNICATION GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

In the past several years, there have been increasing calls for revisions to U.S. graduate programs, particularly the doctoral degree. Two national foundations have undertaken work in this area, and both of them have recently issued reports. The suggestions and guidelines in these reports, while focused on doctoral education, are equally applicable to Master's degree programs.

The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation examined the current state of doctoral education and produced a report that highlighted four principles of what the Foundation called "The Responsive Ph.D.:"

1. *A Graduate School for Real.* The Foundation believed that doctoral programs should be the defining feature of a research university and that administrative structures need to be in place to ensure that doctoral programs are strong, interconnected, and a central part of the institutions that undertake them. In other words, an effective doctoral program is at the heart of an institution's mission and not an add-on to an undergraduate program.
2. *A Cosmopolitan Doctorate.* Doctoral programs need to be connected to societal needs and to the world beyond academia. Research that benefits only a narrowly-focused set of ideas is not a defining characteristic of a responsive Ph.D.

3. *Drawn From the Breadth of the Populace*. There is an expertise gap in the U.S. that needs to be filled. Doctoral programs need to recruit and retain students of color.
4. *An Assessed Excellence*. There is an assumption of quality in doctoral education, but that assumption needs to be challenged and assessed not only within programs themselves but across programs in universities.

The full report from the Woodrow Wilson Foundation is available online at <http://www.woodrow.org/responsivephd/index.php>.

A recent book that resulted from a long-term study by the Carnegie Foundation fleshed out some of these principles. In particular, the book makes four recommendations to faculty at doctoral institutions:

1. *Talk About Purpose*. There needs to be what the book calls, “processes, tools and occasions” for doctoral faculty to discuss amongst themselves the purposes of the doctoral program and whether those purposes are being met or have evolved. Data need to be collected to guide these conversations.
2. *Pay greater attention to these principles of doctoral student formation; (a) progressive development towards increasing independence and responsibility, (b) integration across contexts and arenas of scholarly work, and (c) collaboration with peers and faculty at each stage of the process*. Too often, the book concludes, faculty members are not aware of student progress, or lack of same, until it is too late to be of help. As a result, students sometimes flounder without adequate guidance. The book calls for the establishment of a community of scholars approach to doctoral education as a solution to this concern.
3. *Reconsider the apprenticeship relationship*. Doctoral education most importantly consists of an experienced scholar working with a novice scholar to develop the novice’s abilities. The book’s authors envision students working with several mentors, instead of with just one.
4. *Work to achieve an intellectual community in which all members can succeed*. The best graduate programs are those where faculty and students are constantly collaborating with each other. The worst are those where competition and ongoing conflict keep individual faculty and students isolated from others in the program. This isolation affects students of color and part-time students most. Developing a “multigenerational intellectual community” requires ongoing care and attention.

A description of this book-length report from the Carnegie Foundation is online at <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/publications/pub.asp?key=43&subkey=712>.

An example of a program that has attempted to take some of these recommendations and implement them is titled “Preparing Future Faculty” (PFF). PFF was begun by the National Science Foundation but has since been taken up by the Council of Graduate Schools. PFF departments work with their students, particularly doctoral students, to assess their teaching and research interests early on and help students to shape their doctoral study so as to prepare them effectively for the kind of faculty work they wish to do. Doctoral faculty are very good at

preparing mirror images of themselves, but they are less strong at preparing students who might want to emphasize teaching over research, or teach at community colleges or small liberal arts colleges where a generalist's knowledge is important. Through PFF partnerships, students can shadow faculty at non-doctoral institutions, learning the kinds of lives those faculty live and what is expected from professors in colleges and universities of various sorts. Then, students can arrange to attend workshops or other events that will make them more appealing applicants for the types of positions they might desire.

For prospective graduate students, then, the lesson that one might take from these reports is to look for programs that are in universities where doctoral education is central to the campus mission, where faculty and students are engaged in scholarship that engages societal concerns, where the graduate student cohort is a diverse one, where the program is regularly being evaluated and improved, where graduate programs engage beyond their intellectual boundaries to include other disciplines, where intellectual community is strong, and where mentorship of graduate students is shared. Fortunately, many communication graduate programs meet these criteria very well or to a great degree.

If this chapter has done its job, you should by now understand and appreciate the various strands of knowledge and traditions that have come to form the discipline of communication. You should be able to describe the common topics of study in the discipline and know which ones have an academic base, which ones are professional, and which combine both scholarship and professional ability in a particular graduate program. You should understand what sorts of careers might be available to both Master's and doctoral degree holders in communication and also know where you might look to find employment for various career choices. Finally, you should have some ideas about what makes for a quality graduate program based on recent reports detailing needed reforms in graduate education. Having made the decision that a graduate program in communication is the right fit for you, the next step is to identify and apply to programs that are appropriate for your needs. The chapter that follows will explain this process in detail.

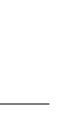
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# 2

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## ***Selecting the Right Graduate Program and Maximizing Chances for Admission to that Program***

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There are many considerations when determining whether or not to attend graduate school, and often these considerations seem overwhelming. In this chapter, the authors walk prospective graduate students in communication through a series of questions that they typically ask before, during, and after the graduate application process. We discuss how to choose a graduate program, the structure of graduate programs, types of financial support offered, the application process, and what happens after the application has been submitted.

### **HOW DO I CHOOSE THE PROGRAM THAT IS RIGHT FOR ME?**

The decision about the right program for you begins with personal reflection on whether graduate education in communication is right for you in general. We then discuss how to begin your search for a program that will suit you and offer steps to take in evaluating possible choices among the many programs available.

### ***"Should I go to graduate school?"***

If you did well as an undergraduate student, and are interested in learning more about the discipline of communication, you may wish to consider graduate study. Pursuing a graduate degree is not for the faint of heart. Graduate work is much more focused than undergraduate work. You will be required to critically analyze and synthesize often difficult and voluminous reading, as well as produce knowledge through research. Graduate study also provides more in-depth and detailed information on theory and research practice. On the brighter side, graduate work allows you the opportunity to engage in research and creative activity, provides you the opportunity to develop close relationships with faculty members, and makes available to you a higher caliber of peers, many of whom become your professional and personal friends throughout your academic and professional career.

### ***"Where do I begin?"***

The search for a graduate program can be a daunting process, so knowing how and where to search is essential to making a decision about a program where you are a good "fit." Begin by determining whether you wish to make a short- or long-term commitment to school. If you only wish to devote two years to graduate study, then it is likely that a Master's (offering either the M.A. or M.S.) program is best for you. If you wish to devote five to six years, then you might consider a Ph.D. program or a Master's/Ph.D. program. Once you have determined that, you should "do your homework," and talk with your faculty members, search the Web, and attend communication conventions to learn more.

The best sources of information about graduate school are the faculty in your undergraduate communication program, as they all have advanced degrees in the discipline and know about graduate study. Talk with several of your faculty members, as they will have different opinions of the best school for you. It is also helpful if you have an idea of what you want to study as you talk with them. Every graduate program in communication will have a website where you can find information about courses of study, faculty interests, funding, and other information about the department. If you wish to get a list of all graduate programs in communication, visit the homepage of the National Communication Association (the communication discipline's largest professional association) at <http://www.natcom.org> and follow the link to "Graduate Programs." You might also have read something in one of your classes that interested you. Find out where the author is teaching, whether that program focuses on your area of interest, and consider applying to that program.

An excellent way to learn more about graduate programs (as well as the discipline of communication) is to attend a communication conference. Conferences are held annually at the regional, national, and international levels and are a wonderful way to meet faculty and learn about scholarship in the many sub-fields of the communication discipline. Many states hold conferences that are even closer to home. Graduate students are actively recruited at regional and national meetings through "Graduate Fairs." Here, Graduate Directors set up booths where they can recruit prospective graduate students. Through these



routes you can identify programs that suit your academic interests. One common criterion for choosing a program is that there should be at least three faculty members who conduct research in your area of interest. If you are interested in more than one academic area, you will want to be sure to identify graduate programs that offer courses in each.

**"I've found some programs that interest me. What do I do now?"**

After you have narrowed your search, and if you can afford it, visit the programs where you plan to apply. Some programs will encourage you to visit before you apply; other programs prefer that you visit only after you are admitted. Visits are valuable for learning the culture of the department and finding out whether or not the program would be a good "fit" for you and your interests. The department website will typically list the name of the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). The DGS has oversight for the graduate program in general and graduate admission in particular. Contact this person to arrange a visit, and he or she will assist you in setting up appointments. Many programs have graduate student representatives who will help you arrange your visit and serve as your "guide" while you are on campus. Ask the DGS for the names of these students or others who can assist you. Contact them prior to your visit as well.

During your visit, make sure that you talk with both graduate students and faculty. Students typically have the best insight into the program and can tell you about the informal graduate student culture. We highly recommend that you talk to students who have graduate teaching (GTAs) or research (RAs) assistantships (e.g., funding to attend graduate school) to find out what is expected of you in those roles as well as talk to students who *do not* have teaching or research assistantships in order to learn how they function in the department. Unfortunately, students without funding are often seen as "second class citizens" by their graduate student peers. It is helpful, then, to learn how those with no funding are perceived. Learning this information can provide great insight into how graduate students are treated overall. We recommend that you ask these specific questions of graduate students during your visit:

1. What are student/faculty relationships like?
2. Are faculty willing and available to work with students?
3. Do graduate students get along with each other?
4. Are graduate students encouraged to submit their research to conventions and journals?
5. Do graduate students collaborate on research and class projects?

During your pre-arranged appointment with the Director of Graduate Studies, we encourage you to ask:

1. What do you perceive to be the department culture?
2. What are your recent graduates doing?
3. How long does it typically take students to progress through your program?
4. What percentage of students applying is accepted into the program?
5. What percentage of students is awarded funding?

You should also arrange to meet with several faculty members in your prospective area of interest. You can learn who these people are by reading some of their research prior to your visit. Most faculty members will post or reference their most recent publications on their department websites. Download their most recent articles and read them. Reading their work beforehand will allow you to talk with some knowledge about their area and will help you make a good impression with them! We add a note of caution here, however: Do not select a graduate program simply because you “clicked” with one specific faculty member. Often faculty will move to another program at another school. As such, it is important that you apply to a program where you feel as if you can work with several different faculty members. During your visit with faculty members, you may wish to ask the following:

1. Do you anticipate taking on new students to work with you (as advisees, as graduate researchers, etc.)?
2. What research projects are you currently working on?
3. May students work with you on research projects? If so, how do you involve students with your research?
4. Where are *your* most recent graduate students/alumni?

Finally, you might consider meeting with recent alumni from the program, face-to-face (another good reason to attend conferences) or via phone or email.

### ***“Now what?”***

Once you have gathered this information, consider the program(s) that best fit your academic interest, will help you meet your career goals, and provide the kind of department culture that you (and your family, if applicable) desire. Some programs and faculty mentors are more demanding of a student’s time than others, so keep that in mind. We also recommend, particularly if you are relocating, that you get teaching, research, or tuition reduction funding from the graduate program that you plan to attend, as it will greatly lessen your financial burden.

## **STRUCTURE OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS: MASTER’S (M.A./M.S.) OR PH.D. (DOCTORATE)?**

Probably one of the most important decisions that you will make is whether or not to go to an M.A./M.S. program or a combined M.A./M.S./Ph.D. program. There are three options to consider. You can apply to a Master’s-only program, a program that offers both Master’s and Ph.D. work, or do work at a Master’s program and transfer to a Ph.D. program. There are distinct advantages and disadvantages to each option, a few of which we highlight.

### ***Master’s-Only Program***

Master’s-only programs, typically called “terminal Master’s,” provide students the opportunity to finish graduate work in two years. These programs generally range from 30–36 hours of graduate work, and they include either a thesis or

professional paper. There are several advantages to beginning your graduate work at an M.A./M.S. only program. First, you do not have to compete with higher level Ph.D. students for assistantships or in classes. Combined Master's/Ph.D. programs typically give funding priority to Ph.D. students, often leaving few assistantships for M.A./M.S. students.

Next, you are able to build close mentoring relationships with faculty advisors in an M.A./M.S. only program, as you will have a graduate committee chair who will supervise your thesis or professional paper. Many Master's program faculty engage in research and are interested in working closely on joint projects with students. Not only is this a great opportunity to work closely with a faculty member (often limited only to Ph.D. students), it can provide you with an opportunity to gather data for your thesis. Again, you will not be competing with Ph.D. students for your advisor's time and energy. A third advantage of attending a terminal Master's program is that there is a finite end point to your degree. You can finish your degree and take a break before beginning doctoral work, should you choose to continue at a different institution. Finally, because you have worked closely with graduate faculty in a terminal Master's program (who are typically well-known in the field), you can request letters of recommendation from them where they can speak more specifically about your academic qualifications than faculty from your undergraduate institution. This will serve you particularly well if you decide to pursue a Ph.D.

### ***Master's/Ph.D.***

There are also advantages to going to a combined Master's/Ph.D. program. Perhaps the largest advantage is that you only have to apply to graduate school once. If you enroll as a Master's level student, you would first fulfill the requirements for your M.A./M.S. and then progress on to your Ph.D. studies. Generally, you would complete your comprehensive examinations and/or thesis/professional paper before becoming a Ph.D. student.

A second benefit of enrolling in a combined Master's/Ph.D. level program is that you receive the benefit of both a wider variety and often a more challenging set of classes. Ph.D. programs typically have more faculty than M.A./M.S.-only programs, so there are more classes from which to choose. Additionally, M.A./M.S. and Ph.D. students enroll in the same courses, so new M.A./M.S. students may be taking classes with Ph.D. students in their final year of coursework.

A third benefit is that even as a Master's level student, you can always participate in research. All faculty members at Ph.D. programs have active research agendas, often have some grant funding, and will be looking for paid and unpaid research assistants. This is an excellent way to get research experience and work on a project that could become a thesis or dissertation.

### ***Pursuing the M.A./M.S. and Ph.D. Degrees at Different Schools***

Students may also choose to go to different schools for their M.A./M.S. and then their Ph.D. While this does involve two applications (one to the Master's program and a second to the Ph.D. program), the benefits of studying at two

different programs can be immense, for the reasons outlined above. One big advantage is that you will have greater breadth, as you will have worked with a larger variety of faculty and students at the two institutions. Most, if not all, Ph.D. programs will accept (and actively recruit) students who have completed their Master's degrees at other institutions, and many smaller institutions will prefer that students obtain their Master's degrees elsewhere.

### ***Graduate Non-degree***

If you are unsure if you wish to pursue graduate study and want to decide if graduate school is the right choice for you, consider enrolling as a graduate non-degree student. The process for attending classes in this capacity varies by institution and program, so the best place to investigate this option is to go directly to the university graduate school website. Most graduate programs will allow you to take up to nine credit hours before you have to enroll as a full-time graduate degree seeking student. It is also important to check with the DGS of the communication program to learn their procedures for allowing people to enroll as non-degree students. This is a wonderful way to "get your feet wet." Moreover, if you make a good impression with the faculty, it might facilitate easier entry as a full time student in the program.

### ***What if I want to attend graduate school part time?***

Most programs include some students attending full-time and some part-time. Some programs are designed around part-time students. Other programs are geared toward distance learning. Still others may have full time in-residence requirements. It is important to have a clear sense of the focus of the program and expectations for students before you apply.

## **WHAT TYPES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT ARE AVAILABLE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS?**

The primary forms of financial support for graduate students are (a) Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA), (b) Research Assistantship (RA), (c) fellowship, (d) tuition waiver, and (e) educational loans. Each program is able to offer different types of support and this information will be available on university and program (department) websites. Start with the university's Graduate College/School (or Office of Graduate Studies) website and follow up with materials the particular program provides. Most Graduate Schools have a fellowship specialist who can answer questions; the Director of Graduate Studies from the program you are interested in can provide specific information on what the program can offer.

Admission to a graduate program does not guarantee financial support (as we have already noted), thus it is important to read carefully and ask questions in order to clearly understand what support is available and what is offered, if anything. For some programs, the financial offer comes at the same time you are admitted to the program. For others, financial support decisions are made separately. For example, a student may be admitted and offered a GTA position

or a fellowship upon admittance, or the financial offers may come later, if the program is able to make them.

Programs can differ significantly in terms of what kinds of financial support they can offer. The most common support from graduate programs in communication is the *GTA* or *RA*. Both of these opportunities usually pay an annual stipend (anywhere from \$10,000–\$18,000), for approximately 20 hours of work per week during the academic year. Students may be able to apply for summer teaching or for additional work. In most programs, GTAs and RAs attend school full time (normally two to three classes per semester), and are usually unable to hold other employment during the academic year. GTA and RA positions may also include a waiver of tuition; in some cases waiving all tuition and in other cases, waiving out of state tuition, with students paying the in-state rate. Some programs include tuition waivers in the summer and others do not. Other financial incentives may include health insurance (full or partial), and travel money for students to attend conferences.

*Fellowships* are grants that may be awarded to students at the time of admission and can range from several hundred dollars to several thousand. Some fellowships are given for the first year only and others cover multiple years in the program. Some programs have fellowships for more advanced students, for example, those working on their dissertations. Students may also apply for fellowships from external foundations, and these fellowships may provide travel money for thesis or dissertation research or perhaps a full year of support. In addition to the monetary value, fellowships may be listed on one's curriculum *vitae* (academic resume or CV) under "awards" and carry prestige for the recipient.

Some programs can offer a *tuition waiver* to students even if they do not have a GTA or RA position (see above for details on tuition waivers). Finally, students may apply for *loans* through the campus financial aid office. This process is similar to applying for loans during the undergraduate years.

### **"What are the duties of GTAs and RAs?"**

GTAs perform a variety of tasks, such as assisting with courses taught in the department (e.g., grading, lecturing, or supervising recitation sections). As a GTA, you may teach your own "stand alone" courses, often after gaining experience assisting a faculty member with the course. Some advanced graduate students have the opportunity to develop and teach their own courses. Some departments reserve stand alone courses for more senior GTAs. Programs differ greatly in the types of training and supervision of GTAs and in the teaching opportunities available.

RAs work on research projects with faculty members. Most RA positions are funded by grants and graduate RAs may work on research with one or more faculty members. Some students may have a combination of both GTA and RA positions.

### **HOW DOES THE APPLICATION PROCESS WORK?**

While the specifics of the application process are unique to every university, there are commonalities as well. Study the application procedures at each university, which are found on websites and in written materials (look at materials

from both the Graduate College and the specific program in which you are interested). Once you have read these materials carefully, the Director of Graduate Studies from the program will be able to answer additional questions you may have.

### **"To how many programs should I apply?"**

Graduate programs differ greatly in the percentage of applicants they are able to accept in a given year and the percentage of students who are offered GTA or RA positions. You may ask the Director of Graduate Studies about the program's acceptance rate. As we discussed above, students should consider carefully background, goals, and fit with the program to make decisions about where to apply, and you may want to consider acceptance rate as well. Some students will also have geographic limitations due to family or jobs. However, *do not* be afraid to make a move to attend the right program. Moving and experiencing a different location can also be a great opportunity and growth experience. In the end, a good rule of thumb is to apply to between four and six programs to provide the best chance of admission and the greatest number of opportunities.

### **"Where and when do I apply?"**

In most cases, students apply to the Graduate College and also to the individual department/program, and they need to be admitted to both places. In most cases, admission to the Graduate College happens first. They are looking at degree(s) earned, that the student meets the minimum GPA (usually 3.0), completion of any required tests (e.g. the Graduate Record Exam (GRE)), and English proficiency for international students (TOEFEL test scores). If the specific program is able to offer admission, that decision will normally come separately, following acceptance to the Graduate College. Application materials are typically due between January 1<sup>st</sup> and March 15<sup>th</sup> for fall admission. Some programs go through the admission process for both fall and spring semesters, but fall admission is the most common. Check the websites for specific deadlines.

### **"What will I send in?"**

Applications for the Graduate College and the department are usually available online. Students may be able to apply online or may need to print, complete the application (typewritten), and mail it in. There is often an application fee to apply to the Graduate School/College. Review all of the application materials carefully and make sure to submit all materials requested and to the right place. Graduate Schools will often require your college transcripts and completion of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). International students will have to provide TOEFEL scores in most cases.

Individual programs will require different materials, but it is not unusual to ask for a curriculum vitae, a personal statement of goals, a writing sample (a thesis chapter or one of your best papers), and evidence of teaching effectiveness (for students who have teaching experience). Your *curriculum vitae* should detail your education, previous employment, and experiences relevant to the program



to which you are applying (e.g., awards, volunteer work, training, and presentations you have given). Normally, these documents are no longer than one to three pages for graduate school applicants.

A *personal statement of goals* is an opportunity for the program to get to know you as a person and to get a sense of your fit with its curriculum and faculty. Sometimes the program will stipulate the number of words for this document. If they do not, we recommend about 350–400 words (approximately 1.5 pages). In this statement you should be clear about your goals, how you perceive your fit with this particular program and faculty, and a sense of what you wish to emphasize. In other words, why are you applying to this particular program? While personal growth is a fine goal, programs are looking for a well thought-out sense of fit with their curriculum and personnel. If the program does not ask for a personal statement, we suggest you include a cover letter with your application materials that speaks to these issues.

When programs ask for *writing samples*, they are looking to see how well you think and write. Send them the best example of your scholarly work, for example, a chapter from your thesis or an excellent classroom paper. It is fine to go back, edit, or rewrite this document before you submit it. It should represent your best writing.

### **"What else should I know about writing the admissions essay or personal statement?"**

While this may seem obvious, we encourage you to read carefully the requirements for the essay or personal statement. Too many applicants lose points because they try to use the same essay/statement for every program. Often these essays come across as "canned," and you can lose credibility in the eyes of evaluators because you have not tailored your essay to the program to which you are applying. With that in mind, do your homework on the school and program, and use this information to introduce yourself and how your interests match the program's emphases. You may wish to discuss pivotal books, experiences, or teachers who have motivated you, note experiences or aspects of your character that outweigh any weaknesses in your record (without making excuses for poor performance in the past), your scholarly interests, and a future career that appeals to you and why. In sum, make your essay upbeat, convincing, persuasive, and keep it short, as noted above. Finally, edit, edit, edit! Poor writing is unacceptable.<sup>1</sup> One of the authors of this chapter recently received an application essay where the author continuously referred to her "collage carrier" (e.g., college career) throughout. Needless to say, she was not recommended by the graduate review committee for acceptance to the program!

If you are applying for a GTA position, then you may be asked to send along *evidence of teaching effectiveness*. Programs will not expect these materials from students applying for Master's programs, but it is fairly common that doctoral students will come with teaching experience. Send a summary of teaching evaluations for two or three classes, if you have these. If not, you may want to

1. The authors are indebted to Dr. Nancy Mattina, The Writing Center at the University of Montana, for this information.

ask a faculty member to observe your teaching and write a short summary of your performance. If you do not have teaching experience, explain that in your personal statement. If you have other experience (e.g., you were a grader, supervised recitation sections, or attended teacher training) or any other experience related to teaching, discuss that in your personal statement.

### ***"How concerned should I be about the GRE Exam?"***

Taking the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is required for many programs. Our experience is that this exam seems to be the most stressful part of the application process for many students. In reality, the exam is much like the SAT and ACT exams, so you can think back to taking those exams before college and recall how you did. It is wise to do at least some reviewing for the GRE and especially helpful to take some practice tests. Remember, that for most programs, the GRE score is just one source of information about a candidate, so do your best, but realize this is not the only thing programs review. Some programs have minimum scores that they accept while others do not. Feel free to talk to the program's Director of Graduate Studies if you have questions or concerns.

### ***"Do I need letters of recommendation?"***

Most programs ask for three or four letters of recommendation. Some programs provide a form for the letters and, in other cases, the letter writers write on their institution's letterhead. Most programs require that recommendations be sent directly to the program. Some forms allow the applicant to waive the right to see the letter of recommendation. In general, these waivers should be signed so that the graduate admissions committee can be assured that letters were written in confidence.

These letters are very important, so select your letter writers carefully. Most, if not all, of the letters should come from your professors (doctoral-level GTAs may write a letter too, but we advise not getting more than one letter from a GTA). Choose letter writers who will be most familiar to the graduate program to which you are applying and who can speak to your academic qualifications specifically. Short, unspecific letters are of little help to those trying to evaluate your qualifications and fit with the program. Normally, programs look for a letter from a student's advisor, especially when the student is applying to a doctoral program. If the advisor is not among those providing a letter, it is wise to discuss this with the Director of Graduate Studies from the program to which you are applying. If a student has any weaknesses in his or her record, for example lower GPA or GRE scores, it is wise to ask your letter writers to address this directly in their letters. It is also helpful for letter writers to discuss a student's progress toward degree, if the student is still completing the degree at the time of application. Once your recommenders agree to write a recommendation for you, make sure they have all the materials they need to remember your performance in detail (such as a transcript, a list of your accomplishments, and/or a resume), and the deadline and specific information about where to send the recommendation. Students should send reminders to letter writers four to five days before the letter is due (do not be shy about this, letter writers can forget). For more information on letters of recommendation see <http://www.unl.edu/cs>.



### ***"How do I know if all my materials arrived?"***

You may contact the Graduate Administrative Assistant in the program(s) to which you are applying to make sure your file is complete and all the materials you submitted and all recommendations have been received. Give the office two to three days after receipt of your materials to get everything filed. Apply early enough so you can correct any problems that may arise.

### **I APPLIED, NOW WHAT HAPPENS?**

Once you are admitted to the Graduate College, usually there is a wait to hear from the program. Most programs have a committee that considers all the files, ranks the candidates, and then makes admissions decisions. They will make students offers of admission and then wait to hear if the students accept. If you are accepted, you may receive a phone call from the Director of Graduate Studies or Department Chairperson, or you may receive a letter or email notice. Usually you will receive a letter detailing the offer or letting you know the program cannot offer you admission at the time. If you do not hear back right away, do not lose heart. You may still receive an offer, but it may take some time before the program knows if they are able to extend an offer to you. If you have not heard back from the program a month after your application, it is fine to check with the Director of Graduate Studies about the status of your application. Email is likely the most efficient way to check.

When you receive an offer to join the program, this should include the name of the program and degree, financial benefits, if any (e.g., GTA or fellowship or when you may expect to hear about this), and a starting date. A resolution by the Council of Graduate Schools stipulates that students have until April 15<sup>th</sup> to make a decision about whether they are going to accept the offer and most universities adhere to this agreement. Understandably, programs will appreciate an answer as quickly as you can reasonably provide one and often prefer to have your final decision earlier than the Council of Graduate School's date. If you cannot accept the offer, decline it within 24 hours so that an offer can be made to another student who is waiting anxiously. Our advice is to do your research on the program and community up front and be ready to make your decision as rapidly as possible for everyone's sake.

### ***"What do I do when I receive an offer of admission?"***

When you receive an offer, make sure you understand the details. Talk it over with advisors and others you trust. If you have new questions, talk with students and faculty in the program. Ask questions that will help you determine if this is the right place for you. We advise that you talk with multiple people—do not let one person sell you or sour you on a particular program.

If you have not visited and are unsure whether to accept the offer, you may want to do so at this point. Arrange your visit through the Director of Graduate Studies. Some programs pay your way or help with expenses and others do not. Some programs plan all their visits for one particular weekend, and if they do

this, they will let you know. Again, we advise you to set up these visits quickly after receiving an offer, as programs will hope for a decision from you as soon as possible.

If you are waiting to hear from other programs, go ahead and contact them; let them know you have an offer(s) and inquire when you might have a decision from them. While it is tempting to wait out all your offers to see what would have happened, our advice is to give your offers careful consideration. When you have an offer you are happy with, make your decision. You will feel relieved, and the programs will appreciate a decision in a sensible amount of time.

Once you have made a decision, contact the Director of Graduate Studies right away via phone and/or email to let them know you will be joining their program. Ask them what steps to follow from this point in terms of completing paperwork, registering, and the date you need to begin. As soon as you confirm your acceptance, contact all other programs from which you have offers, and let them know your decision. Email is fine for this contact. Thank them for their offer, and let them know you have decided to go to school elsewhere.

Once you have made your decision and accepted an offer, the program will expect that you honor this commitment, just as you should expect the university to honor its agreement with you. If anything happens that will alter your ability to follow through, it is critical that you contact the program immediately by email and follow up with a phone call or letter. For a copy of the Council of Graduate Schools "Resolution Regarding Graduate Scholars, Fellows, Trainees and Assistantship" see <http://www.cgsnet.org/Default.aspx?tabid=201>.

### **"What happens if I am not admitted?"**

Of course not being admitted to a program or not being admitted to the top program you desire is disappointing. If this happens, we suggest that you sit down with trusted faculty members and talk this through. They may suggest that you contact Graduate Directors from programs to which you applied to see if you can learn anything to help strengthen your application in the future. You should know that many graduate programs are only able to admit a very limited number of students. In any given year, the program may be admitting fewer students than in past years. As difficult as it can be, these are issues over which you have little control, but you can explore them for any areas of weakness you may have. You may need to undertake steps to strengthen your application and/or expand your search for a graduate program in the next round of applications.

## **RECOMMENDED RESOURCES**

- National Communication Association. (n.d.) *NCA Graduate Program Directory*. Available from National Communication Association Web site, <http://www.natcom.org/ComProg/GPDHTML/Scripts/GradDir2.htm>.
- Braithwaite, Dawn O. (2006). *So you'd like a recommendation?* Available at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Department of Communication Web site: <http://www.unl.edu/cs>.
- Council of Graduate Schools. (2006). *Council of Graduate Schools: Advocacy, Research, and Innovation*. Available at: <http://www.cgsnet.org?Default.aspx?tabid=201>.

# 3

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## ***Socializing Yourself into Graduate Study and the Communication Discipline***

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As individuals make the transition from their undergraduate educational experience to a Master's-level degree program, from their Master's-level degree program to a doctoral program, or from employment in the private sector to a graduate program, it is essential that they negotiate the nuances associated with successful role and cultural socialization (Staton & Darling, 1989). These nuances include learning the requirements and expectations associated with being an effective graduate student and professional scholar, dealing with the increased academic demands and rigor that accompany graduate study, developing an awareness of the cultural understanding and social practices of both an academic department and an institution, and identifying and adhering to the philosophical, theoretical, methodological, and ethical practices that comprise membership in an academic discipline (Gaff, 2002; Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Staton & Darling, 1989).

Once these nuances have been negotiated, only then is it possible for individuals to become socialized into their new role as graduate students. Socialization, which is considered broadly as “the process through which an individual becomes part of a group, organization, or community” (Austin, 2002, p. 96), is vital to the success (or failure) graduate students may experience. Because no two graduate programs are alike and because no two graduate students experience socialization in the same manner (The Professions and Socialization, 2001), developing an

understanding of the graduate student socialization process is essential to an individual becoming a functioning and contributing member of a department, institution, and academic discipline. Moreover, the socialization process can affect the extent to which graduate students are committed to their academic program (Austin, 2002) and whether they even complete their graduate degree (Gaff, 2002).

The purpose of this chapter is to help prospective communication graduate students navigate the socialization processes they will encounter as they consider graduate study in our discipline. To do so, this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section explores the socialization process associated with graduate study. The second section examines the socialization process into the communication discipline. The third section identifies several ways in which graduate students can become actively involved in their own graduate school socialization experience.

## **THE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS AND GRADUATE STUDY**

Several communication researchers have examined the organizational socialization process, both inside and outside the academy (Bullis & Bach, 1989; Cawyer & Friedrich, 1998; Jablin, 1987, 2001; Schrodt, Cawyer, & Sanders, 2003; Staton, 1990; Staton & Hunt, 1992). Of these researchers, Jablin (1987) was the first researcher to propose a three stage model of socialization. The first stage is the anticipatory stage, which occurs when individuals begin to prepare for future organizational positions. During this stage, individuals form expectations about jobs, careers, and organizations before entering the work force (Jablin, 1985a), although they have not yet chosen a particular vocation or sought employment at a specific organization. The second stage is the assimilation stage, which begins when individuals have begun employment in a specific position at a specific organization. During this stage, organizational members are integrated into the reality or culture of the organization over a period of time with hopes of getting them to share the same norms and values of the organization (Jablin, 1987). The third stage is the exit stage, which occurs when individuals disengage from an organization, typically due to job transfer, organizational change, or retirement (Jablin, 1987).

Using Jablin's (1987) model as a template, Myers (1995b) developed a model of socialization for graduate teaching assistants (GTA, or graduate students who hold an assistantship). He proposed that similar to other organizational newcomers, GTAs progress through anticipatory, assimilation, and exit stages of socialization, but the components that comprise each stage are unique to the academy. (Although his model was developed to explain the socialization of GTAs, it is applicable to the socialization of graduate students because, similar to GTAs, graduate students are organizational newcomers to a department, institution, and academic discipline.) The components of the anticipatory and the assimilation stages now will be reviewed as a way for prospective graduate students to consider how socialization occurs in the academy.

### **Anticipatory Stage of Socialization**

Four components comprise the anticipatory stage of graduate student socialization (Myers, 1994a, 1995b). These four components are biography, vocational choice, organizational choice, and preservice training.

*Biography* refers to the biographical features of prospective graduate students, which includes their personality and communication traits and characteristics, their social experiences, and their educational experiences (Staton & Hunt, 1992), including their attitudes toward learning and teaching. Lortie (1975) posited that through years of close contact with their primary and secondary school teachers, individuals internalize the work of their teachers. This internalization exerts an influence on them before they enter any professional training program (Staton & Hunt, 1992), which would include graduate study in a master's-level or doctoral degree program.

*Vocational choice* refers to the examination of relevant information-providing resources by graduate students as they seek a particular organizational position (Jablin, 1985a). These resources can include family, peers, media, prior employment, and educational institutions (Jablin, 1985a, 1985b). For graduate students, vocational choice most often centers on their personal needs and interests (Feldman, 1988) that influence their decision to pursue a particular field of study or enrollment in a graduate program. Myers (1994a) found that an interest in the subject matter and an enjoyment of the subject matter were the primary reasons why graduate students decide to pursue graduate study in a particular field of study whereas needing the degree for their intended career plans and an enjoyment of learning were the primary reasons why graduate students enroll in a specific graduate program.

*Organizational choice* refers to the examination of relevant information about an organization through either a reading of organizational literature or engaging in interpersonal interactions that inquire about the organization (Jablin, 1985b, 1987). For graduate students, organizational choice explains the methods of inquiry they use to inquire about graduate study at a particular institution. These methods include researching the institution (e.g., guidebooks, catalogs, Internet), seeking recommendations from professors, contacting the academic department, soliciting opinions and advice from peers or family members, responding to the academic department's recruiting efforts, and general "word of mouth" (Myers, 1994a). Moreover, Myers found that the quality of the academic program, the physical location of the institution, an assistantship offer, and the faculty were among the factors influencing whether graduate students chose to enroll in a particular degree program.

*Preservice orientation or training* refers to the orientation that graduate students receive prior to the start of their graduate program or the training that graduate students receive prior to commencing their duties as a GTA. It should be noted that although not all graduate students will apply for or be awarded a teaching assistantship, it is not uncommon for graduate students in the communication discipline to serve as GTAs (Nyquist & Wulff, 1987), particularly as instructors who teach the basic communication course (Morreale, Hugenberg, & Worley, 2006). In a national survey, Pooch (2004) found that university-wide graduate orientation sessions generally are offered during the fall semester where attendance

is optional and covers general topics such as graduate school and university policies, the services available to graduate students, insurance coverage, and computer, library, and health facilities. Conversely, GTA training sessions often are a one-week (or shorter) session held prior to the fall semester, tailored to a particular department, and focused on job duties, policy, and procedure (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray, 1990; Gartner, 1993). Unfortunately, the impact of GTA training often is short-term rather than long-term (Rodriguez, 1985) and GTAs leave training sessions desiring additional information on topics such as grading, lecturing, and managing student behavior (Williams & Roach, 1993).

In sum, the anticipatory stage of socialization provides graduate students with the opportunity to explore the reasons why they want to attend graduate school, pursue a particular area of study, enroll in a specific department or at a particular institution, learn more about services offered by an institution, and determine whether an assistantship is a viable option. To facilitate progression through this stage, graduate students would be well-advised to consider the questions contained in Table 3.1. The answers to these questions not only can help graduate students identify their expectations and concerns about their prospective graduate school experience, but can affect the rate at which graduate students become assimilated into a department, institution, and academic discipline. These four components (i.e., biography, vocational choice, organizational choice, preservice training) also are applicable to students who choose to pursue a career in the private sector after completing graduate studies.

### ***Assimilation Stage of Socialization***

Three components comprise the assimilation stage of graduate student socialization (Myers, 1995b). These components are supportive communication relationships, information acquisition methods, and communication concerns.

**Table 3.1 Questions to Ponder during the Anticipatory Stage of Socialization**

- 
1. What do I find enjoyable about learning?
  2. What are some features I associate with my favorite teachers and professors?
  3. Why am I interested in attending graduate school?
  4. What are my career plans after I obtain a graduate degree? Do I plan to seek employment or continue my graduate studies?
  5. Why am I interested in my proposed field of study?
  6. What do I know about my proposed field of study?
  7. Who or what has influenced me to continue my education?
  8. Who or what has influenced me to gain admission to a particular department or institution?
  9. Am I interested in obtaining a graduate assistantship?
  10. What qualities do I have that would make me an effective GTA?
-

*Supportive communication relationships* highlight the range of significant others who support the development of any young professional (Kram, 1988). For graduate students, the most significant relationships in which they engage are the mentor-protégé relationship, the faculty-student relationship, and the peer relationship. Mentors, who are considered to be “senior, experienced organizational members who help young professionals develop technical, interpersonal, and political skills” (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993, p. 171), provide multiple benefits for graduate students. These benefits include providing students with academic advice and career guidance; assisting with issues related to departmental policies, procedures, climate, and culture; providing students with networking opportunities; providing students with the information they need to be successful; and serving as a source of support (Hill, Bahniuk, & Dobos, 1989; Myers, 1995a; Waldeck, Orrego, Plax, & Kearney, 1997). Although initiating a mentor relationship is not an easy task (Waldeck et al., 1997), graduate students who are mentored report resoundingly that their mentor was helpful (Myers, 1995a) and their participation in the mentor-protégé relationship was meaningful, satisfactory, and productive (Waldeck et al., 1997).

The faculty-student relationship is important because not only do faculty members engage in consistent interaction with graduate students, they also serve as advisors and mentors for graduate students. A national study of graduate students conducted by Weiss (1981) indicates that sustained interaction with faculty creates graduate students who are productive, have high levels of commitment, and have a strong sense of self-identity. Graduate students who view faculty members as being supportive are more likely to interact with them and view the department as collegial (Weidman & Stein, 2003). Highly active graduate students also receive more sponsorship and forms of encouragement from their faculty members and their advisors than less active students (Corcoran & Clark, 1984). Graduate students who are provided with useful information by their advisors develop better work relationships, are more committed to the academic role, and are more productive (Green, 1991).

The peer relationship, or relationships with other graduate students and GTAs, is recognized by graduate students for both its social value and its advisory value (Austin, 2002). Peer relationships are characterized by informal discussions, mutual stimulation, and exchanges of ideas (Corcoran & Clark, 1984) and are particularly important for GTAs in that peers aid each other in the day-to-day-sensemaking, adjustment, and skill development needed for the new occupational role (Darling & Staton, 1989). Furthermore, experienced GTAs act as interpretive guides and mentors for newcomer GTAs (Boyle & Boice, 1998; Darling & Staton, 1989) and provide the resources needed by those newcomers to develop the necessary attitudes and skills (Darling, 1987). Indeed, interactions with both newcomer and experienced GTAs are considered to be among the most helpful and available socialization activities for graduate students (Myers, 1994b, 1997).

*Information acquisition methods* refer to the ways in which graduate students seek information in order to be successful in graduate school. Closely linked to the development of supportive communication relationships, graduate students seek information from mentors, faculty members, peers, department personnel (e.g., secretary), and even students in the form of seven information-seeking



strategies: overt, indirect, third party, testing, disguising conversations, observing, and surveillance (see Miller & Jablin, 1991 for a review of these strategies). Of the seven strategies, Myers (1998) found that GTAs use the overt information-seeking strategy the most frequently and the testing information-seeking strategy the least frequently. He further found that GTAs seek information from their mentors by asking for the information either directly or indirectly whereas GTAs seek information from their peers through either observation or a third party.

*Communication concerns* are defined as the concerns graduate students have about communicating with significant departmental others, which include faculty, peers, and for GTAs, students, parents, and administrators. To date, the study of communication concerns has centered exclusively on GTAs. For GTAs, communication concerns emerge in the form of *self* concern (i.e., concerns about their communication abilities), *task* concern (i.e., concern about their ability to teach effectively), *impact* concern (i.e., concern about their ability to affect student learning), and *role conflict* concern (i.e., concern about their ability to balance their roles as graduate student and GTA) (Staton-Spicer, 1983; Potee, 1993). Although GTAs express all four types of communication concerns (Feezel & Myers, 1997), beginning GTAs typically express more self concern than task or impact concern (Darling & Dewey, 1990). Over time, GTAs express more task and impact concern (Myers, 2000).

In sum, graduate students, and in particular GTAs, who develop supportive communication relationships with their faculty members and their peers, actively seek information about their program of study and assistantship duties, and are concerned with how they communicate with faculty, peers, and students should encounter fewer obstacles and face fewer constraints as they progress through the assimilation stage of socialization. To track their progression through this stage, graduate students should address the questions contained in Table 3.2. Doing so creates an opportunity for reflecting and understanding what it means to be assimilated into the academy as a graduate student (Gaff, 2002) as well as what it means to be assimilated into a vocation outside the academy.

## THE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS AND THE COMMUNICATION STUDIES DISCIPLINE

To become further socialized into graduate study, having an understanding of the academic discipline is necessary (Dues & Brown, 2004; Gardner & Barnes, 2007). “What is Communication Studies?” is one question often posed to graduate students in Communication Studies by individuals (i.e., family members, significant others, friends, coworkers) and is a question that students new to the discipline may even ask themselves. Before this question can be answered, however, there are three additional queries that should be explored prior to formulating a response. These three questions are “What communication questions am I interested in answering?,” “With which tradition(s) of communication discipline do I identify?,” and “Which methodological tools will I use to answer my questions?”.

Poole and Walther (2001) wrote a monograph based on input provided by several communication scholars who were charged with identifying emerging



**Table 3.2 Questions to Ponder during the Assimilation Stage of Socialization**

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1. Have the expectations I formed during the anticipatory stage of socialization been met or unmet?
  2. To what extent have I developed supportive communication relationships with the faculty and my peers? What types of supportive communication relationships am I interested in developing with the faculty and my peers?
  3. Have I attempted to develop a mentoring relationship with a faculty member or peer? If so, how? If not, why not?
  4. What effects, if any, has interaction with the faculty had on my professional development?
  5. Which information-seeking strategies do I use? How helpful are these strategies?
  6. Which communication concerns do I have? How have these concerns impacted my academic performance? How have these concerns impacted my GTA performance?
  7. At this point, to what extent do I feel involved in my department? At this point, what do I need to do to become (more) assimilated into my department?
  8. How rewarding was my graduate school experience?
  9. What advice would I offer prospective graduate students on how to progress successfully through the assimilation stage?
- 

issues in communication. Believing that communication research makes a difference and will continue to be relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Poole and Walther concluded that communication research (a) maintains and enhances a vigorous, self-renewing democracy; (b) promotes the health and well-being of all people; (c) helps organizations and institutions prosper in the emerging global economy; and (d) improves people's lives and relationships. In their monograph, they offer questions that need to be addressed by communication researchers for each of the four emerging issues. As individuals enter graduate study and are introduced to (or immersed in) a plethora of communication topics, they eventually must make a decision about the communication questions and issues they would like to address and study.

In an effort to highlight the relevance of communication scholarship, *Communication Currents* was created as an online magazine by the National Communication Association. The purpose of *Communication Currents* is to reach a greater audience for communication research and to demonstrate the applicability and utility of communication research. The content is based on recently published scholarship, but presented in a form that is understandable to a lay audience. One way to investigate research topics that are receiving attention by communication scholars is to read the current and archived issues of *Communication Currents*.

Additionally, as students become socialized into the communication discipline, they likely will be introduced to the primary traditions surrounding the study of the discipline. Scholar Robert Craig (1999) attempted to organize the fragmentation of communication studies by summarizing seven traditions of the disci-

pline: Rhetorical, Semiotic, Phenomenological, Cybernetic, Sociopsychological, Sociocultural, and Critical. Each of these traditions, which differ in how it theorizes about communication as well as its vocabulary, focus, and breadth and depth of study, is listed in Table 3.3. While students generally are not forced to select only one tradition to study, depending on the choices they make (e.g., in terms of which institution to attend graduate school, what classes to take, what books to read), ultimately they will spend considerably more time focusing on one or two traditions while minimizing their attention to the other traditions.

In graduate school, students will be exposed not only to different traditions of theorizing about communication, but they also will have the opportunity to explore the various research methodologies used to study communication. Five common research methodologies in the communication discipline include (a) critical/rhetorical, (b) conversational/textual analysis, (c) survey/interview, (d) observational, and (e) experimental (Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 2005). Critical and rhetorical research examines communication acts and their consequences. Conversational and textual analysis focuses on the structure and content of conversations to identify how people accomplish their goals. Survey and interview research is used to describe or identify people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Observational research involves watching how individuals interact with each other in a natural setting. Experimental research consists of controlling and manipulating variables to study people's behaviors.

Interestingly, any research topic can be researched using any one (or possibly more than one) of these five research methodologies. For instance, the same topic—graduate student socialization—can be studied using a variety of research methodologies. If an individual was interested in studying the socialization process of new graduate students, conversational and textual analysis could be employed to examine the transcripts of conversations that occur between newcomer GTAs and experienced GTAs. Another possibility might involve asking

**Table 3.3 Traditions in the Communication Studies Discipline**

1. Rhetorical: Communication is the practical art of discourse (e.g., analyzing the speech of a presidential candidate to identify patriotic themes)
2. Semiotic: Communication is the intersubjective mediation by signs (e.g., exploring the historical usage and meaning of a current racial slur)
3. Phenomenological: Communication is the experience of otherness (e.g., studying the acculturation process of Swedish students into American universities)
4. Cybernetic: Communication is information processing (e.g., examining the impact of noise in teaching an on-line course)
5. Sociopsychological: Communication is viewed expression, interaction, and influence (e.g., testing which compliance-gaining strategies are most effective in the superior-subordinate relationship)
6. Sociocultural: Communication is the production of social order (e.g., identifying the diffusion of an American innovation into other countries)
7. Critical: Communication is discursive reflection (e.g., describing the impact of the muted voices of a culture on the culture's dominant group)

new students to complete a questionnaire about how others in the department have communicated with them and their overall sense of belonging at the end of the semester, which is an example of using the survey and interview research methodology. New GTAs might shadow an experienced GTA for a semester, resulting in a case study of that individual's experiences of starting graduate school (i.e., an observational research methodology).

Ideally, graduate students would receive training in and gain practical experience with using all five research methodologies. While there may be some stubborn and dogmatic voices that argue otherwise, one research methodology is not superior to another research methodology. Graduate students learn that as researchers, the human phenomena (i.e., research questions) with which they are interested in investigating often will indicate the appropriate research methodology for their studies.

To gain more understanding of the traditions and research methodologies contained with the communication studies discipline, graduate students should answer the questions posed in Table 3.4. Doing so will provide students with a sense of direction for approaching their prospective graduate studies.

### **GRADUATE STUDENT INVOLVEMENT AS THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL SOCIALIZATION**

Gardner and Barnes (2007) noted that an excellent way for graduate students to become socialized is through involvement, which they posit begins at the local level and proceeds to the national level. At the local level, one way for graduate students to become socialized into an academic department is to become an active departmental and campus citizen. Attending department meetings, colloquia, informal gatherings, and formal functions; volunteering to serve as a student representative on department committees; representing the department at institutional events; attending campus-wide training and development sessions;

**Table 3.4 Questions to Ponder about the Communication Studies Discipline**

1. What communication questions am I interested in studying? Researching? Teaching?
2. Which traditions of Communication Studies do I find most appealing? Least appealing?
3. With which traditions do I have a basic understanding? Which traditions are foreign?
4. Which research methodologies do I find most appealing? Least appealing?
5. With which research methodologies do I have a basic understanding? Which traditions are foreign?
6. How might these traditions and research methodologies inform my proposed area of study?
7. How might these traditions and research methodologies prepare me for a career outside the academy?

and participating in department- or institution-sponsored outreach programs are several examples of how graduate students can increase their visibility, demonstrate their commitment and interest, and gain valuable insight and professional experience.

A second way is for graduate students to become active classroom participants. Unlike the undergraduate collegiate experience where students generally are passive in the classroom and are not motivated to participate (i.e., initiate questions, respond to questions, offer comments, contribute to class discussion) during class (Howard & Baird, 2000), graduate students are expected to be active participants in their own learning, both during and out of class. Many graduate courses are taught in a seminar format, in which the course instructor facilitates discussion of the assigned topics and readings. Course assignments often require extensive out of class time, reading, and preparation in addition to completing library research and conducting data analysis. Graduate students who either fail to immerse themselves into department and campus functions or are less than dedicated to their academic studies not only hurt their chances to become assimilated into the profession, but implicitly suggest that they are not committed to graduate study.

At the regional or national level, perhaps the best way for graduate students to become involved in the discipline is to join state, regional, or national associations. Not only does joining an association enhance students' professional development, but most associations host an annual convention and publish one or more academic journals to which graduate students can subscribe. The benefits of convention attendance are attending panel presentations conducted by content experts, visiting the textbook display center and scanning the most recent textbooks or periodicals available for course adoption or personal purchase, and developing working relationships with other scholars and instructors (Hickson, 2006). The benefits of journal subscription include keeping abreast of the latest theoretical and methodological developments and uncovering potential new research and teaching interests. Joining an association also enables graduate students to submit papers for potential presentation at its annual convention, to become involved in association governance, to participate (e.g., serve as a chair or paper reader) in the convention process, and to initiate and develop relationships with their peers enrolled in graduate studies at other institutions.

Still other ways of becoming involved during graduate school are to participate in community endeavors, conduct training sessions for campus (e.g., student government association, fraternities or sororities) groups on basic communication competencies or skills (Beebe, 2007), or serve as a volunteer coach or advisor for the forensics team. Not only do these activities represent a way to further the socialization process, they also provide practical experience that might be helpful when seeking employment after graduation whether within or outside the academy.

Above all else, perhaps the most practical way to become involved, and ultimately progress successfully through the socialization process, is to promote and maintain open lines of communication with faculty, advisors, mentors, administrators, and peers. Whether this communication occurs in-class (e.g., asking questions, contributing to discussion) or out-of-class (e.g., working in a lab, attending office hours), takes place face-to-face or through mediated means

(e.g., e-mail), or centers on academic or personal issues, engaging in communication is the best way for students to obtain advice or counsel, address academic successes or failures, identify expectations and challenges, and facilitate relational development. Doing so not only will contribute to students' professional and personal development, but will make the graduate school experience much more enjoyable and rewarding.

## CONCLUSION

Considering the possibility of graduate study is not a task to be taken lightly. Gaff (2002) noted that many students enter a graduate program without having a full awareness of the time, money, energy, sacrifices, and perseverance needed to successfully complete the program. In a similar vein, Austin (2002) stated that prospective graduate students often have an undeveloped understanding of the three components (i.e., research, teaching, service) that comprise academic life. Learning about the socialization process, associated generally with graduate study and specifically with graduate study in communication, will make the transition into any graduate program, an already cumbersome experience, much easier.

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## ***Gaining Credibility and Achieving Focus***

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The graduate school experience provides opportunities for students to position themselves for future careers. Included in this preparation are opportunities to develop teaching, research, and service skills—the three common touchstones that define academic life. While these three standards are more directly applicable to a career in higher education, they are also relevant to those who wish to pursue a career in business or the professions. This chapter focuses on research, teaching, and service, in turn, offering insights and suggestions to engage students in their graduate education.

### **RESEARCH**

This portion of our chapter explores the importance of graduate students becoming engaged researchers at the onset of their studies. We also discuss how to start a research agenda, different ways of asking questions and learning about the research process, and the different research expectations of varying colleges and universities.

#### ***Using Graduate Education to Start***

Being a graduate student is the optimum time to start a career as a researcher. The Council of Graduate Schools (2007) reported that too many doctoral students

do not gain the needed research skills to complete their dissertations because they are not engaged in research projects from the beginning. Although not suggested, the same conclusion seemingly would apply to Master's degree students in writing their theses. The Council recommends graduate students become engaged in the research process from the onset of their graduate studies, although this may be more problematic for marginalized groups who are typically faced with greater challenges in finding and working in the academy (see Turner, 2002) and may, therefore, need to seek on research opportunities.

Textbooks in research methods and statistics provide detailed explanations of the research process (e.g., Babbie, 2007; Gray, Williamson, Karp, & Dalphin, 2007; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Graduate students use the understanding of research methods as a foundation for developing communication research projects. Other graduate classes become laboratories to conduct research in a supportive environment. Faculty, serving as research mentors and critics of student work, provide feedback to help hone student research skills and prepare their work for presentation during professional conferences. Conferences serve as an excellent "first venue" to disseminate research findings. Participating in professional conferences is important to each student's development as a communication scholar. Students need to search for appropriate venues in and out of communication studies to submit work for presentation.

There are many professional organizations that welcome communication scholarship. Beyond the obvious state, regional (Central States Communication Association, Eastern Communication Association, Southern Communication Association, and Western Communication Association), national (National Communication Association), and international (International Communication Association) communication associations, there are professional associations in communication-related disciplines (e.g., history, English, popular culture, broadcasting, sociology, political science, journalism, psychology, and management). Research each organization before submitting your work to locate the appropriate venue for each professional presentation.

Do not think that learning research skills is important only for a scholarly presentation or publication. Learning and applying research skills is important in business and industry as well. Students familiar with research methods and procedures make significant contributions to their organizations as collectors and analyzers of data pertinent to organizational success. Equally important to conducting research is the ability to read, understand, and synthesize data. There are multiple sources of data available to organizations, and they need employees competent in research to help use those data effectively.

### ***Using Research Assistantships Effectively***

Some graduate students are fortunate enough to receive appointments as research assistants (RA). Even if one is not a RA, graduate students need to seek faculty mentors during the first semester of study to enhance their learning and expertise at conducting research. Multiple authors point out the importance of a mentoring faculty member to evaluate and monitor graduate student progress toward degree completion (Jaschik, 2007; King, 2003; Nettles & Millett, 2006). Graduate students need to learn about faculty research interests *and* approach

faculty who hold similar research interests. These relationships provide opportunities to learn the research process while collaborating with a faculty member. At the same time, faculty-graduate student research teams afford opportunities to learn about and witness the ethical nature of good scholarship (Hutchings, 2002; Kahn and Mastroianni, 2002; Kirsch, 1999; Zeni, 2001).

Remember, though, faculty members' goals for their research agenda are different than a graduate student's agenda. With the goals of the faculty member preeminent, the faculty-graduate student relationship frequently results in coauthored research—benefiting both the faculty member and graduate student. If a student is appointed as a RA, the graduate student should seek to capitalize on its potential. All graduate students need to forge research relationships with interested faculty. Students need to communicate regularly with their faculty mentor, constantly inquiring about what to do next in the research process. Sometimes a student's participation in a research project involves conducting information searches and tracking down specific source materials for faculty. Sometimes a student's involvement is learning about the research process, helping in the creation of research questions or hypotheses and the research design itself. Sometimes the student becomes intimately involved with the analysis of qualitative or quantitative data collected. At other times, the student coordinates the collection of the necessary data. If the student has sufficient research knowledge and expertise, the faculty member likely will rely on the student's expertise in the process. Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, and Hutchings (2008) noted the appropriate role for mentors, "Our ideas about mentoring require letting go of the notion of sole 'ownership' of a student and recognize that students are better served with multiple mentors, albeit with one or two taking primary responsibility for the team" (p. 15).

The specific role for each student, whether a RA or not, is determined by the faculty mentor and dependent on the knowledge and expertise of the student. Students must demonstrate to the faculty member that their research skills are of value. While this burden rests with all students, students from marginalized groups will be served well by ensuring that their skills are evident to potential mentors. Simply asking to work with a potential mentor may open doors. At the same time, students need to view the relationship as both a learning opportunity and as the beginning of their professional development as scholars. Even if not fortunate enough to have a RA appointment, graduate students need to promote themselves to faculty to participate in appropriate research projects. This faculty member-graduate student collaboration serves to jumpstart the professional development of each graduate student *prior to* graduation. This is especially important for doctoral students. If doctoral students enter the job market without an established record of scholarship—professional presentations and peer-reviewed publications—they likely will lack the credibility to be a competitive candidate.

### **Research Expectations for Faculty at Different Institutions**

Although research is defined differently by each college and university, the role of the faculty-scholar has not changed. The goal of the faculty-scholar is to

produce research to disseminate to others inside and outside of the communication discipline. Periodically, there are calls to change depictions of scholarship—the latest is titled *The formation of scholars: Rethinking doctoral education for the twenty-first century* (Walker et al., 2008). Graduate students must understand these differing research expectations. As Boyer (1991) pointed out, “At most institutions it’s much better for a professor to read a paper at a convention at the Hyatt in Chicago than it is to teach undergraduates effectively back home” (p. 5). This statement is as true today as it was then; there simply are institutions that value faculty research more than they value the quality of their teaching. At the same time, graduate students need to develop clear career goals and expectations sensitive to their knowledge, expertise, and interests. Given these three variables, let us briefly explore some general research expectations to consider in developing a career focus.

If a graduate student is ultimately seeking employment in a university department that offers graduate degrees, especially a doctoral degree, there will be specific and clearly defined faculty research expectations. If a graduate student is seeking a faculty position at an institution offering only an undergraduate degree, there are varying expectations. For example, some of these institutions have few research expectations because they prefer faculty to be excellent teachers and highly engaged members of the university and local communities. Other undergraduate degree-only institutions expect faculty to be engaged as a classroom teacher and service-to-the-community provider, with some research expectations. Finally, there are few, if any, research expectations for faculty members at two-year institutions, community colleges, or technical schools. Cochran (1992) concluded, “There is no doubt that the expectations of a faculty member at the University of Minnesota are different from those at Central Michigan University, which are different still from those at Gettysburg College” (p. 63).

Along the same lines, expectations for publication venues appropriate to promotions and/or receiving tenure also vary. Some institutions expect publications in only the top-tier journals (e.g., *Communication Monographs*, *Communication Education*, *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *Journal of Communication Studies*, *Human Communication Research*, etc.). Other institutions are more supportive and accepting of publications in regional communication journals (e.g., *Communication Studies*, *Southern Communication Journal*, *Communication Quarterly*, etc.). Other institutions recognize publications in state communication journals or in pedagogy or instructional publications (e.g., *Communication Teacher*, *Teaching Ideas for the Basic Communication Course*, etc.). If writing a chapter for an anthology or annual, be sure the institution recognizes their value in promotion and tenure guidelines.

Graduate students need to develop realistic personal career goals and understand the expectations of their potential employer to make sure they match. This is important so the graduate student *and* her or his employer can realize the benefits of their investments. McCroskey (1999) noted that to become a valued and respected professional, graduate students need to continue to improve their research skills and consider how those skills can be used effectively in the workplace. For example, students entering the workforce possessing the skills to interpret research data and design data collection methods are valued in any organization.

For students seeking positions in the private or public sector, matching appropriate educational objectives with employer expectations is essential. Demonstrating the theoretical background and practical skills necessary for the demands of professional careers provide the foundation for long-term career success. As a graduate student with these aspirations, develop a list of knowledge and skill competencies requisite for the positions linked to career goals. Understanding requisites for relevant entry positions provide specific benchmarks to create a course of study. Finally, developing a professional portfolio demonstrating the specific skills and talents desired in business and industry is essential. It is important to create this portfolio from the beginning of graduate study and to supplement its contents throughout graduate study.

### **Getting Started as a Researcher**

So, where does a graduate student start? How does a graduate student develop a research agenda? There are multiple responses to this question. Let us explore a few of these responses below.

*Reading journals.* There is no substitute when starting to conduct research than reading published research. Graduate students will find value in becoming familiar with published communication research. This awareness creates opportunities to replicate studies, to use pre-existing scales, to use existing data bases, and/or to expand on research already published. At the very least, graduate students become informed scholars and students, providing the foundation for their research interests.

*Graduate coursework.* When appropriate, graduate students should capitalize on the research conducted to complete coursework. Every paper a graduate student turns in is not appropriate or good enough for presentation—much less publication—consideration. Before revising a course paper for presentation or publication, a brief discussion with the instructor would be beneficial. Ask the instructor for feedback related to three questions: (a) Is the topic significant enough to warrant sharing the findings with others? (b) What needs to be changed before submitting this work to a professional outlet? and (c) What is an appropriate venue for the project? Whatever the advice received from the faculty member, the graduate student should adhere to it. Do not ask for a faculty member's advice and then fail to follow it.

*Developing research questions.* Another way to get started is to study what one is interested in. When reading material for courses, write down questions that come to mind. Keep track of these interests and questions so, when there is time, each can be further investigated to determine their research potential.

Research is methodical—so it must be systematic. Graduate students should not be afraid to ask for help along the way. As a graduate student, seek the guidance of more experienced graduate students or faculty at any stage of the research process. Finally, present the research for feedback *before* submitting for presentation or publication consideration. Graduate students should not hesitate to schedule a colloquium and present their research to peers and interested faculty. The session should be organized to allow those in attendance to ask questions and provide feedback. These comments should be written down for use during the revision process. This is not the time for the graduate student

to be defensive to others' feedback. The graduate student must focus his or her listening skills to garnish the most from these comments to improve the manuscript for submission. As a researcher, learn to deal with criticism and rejection from others. If the graduate student is overly ego-involved in her or his research and its value, he or she will be "offended" and "hurt" by feedback from reviewers—which is usually negative. Consider the current acceptance rates of our major journals posted on the National Communication Association website (e.g., *Journal of Applied Communication Research* = 3.85%; *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* = 9.9%; *Communication Education* = 11%; *Communication Monographs* = 15%; etc.). After reviewing these data, remember that when submitting a manuscript for publication consideration the likelihood of receiving negative comments is far greater than the likelihood of receiving positive comments. Learn to recognize and use constructive criticism.

*Collaborative research teams.* The adage "two heads are better than one—three heads are better than two" applies to conducting communication research. Collaborative research is another alternative when getting started as a novice communication scholar, whether one intends to work in business, the professions, or academe. Working collaboratively enhances the research process for each participant. A good way to learn about research is to work with others. In conducting collaborative research projects, everyone capitalizes on the strengths of each contributor and learns from their expertise. One collaborator may be strong at conceptualizing research, another strong at data collection and analysis, and another at cogent and exemplary reporting the research in writing.

There are some issues related to collaborative research. First is the ability to work with one another. Nothing is more frustrating than working with others on a project when each possesses a different agenda or different work ethic. If these areas are incompatible between collaborators, the research will languish and may never be completed. If this occurs, all the benefits of collaborative research are negated and no one will have an enjoyable experience. Whether working alone or in teams, research needs to be fun.

### ***Developing a Research Portfolio: Outside the Academy***

In preparation for graduation and employment, prepare to demonstrate clear evidence of successful research—both in presentation and publication. A research portfolio should incorporate more than papers completed for coursework. The portfolio should demonstrate a range of research skills seeking answers to a range of research questions. The portfolio should include copies of papers presented during conferences. The portfolio should also include all peer-reviewed publications. The portfolio is a persuasive document demonstrating a graduate student's promise as a communication researcher.

While portfolios are useful for obtaining positions in an academic environment, Hansen (n.d.) notes that portfolios, which have been used for many years by artists, journalists, and teachers, are increasingly useful in a variety of job searches. Additionally, Hansen notes that a portfolio allows job seekers to demonstrate the depth of their experience and enhance or obtain interviews. For example, students who have concentrated their study in public relations or organizational

communication, may develop a portfolio demonstrating their research, as well as their creative skills (Walton, 2008).

Being an active researcher demonstrates an engagement in the community of scholars and contributes to one's skills as a teacher. As a teacher, reading current research, completing literature reviews, and executing research projects informs one's instruction.

## **TEACHING**

Many prospective communication graduate students seek a teaching assistantship to help offset the expenses associated with graduate education. In our experience and others' writings, graduate students report that they learn a great deal from their teaching assignments (Avery & Gray, 1993; Gray, Buerkel-Rothfuss, & Bort, 1993). This learning includes pedagogical, personal, technological, and practical principles transferable to a career in the academy, business, or the professions. For example, learning the art of teaching and the integration of instructional technologies provide a solid foundation for graduates seeking positions in organizational training and development. To assist in gaining credibility and achieving focus, this portion of our chapter addresses a range of issues including the nature of teaching assistantships; the role of teaching assistantships in pedagogical, personal, and professional development; and practical steps to take in using teaching assistantship to best position oneself for career advancement.

### ***The Nature of Teaching Assistantships***

Institutions construct teaching assistantships in a variety of ways. Epstein (1974) noted that teaching assistants (TAs) may assist a professor in a class with a variety of tasks including grading, serving as a discussion section leader, or acting as the teacher of record. Today in communication departments most TAs function as either the primary teacher of an assigned number of sections or as a breakout leader for a large lecture course. While TAs, especially at the doctoral level, may teach upper division courses, most teach a basic course, the topic of which can vary from among institutions, but which typically focuses on public speaking, interpersonal communication, or introduction to human communication (Morreale, Hugenberg, & Worley, 2006). Therefore, teaching assistantships are very common in departments of communication and play a vital role in undergraduate communication programs (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray, 1990; Nyquist, Abbott, Wulff, & Sprague, 1991; Vangelisti, Daly, & Friedrich, 1999).

Pursuing a teaching assistantship is a worthy goal because as Allen and Rueter (1990) explained, assistantships offer a variety of benefits including providing financial support, ensuring teaching experience, complementing graduate education, personalizing undergraduates' education experience in large universities, using human resources more effectively, and helping to socialize graduate students. Additionally, Most (2002) noted that students who receive assistantships are more likely to complete a Ph.D. than those who do not. Additionally, campuses like the University of Colorado at Boulder have put in place programs to encourage minority enrollment so that students who come from marginalized



groups have greater access to assistantships, which opens the door of opportunity to more students, even though there remains an ongoing need for such programs.

*The roles of TAs.* While understanding the overall nature of teaching assistantships provides basic information, knowing more about what TAs actually *do* is equally helpful. Allen and Rueter (1990) identify four types of roles for TAs. While Allen and Rueter's work is now somewhat dated, the roles they identified continue to represent the common TA experience in communication studies.

First, TAs fill instructional roles that require them to interact with undergraduate students in the classroom. As a result, they are responsible to lecture, lead discussions, develop course syllabi, create assignments, make and grade tests, master instructional technologies, and ask questions. In short, TAs must teach. While teaching includes a set of complex behaviors, one may think of teaching using this acronym: T—*trim* the content to fit the class time; E—*explain* the content so that students comprehend it; A—help students *apply* the content to their own experiences; C—*clarify* the content or assignments when students have questions or difficulties; H—*help* students succeed. Second, TAs fill roles that focus on interacting with undergraduate students outside of the classroom. In these interactive roles TAs provide feedback to student work, give advice about academic matters, and tutor individual students. Third, TAs fill administrative roles including planning teaching, administering multi-sectioned courses, integrating technology, taking and reporting student attendance, constructing tests, grading assignments, and keeping records. Fourth, TAs also assume institutional roles, which vary by institution but typically include being an office mate, coaching forensics, a member of a teaching staff for a particular course, and a citizen of a particular academic institution (Allen & Reuter, 1990).

In reviewing these roles and the associated responsibilities, many students feel twinges of anxiety or panic. As Darling (1999) noted, new TAs have mixed feelings including triumph and terror. She further explained, "Questions about your ability to handle the new responsibilities and challenges will probably be present for you during much of your first year in the program" (p. 49). Therefore, in understanding the nature of teaching assistantships, it is important to understand the training that accompanies this opportunity.

*GTA training.* The subject of TA training is richly represented in communication literature. As early as 1979, Staton-Spicer and Nyquist identified the need for TA training and described a newly implemented TA training program at the University of Washington. Their work highlighted an ongoing need for TA training (Ferris, 1992). Over time, several researchers have also noted that GTA training has matured, yielding insights into both research and practice (see Buerkel-Rothfuss & Fink, 1993; Harter, Graham, Norander, & Rossi-Keen, 2006; Hendrix, 2000; Williams, 1995). Additionally, a nationwide program, launched in 1993 by the Council of Graduate Schools and Association of American Colleges and Universities, entitled *Preparing Future Faculty*, focuses on enhancing graduate students preparation for a career in the academy (see <http://www.preparing-faculty.org>). Moreover, resources such as the book entitled *Basic communication course best practices: A training manual for instructors* (Hugenberg, Morreale, Worley, Hugenberg, & Worley, 2007) have emerged to assist in TA training.

What does this information mean for prospective graduate students? At minimum, graduate students should expect to receive initial and ongoing training



in order to prepare them for their role as a TA and as a potential future faculty member or professional using these transferable skill sets. The nature of this training varies from institution to institution, and may include a one-week teaching seminar held prior to the beginning of a semester, a graduate course in pedagogy, regular course staff meetings for professional development, occasional single sessions dedicated to teaching topics or instructional technologies, and online tutorials. Take full advantage of the available training. While some training will be required, other opportunities will be voluntary. For example, some institutions, including the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (see <http://www.oir.uiuc.edu/Did/TAs/GTC.htm>) offer graduate teaching certificates, while others, such as the University of Texas at Austin (see <http://www.utexas.edu/academic/diia/gsi/>) provide a variety of services for TAs. Even though one's daily schedule will be crowded with course work, research and teaching responsibilities, develop the practice of sharpening and refining one's instructional abilities. This practice creates the important habit of ongoing professional development. One of the worst conclusions graduate students can reach after a term or two teaching is that they are now master teachers.

### ***The Role of Teaching Assistantships in Pedagogical and Personal Development***

The *Graduate student employment handbook for teaching assistants and associates* (2003) from the University of California at Davis concludes with these words:

In addition to being a source of income and a way of defraying the costs of graduate school, being a TA is an important part of the professional development of a graduate student. As a teaching assistant, you have the opportunity for “hands on” learning pedagogy and pedagogical skills, just as the research assistant learns lab work “hands on.” Serving as a TA is an important professional development activity. It gives you the opportunity to add both pedagogical skills and good classroom methods to your professional repertoire (p. 16).

This paragraph effectively summarizes the value of being a TA; this opportunity provides both pedagogical and personal development. Consider each of these advantages further.

*Pedagogical development.* There is only one way to learn to teach and that is to actually teach. Although, as noted earlier in this chapter, teaching is weighted differently in different types of educational institutions, it is still important to a life in the academy. The national conversation as a result of the Spellings Commission formed in 2005 has called attention to the need for greater accountability in higher education including attending to ensuring effective instruction in higher education (see <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/index.html>). Teaching, then, remains important for graduate students as they develop toward becoming future faculty members and/or readying themselves for careers in business and the professions.

Teaching well requires that one learn a great deal. An instructional skill set includes learning to plan a course, including choosing texts, developing syllabi, establishing a course calendar, integrating technologies, and selecting assign-

ments. Instructors must develop the skill of engaging students in class with different teaching methods including lecture, discussion, online learning objects, experiential learning, community engagement, and service learning. Teachers are more successful when they use instructional technology effectively for best results, including computer software applications, online delivery of course materials or instruction, and using course management software such as Blackboard or WebCT. Managing interpersonal relationships with students in and out the classroom is also important, including responding to incivility, poor academic performance, absenteeism, lack of motivation, and grade appeals. Evaluating student work and keeping clear, official records are also central to teaching well.

Teaching, then, is both an art and a craft and includes a complex variety of skills (see Worley, Titsworth, Worley, & Cornett-Devito, 2007). However, as Weimer (1990) argued it is a myth that good teachers are born and not made. With time and reflection, TAs can begin the journey toward developing skills to become excellent classroom teachers or successful in business and the professions. Many academic institutions and communication associations present teaching awards to TAs to recognize that they are, indeed, valuable and effective instructors who impact student learning.

*Personal development.* Not only do TAs gain pedagogical knowledge and skill, they also develop personally. As Darling (1999) notes, becoming a professional in graduate school is the result of a socialization process that includes agents, activities, and role development. The agents of socialization include self, peers, and faculty, while the activities are a graduate orientation, ongoing encounters, and identifiable turning points. Business contacts developed during service-learning initiatives also socialize graduate students interested in pursuing careers outside of academe.

During graduate school, TAs pass through development stages of socialization beginning as a senior learner and then progressing to a colleague in training, and finally a junior colleague. Sprague and Nyquist (1991) summarized TA development in four different areas. First, TAs develop with regard to their own concerns. Initially, TAs, especially as classroom teachers, are concerned about themselves and surviving the multiple challenges they face. In time, they become more concerned about their skills and the ultimately the impact they have on their students' learning.

Second, TAs change how they talk about their disciplines. Initially, they are pre-socialized because they do not have a command of a given discipline. After immersion in a discipline, TAs become socialized and learn the language of their discipline. As TAs mature in their discipline they are post-socialized; they can articulate their views in dialogue with people from other disciplines or areas of specialty.

Third, TAs change their approach to authority. TAs are dependent on authority and look to their mentors for insight and affirmation. With time, however, TAs tend to become more independent or counter-dependent. That is, they develop their own sense of competence and/or even confront their senior colleagues. Finally, TAs become interdependent or collegial, developing respect and dialogue with peers.

Finally, TAs develop with regard to their approach to students. As a new TA one may identify with undergraduate students and become very engaged

with them. At this point, TAs may view their students as friends or even victims who are brutalized by the system. After a semester of teaching, however, some TAs begin to see their students as enemies. TAs report that their illusions are shattered and they, therefore, become more defensive. With the passage of time, however, TAs become more detached and may tend to see their students as subjects on whom they try out various pedagogical strategies. In the end, TAs are likely to view students as clients with needs; they become concerned about the impact of their teaching and student learning. Ultimately, as TAs become professionals they change in numerous ways. Over time they may grow cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally to distinguish themselves as professionals with transferable skill sets appropriate to a variety of careers.

### ***The Transferable Skills of Teaching Assistantships: Outside the Academy***

As Darling (1999) noted, “Many individuals who take a graduate degree in communication enter the academic workforce; they become teachers and professors at institutions of higher education. Others, in increasing numbers, enter the business arena, usually providing some sort of consultation, training, or personal coaching” (p. 57). When planning for a career outside higher education, a teaching assistantship is still a very valuable experience. Careers in consulting, training, or coaching involve teaching and use of instructional technologies, albeit in a different way. For example, many of the concepts and skills one teaches in a basic oral communication course are directly relevant to working with others in addressing communication questions or challenges. Issues such as organization of ideas, use of clear and compelling language, and attending to nonverbal cues are equally important in coaching others.

Many of the skills you learn from classroom instruction are transferable. Even if you intend to pursue a career in business or some other arena, the communication, time management, technological, and organizational skills you gain from classroom teaching are useful. A teaching portfolio can be merged with a professional portfolio, so that you can demonstrate that you have gained important skills applicable in the working world outside the academy. The interpersonal skills you have gained in working with students are important preparation for working with clients or colleagues. Additionally, given that you have had to juggle multiple responsibilities as a teaching assistant, you have learned how to organize your time and manage your work flow; these are all transferable skills that will serve you well in the public or private sector outside of the academy.

## **SERVICE**

Graduate school prepares professionals in a variety of domains, predominately teaching, research, and service. If graduate students believe life is hectic during the graduate school years, such years are preparation for experiences yet to occur. During graduate study, one is immersed in learning content and completing the responsibilities of a TA or RA. The domain of service is significant and may

be overlooked, ignored, or perceived as insignificant. However, service provides opportunities for understanding the organizational system as well as networking outside the university. Begin service as a graduate student as early as possible to learn transferable skills and augment one's curriculum vitae.

Being engaged in service creates opportunities for professional networking and learning how the department or organization functions. Although research on and discussions of graduate student service are sparse, we encourage students to consult with one's mentor and create a service component appropriate to one's workload. There are three levels of service: (a) departmental/institutional, (b) professional, and/or (c) civic/community service.

First, departmental/institutional service entails involvement in activities that structure the institution where one is engaged in graduate study. Graduate students may find opportunities to work with student organizations. Involvement and inclusion can create the potential for service opportunities and help the graduate students become an integrated member of the community. Serving on departmental program committees, faculty search committees, accreditation committees, or becoming involved in activities such as graduate student governance gives graduate students a voice on campus and prepares them to be productive members of the learning community (see <http://www.aera.net/Printable.aspx?id=275>).

Second, professional service within one's academic discipline is indispensable. Although contributing ideas on a panel at a professional conference may be preferred, serving as a panel chair, assisting the local arrangements committee, and participating within divisions and caucuses provide vital networking opportunities. By demonstrating the ability to plan, manage, organize, lead, commitment, persevere, tolerate, and coordinate effectively, graduate students can meet others who share similar interests while expanding their knowledge and experiences not available in the academic curriculum.

Establishing connections within an academic discipline are important, furthermore establishing networks on- and off-campus are vital to the reputation of an institution, a graduate student, and the impacted community. Simply, networking in the academy or in the business community establishes the graduate student because of these formed relationships. One's ability to form and maintain healthy relationships is at the core of emotional intelligence theory (Nelson & Low, 2003) which is valuable for career success. Toward the goal of incorporating emotional intelligence into everyday life, volunteering to do civic or community service constitutes the third service possibility.

The Corporation for National and Community Service suggests that America's young people want to and can make a real difference in their communities (see <http://www.learnandserve.org/about/lsa/index.asp>). Through service learning, graduate students can apply their areas of expertise toward analyzing a problem or need within a community, help the community problem solve, and maintain a long-term relationship with the public. As ambassadors of the institution, academic discipline, and area of specialization, service learning can make a real difference in students' careers and communities.

With demands on one's time, graduate students should select appropriate service commitments; no one can be involved in everything. Talking with one's mentor aids in learning how a particular level and type of service will enhance

the graduate school experience and support the department or university's mission. The following questions should be asked before engaging in service as a graduate student: (a) How much time is required to serve as a competent member of the committee or project team? (b) How will serving on a committee or project team benefit the department or university? (c) What skills and insights will be gained by participating on the committee or project team? and (d) How will engagement on this committee or project team affect other commitments to teaching and research?

Outside the academy, employers expect employees to be actively engaged in their work teams, the organizational culture, and many other tasks outside the responsibilities of position each employee holds. Supervisors notice employees who are willing to engage in the organization and do more than their job description outlines. Learning to engage in service opportunities as a graduate student provides excellent preparation for the graduate student entering an organization with an advanced degree in hand.

## SUMMARY

This chapter has provided practical suggestions for graduate students in engaging opportunities for developing transferable research, teaching, and service skills. While pursuing a graduate degree is demanding, given the multiple demands on one's energies and time, engaging the experience wisely and seeking to balance the competing responsibilities and opportunities yield the necessary preparation to succeed in a future career either in the academy or business and the professions. There are multiple opportunities available to motivated graduate students to improve their skills and enhance their understanding of communication. In the final analysis, it is up to the student to pursue these opportunities—or not.

Whether moving from a Master's degree to a doctoral program, graduating with a Ph.D. and seeking a faculty position in academe, or using the advanced degree to enter private enterprise or public service, we noted that identifying specific objectives for graduate study form the foundation for eventual success. The knowledge gained and the skills honed will serve each graduate student's career well—either in the academy or in business and industry. In business and industry, conveying information to others (teaching), using technologies appropriately, understanding data and how to collect appropriate information (research), and becoming engaged in the organization and its members (service) are valued commodities.

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## ***Accomplishing the Mission: Creating a Partnership with Your Advisor\****

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The faculty advisor is all important to a student's success in graduate school, and most students figure out immediately that this is a significant partnership. In fact, the relationship with an advisor can be one of the most important of a lifetime. Not only can the advisor affect the kind of thesis or dissertation the student does but also the time it takes to complete the degree, the kinds of career options available, and the trajectory of research and scholarly interests. Whether the relationship is good or bad, productive or ineffective, an advisor and advisee are connected for a lifetime by reputation ("So you studied with . . ."), professional association (meeting at conventions will be the least of it), and even friendship—some advising relationships become and remain close over a career.

Advisor and advisee can be thought of as partners on a mission to ensure that the student successfully completes the degree. Most students, used to seeing themselves as lower in status than their advisors in terms of expertise, skills, experience, and length of time in the academy, often act deferentially in the

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\* The content of this chapter is adapted from two major sources: A workshop on the advisor-advisee relationship, presented at the University of New Mexico and the University of Western Michigan University (Foss & Foss, 2004) and chapter 11 of *Destination Dissertation: A Traveler's Guide to a Done Dissertation* (Foss & Waters, 2007).

advising situation, accepting and putting up with whatever the advisor hands out. They often assume there is little they can do if they end up with an advisor who does not meet their expectations. There is another option for the student, however, and that is to work behind the scenes to facilitate an effective and productive partnership. The advisee can engage in actions—systematic, clear, and appreciative—that increase the chances the partnership will run smoothly and result in the desired outcome: a completed degree and a strong start to the academic career.

The suggestion that the student engage in covert activity makes sense given the power dynamics of the partnership. Advisors do not necessarily like to think of themselves as in need of help or behind-the-scenes “management” of any kind. But faculty members are busy people with the demands of teaching, publishing, and service that pull them in many different directions (Kalbfleisch, 2002). Perhaps they were not mentored well themselves and do not know what good advising looks like. The advisee, however, can assume agency by initiating certain processes and engaging in certain behaviors that increase the possibilities of an effective partnership. The advisee, in other words, can turn any advisor into a helpful and valuable one despite any distractions or difficulties present.

There are two basic steps in which the advisee engages in the process of creating the ideal advisor who will assist rather than hinder the completion of the degree: *establishing the partnership* and *maintaining the partnership*. By giving these two steps careful and systematic attention, the student can promote a productive partnership with the advisor.

## **ESTABLISHING THE PARTNERSHIP**

The task of the first phase, establishing the partnership, is for advisor and advisee to come to a shared vision about process and product. Together, advisor and advisee answer the question: What is our mission and how do we intend to get there? Many advisor-advisee pairs simply jump into the advising process without considering what expectations each brings to the process, whether those overlap at all, and how they wish to enact the advising partnership. Achieving the desired mission smoothly and efficiently is virtually impossible without a shared vision. The task of this first phase, then, is to make explicit the nature, goals, and processes of the partnership.

A starting point for arriving at a vision shared by advisor and advisee is to consider differences or similarities in demographics and life experiences. These influence the expectations each brings, often unconsciously, to the partnership. For example, the sex of the advisee and the advisor may be an issue. Perhaps both are women or both are men, and certain assumptions of similarity get made on that basis. If both are women, the advisor might make the mistake of assuming that all female advisees are like her—completely devoted to the profession. An advisee who is a mother, on the other hand, might assume that a female advisor will always understand the constraints she is under in the simultaneous roles of wife, mother, and student. Sex also can interact with age, producing traditional sex-role behaviors in either or both of the participants in the advising relationship. A young woman with an older male advisor may fall unconsciously into a father-daughter role, potentially confusing or irritating the advisor and/or the advisee.

Race or ethnicity also can affect the assumptions upon which the advising partnership is established. A person of color may gravitate to an advisor of the same race, thinking that person will be especially understanding and supportive. The advisor, however, may consider it part of the job to toughen up students of the same race to ensure that they will succeed in the academy. Demographics of all kinds can affect the working relationship as the advising partnership begins. These issues may not necessarily be talked about explicitly by the advisor and advisee, but each half of the partnership should be aware of such issues and be prepared to discuss them if they become problematic.

Other issues involved in the establishment phase of the partnership should be discussed explicitly by the student and faculty member: reaching agreement on guidelines about communication in the relationship, reaching agreement on the advising model to be used, and reaching agreement on expectations about the thesis or dissertation. A student should make an appointment with a potential advisor for at least an hour to talk over these issues so that the partnership starts on a clear and solid footing. By initiating discussion about expectations involved and the processes for achieving them, the student is asserting agency and demonstrating a commitment to the advising partnership.

### ***Agreement about Communication***

Establishing an effective working partnership requires an explicit understanding between advisor and advisee about the ground rules governing their interactions. Discussing and reaching agreement on guidelines for communication ensures that the relationship will begin well, with each participant clear about what each can expect from the other as the advising partnership begins. These guidelines will carry the partnership through all of the processes required for the degree—from what courses to take and the plan-of-study meeting to studying for and defending comprehensive exams to writing the thesis or dissertation to finding a job.

A natural starting point for a discussion about ground rules is the extent, nature, and form of communication between the pair. How often will communication occur? Will there be regular meetings—once a week, once every other week, once a month? Or will e-mail or phone calls be the preferred mode of communication? Can the advisor be called at home? Are there limits on when those calls can occur—not before 8:00 a.m. or after 10:00 p.m., for example?

What process will be put in place to record the decisions that are made between advisor and advisee? A frequent problem with advising relationships that span several years is that what is not written down gets forgotten. An advisor may offer several ideas for courses to be taken in other departments but forget about that discussion by the time the formal list of coursework is to be submitted to the graduate school. Or perhaps the student's timeline is discussed, but the advisor keeps asking about it because it has not been written down. Especially frustrating is when an advisor throws out several interesting suggestions for a dissertation or thesis and forgets about them at the next meeting when other interesting ideas come to mind. The advisee benefits from having things in writing to keep the ground from shifting—whether the notes relate to coursework to be completed or a topic for the dissertation.

Not only is it beneficial for the advisee to assume responsibility for keeping track of agreements, but the student should consider the form in which decisions will be recorded. Will the advisee take notes and e-mail them to the advisor after the meeting? Or is the advisee taking notes on a laptop during the meeting and e-mailing them to the advisor immediately at its close? Both parties need to take a few minutes shortly after the notes arrive to look them over and make sure they accurately capture what was agreed upon at the meeting.

After particulars of communication are discussed, issues about how to communicate in order to develop the best working relationship are an appropriate next step. A graduate student may wish to share information with the advisor about preferred learning and working styles. Does the advisee learn by doing, by modeling, or by talking things through? Does the advisee like to be left alone to work on a project once its basic parameters are agreed on? Or does the advisee like constant nudging, reminders, and questions about how things are going? What happens when the student gets stuck? What can the advisor do that will be most helpful when that occurs? What motivates the advisee—rewards, guilt, acknowledgment, praise, or something else? A quick way to get at the heart of the matter is for the advisee to figure out and share the one thing the advisor should never say in an effort to motivate. Then, when the student gets stuck, stress levels rise, and deadlines near, the advisor is communicating in ways that are truly helpful to the student rather than pushing buttons that shut the student down.

Finally, what are the communication practices that will govern the writing process for the thesis or dissertation? This is the part of the advising relationship that often puts guidelines to the test, so talking through communication particulars before the process begins is useful. Issues to address include whether the advisor wants to be notified in advance that a chapter is coming in. Does the advisor want the chapter delivered in hard copy or electronically? Within what time frame will the advisor return a chapter—two weeks, one week, a few days? These discussions enhance the likelihood of creating a successful advisee-advisor relationship that can endure throughout all phases of the student's degree program.

### ***Agreement about the Advising Model***

The advising model that will be used is another major area for discussion important to establishing a strong partnership. Many faculty and students think advising is just advising and assume that the same basic process for guiding and directing academic work applies to all students. In fact, several advising models are in operation in the communication discipline; the three most common models are replication, apprenticeship, and co-creation. All three are legitimate and appropriate, all three can result in good and productive working relationships between students and advisors, and all three can produce high-quality work that results in degrees that are completed on time. What is important is that advisee and advisor agree on the model they will be using throughout the advising process.

One advising model is the replication model. Replication does not mean becoming a clone of the advisor—engaging in identical research or service activities as the advisor, going on to the same Ph.D. program the advisor attended, or taking a job at an institution similar to that of the advisor. Rather, replication

means following the lead of the advisor, who suggests professional activities the student may find useful, invites the student to participate in funded research or other research projects, and asks the student to become a co-author on an essay. The agency lies primarily with the advisor in this model to suggest research avenues, publishing outlets, and co-authorship possibilities.

At the thesis or dissertation stage, the replication model typically is used when the advisor has a funded research project, selects the advisee to work on the grant, and the work done for the grant becomes the thesis or dissertation project. Under this model, the advisor generates the basic plan or formula for the project. The student essentially studies the same topic as the advisor, uses and extends the advisor's data set, and explores the same or similar research questions as the advisor. The advisor structures the bulk of the choices including topic, data, research methods, and questions. The preferences of the advisor drive the student's work throughout the degree process.

Apprenticeship is a second type of advising model. Not unlike apprenticeship positions of all kinds—from the art world to the building trades—the advisee learns from the advisor how to navigate the academic world, but the choices offered are less constrained than in the replication model. Perhaps the advisor and advisee share a research interest, so the advisor suggests various topics that might be possible research projects within that subject area but does not insist that the student participate in the advisor's research program, use the advisor's data set, or adopt the advisor's methodological preferences. Instead, the advisor supervises, suggests, and critiques as a student conceptualizes and works through the choices appropriate at each stage of the process. The student has more agency than in the replication model but still is closely directed by the advisor.

The third advising model available is the co-creation model, and in this model, both advisee and advisor cover territory new to them. This kind of advising model often does not come into play until the thesis or dissertation stage primarily because the earlier aspects of the degree program are fairly rule governed in terms of the number and kinds of courses to be taken, the nature of the comprehensive exam, and the like. But if advisee and advisor have confidence in the ability of the other to engage material in new ways and to ask significant questions, the co-creation model may be an appropriate choice.

The plan for the thesis or dissertation under the co-creation model typically emerges from several long conversations to map out the plan for the project. The pair explores the student's interests, with the faculty member asking probing questions to enable both to figure out the key interests and issues important to the student. As the conversations continue, the particulars of the project—research question, areas to cover in the literature review, and methods of data collection and analysis—get worked out, culminating in a relatively complete outline of the project.

The co-creation advising model gives most of the agency to the student. The advisor has more expertise than the student but does not attempt to tell the student how something should be done or offer patterns to follow in the design and completion of the project. Instead, the advisor takes the lead in asking questions to help the student conceptualize the design of the project. As the project emerges, conversations about it continue, with both advisor and advisee generating new ideas and perspectives that help move the project along. The

thesis or dissertation that emerges from the co-creation model truly is something collaborative and something neither could have produced alone.

Gaining agreement on the kind of advising model under which to work is an important consideration for advisee and advisor, especially at the thesis- or dissertation-writing stage. While a vision of the advising process will not necessarily correspond in terms of every detail, a discussion of the basic model will clarify what is important to each party and will assure that there is enough overlap for them to be a productive team.

### ***Agreement about Expectations for the Thesis or Dissertation***

A final component to consider when creating an advising partnership is expectations about the thesis or dissertation itself. Again, this is the stage at which the advising partnership is most stressed, so discussing expectations about this part of the process up front is crucial. This means finding out about the requirements of the department and university for all stages of the process from writing the prospectus to filing the completed document as well as understanding the advisor's and student's (often different) expectations for a thesis or dissertation.

In terms of the prospectus, questions to ask include: What does a prospectus look like? Does it consist of the first three chapters of the thesis or dissertation, or is it a truncated summary of these parts? What is the procedure for having a prospectus approved? Is there an oral defense of the prospectus? If so, what happens at the defense? Is the student asked to give a presentation? Is the student expected to bring refreshments for those present? Does paperwork of some kind have to be filed following the prospectus defense?

For the thesis or dissertation itself, knowing from the beginning the deadlines and expectations for the official submission of the final document is important to prevent problems that could delay graduation. What is the deadline for graduation in a particular semester? How many copies of the document must be submitted? Are they to be submitted electronically or in hard copy? What does the process of binding the dissertation involve? Is it required? What are the expectations of the department about giving copies, bound or otherwise, to committee members? Does the department require a copy for its library?

What requirements does the Graduate School have for writing and formatting the manuscript itself? Is a particular style guide required—*APA*, *MLA*, or *Chicago*? What is the required width for margins? Are block quotations single or double spaced? Is there a required format for headings? Where can the required signature pages, which often are bordered in red or some other color, be obtained? Does the advisor have samples of outstanding dissertations or theses that can be used as models?

With this information in mind, the next consideration is the advisor's and student's expectations for the dissertation and whether those expectations mesh. What does each see as the function and scope of the thesis or dissertation? Is it an obstacle to be overcome with little assistance from the advisor? Or is the student's competence and ability to design and complete the final project assumed, and the process of writing it expected to be a pleasant and enjoyable one? Is it seen as the culmination of the student's career or simply the beginning?

These questions about expectations for the thesis or dissertation, perhaps more than any others, affect how quickly and smoothly the final project—and thus the degree—gets done. An advisor who took six years to complete a dissertation might assume that a dissertation is supposed to take six years, whereas the advisee conceptualizes it as a very doable project that can be done in nine months. A cautionary note is in order here: Sharing perceptions *per se* is not all that is necessary. Perceptions of the scope of a dissertation can line up but with dysfunctional results. An advisor and advisee might agree that the dissertation is a protracted struggle, and both work to support that vision to the extent that the student never finishes.

Yet other factors for the student to ask about include how to work with the committee. What system will be used for reading the thesis or dissertation? Will the advisor read and approve all chapters first, before the other committee members see them? How much time will the committee need to read the final draft of the thesis or dissertation?

There are additional questions to ask about the defense of the dissertation itself. Is there an oral defense? Who can attend? Is the student expected to make an opening presentation? If so, how long and how formal should it be? What kinds of questions typically are asked at the defense? If outsiders can attend, can they ask questions? Is the student expected to bring refreshments for those present? What will happen at the end of the defense? Is the candidate sent out of the room? If the committee deliberates a long time, what might it mean? What is the range of possible outcomes for the defense? Are revisions likely? Who will approve revisions—the advisor or the entire committee? What happens if the student does not pass the defense?

After completing the thesis or dissertation, students may question whether their work is a good candidate for a conference paper(s) and/or is of publishable quality. Most manuscripts will take cutting and refining, sometimes significantly, for presentation and/or publication. Students may also question whether the advisor should be a co-author on some or all of the work that comes from the thesis or dissertation. Students should initiate discussions about these topics with their advisors. Unless the department or university prohibits it (and some do), many students invite the advisor to be a co-author on some or all of the subsequent manuscripts. First, the advisor can contribute his or her expertise to the project. Second, inviting the advisor is a way to recognize his or her significant contributions to the project. The most important thing is to talk with one's advisor about these questions and know his or her expectations and preferences. If the advisor would like to co-author with the student, the pair should come to an agreement about the timeline and the role the advisor will play in the process.

If the advisee and advisor discuss the thesis/dissertation process in this degree of detail, the student will be as prepared as possible for the process that lies ahead, and the advisor will be confident that the student is fully informed. With this foundation, the partnership is launched, and the advisor-advisee pair can be confident that it is starting off on a solid footing.

## **MAINTAINING THE PARTNERSHIP**

With the partnership between advisor and advisee established, the advisor and advisee put into practice what they have agreed upon in their process



discussions. There are sure to be bumps in the road, however, and the advisee can take the lead in communicating in ways that smooth over these bumps and promote a strong and continuing partnership. Being professional, framing issues collaboratively, backing up the advisor, and appreciating the advisor are some ongoing strategies available for the student to use.

### ***Behaving Professionally***

One set of behaviors in which the advisee can engage falls under the rubric of being professional. This means the advisee acts in ways to uphold the agreements made with the advisor in the establishment phase. Respecting the ground rules, then, is the first and perhaps most important element to being a professional because those rules provide the foundation for the advisor-advisee relationship. The ground rules were developed out of a concern for each other and for a process in which both will engage together, so respecting them is paramount.

Professional behavior is also demonstrated by keeping appointments, being on time for them, and meeting deadlines. While taking appointments seriously may seem like a small and perhaps obvious point to make, many students are casual about such aspects—seeming to forget that faculty are busy with many different demands and simply will not have time for a student who is late, wishes to make up a missed appointment, or turns in a draft long after the faculty member expected it. The irritation factor begins to creep in as well: A student who is perpetually late to meetings or late submitting chapters will become increasingly annoying to the advisor, who may be less likely to take the student and the student's work seriously.

In addition, the advisee should seek to give the advisor polished work at every step of the way. This means preparing carefully for a plan-of-study meeting by thinking through all of the issues to be discussed and giving committee members the documents they will need to assist with the planning process—a curriculum vitae, a list of courses taken at previous institutions and as part of the current degree, preliminary thoughts about the dissertation topic, and a statement of career goals, for example. At the thesis or dissertation stage, where writing many, many drafts is to be expected, each draft should represent the best of the student's thinking, organization, and writing abilities at that moment. The student should check the document for spelling and grammatical errors, make sure references are complete, and follow the appropriate style guide.

By engaging in professional behaviors at every step of the process, the advisee enacts a relationship of respect and competence. Advisor and advisee are moving toward being peers and colleagues, and practicing professional behavior lays the foundation for a strong, professional relationship now and in the future.

### ***Framing Issues Collaboratively***

Despite the work that goes into creating an effective partnership, conflicts can arise. Often, in a conflict situation, problems and issues tend to get framed as opposing positions. The conflict then becomes a conflict of wills because the positions have to be defended. The more time a student and an advisor spend explaining their positions and defending themselves, the more committed each becomes to the different positions and the harder it is to resolve the conflict.



To avoid this kind of polarization, a student can take the lead in framing the issue or difficulty in a way that makes it a problem to be solved together. Perhaps the issue is the advisor's non-responsiveness or tardy response when the student submits chapters of the thesis or dissertation to be read. A typical conversation about the issue might go as follows: The student says feedback on each chapter within a week is necessary for timely progress; the advisor responds by saying that reading each chapter that quickly is impossible due to the many obligations the advisor has at the time. Choosing a collaborative framing, the student can say instead, "It's important that I get feedback to produce a good dissertation. Without timely feedback, I'm at a loss as to how to proceed. Is there something we can do to ensure that I get the feedback I need?" The issue has been framed as one that enables the student and the advisor to collaborate in coming up with an answer that is satisfactory to both.

Another approach to solving a problem collaboratively is to focus on the interests and goals that the student and advisor share. To focus on interests means searching for the shared concerns underlying the different positions. For example, a student's interest might be in graduating at the end of the semester. The advisor might articulate several interests: completing a manuscript due to a publisher in two weeks, giving chapters the time they deserve, and wanting the student to graduate this semester. This conversation reveals a common interest in the student graduating this semester; the student and advisor can build on that shared concern, brainstorming possibilities until they find a workable solution. Perhaps the student volunteers to grade a set of papers or exams or give a lecture in a class the advisor is teaching to give the advisor time to read the latest draft of the thesis or dissertation. The student could offer to bring the advisor lunch one day so the advisor can hole up in the office and read a chapter. Or perhaps the advisor can dictate comments about the chapter into a tape recorder instead of having to write them out. The point is to turn the conversation to a focus on new solutions instead of endlessly discussing the problem and defending the respective positions involved.

### ***Backing up the Advisor***

Backing up a partner during a mission is a common theme of spy and police dramas simply because failure to do so often has dire consequences in real life. While usually not a life-and-death situation in the academy, backing up the advisor is often something advisees do not think about doing. But this kind of back-up can be important to the overall effectiveness of the working relationship.

Backing up an advisor can take the form of understanding the advisor's perspective on a topic or issue. An advisor and advisee will not always see the world the same way, but the advisor undoubtedly has considerably more experience, greater understanding of the nuances of the field, and more astute political savvy. Rather than insisting on a point and not budging, some latitude and even deference are valuable on the part of the student. Perhaps this means taking the advisor's suggestions for a job talk, even though it is not what the student feels most comfortable doing because the student has not been on an academic

job interview before. Maybe it means at least thinking about combining methods to use in a research paper—upon the suggestion of the advisor—rather than adamantly sticking to the one originally selected. Maintaining some perspective is helpful: If the student can keep the bigger picture in mind, giving in to a few requests is not difficult.

A second means of backing up an advisor involves accepting feedback. Accepting feedback is part of being in the academy. Extensive feedback is typical whenever a paper is submitted to a conference or journal or a book to a publisher. Feedback will also be involved throughout the tenure and promotion process and at the close of semesters when teaching is evaluated by students. Accepting feedback graciously is not always easy—and it may be especially difficult coming from an advisor who is respected and admired. Keep in mind that feedback is given for the purpose of improving a project—and it usually does—so learning to accept and take feedback into account is crucial to academic success.

Not taking feedback personally is important: Just because an advisor writes all over a thesis chapter, for example, does not mean the chapter is flawed or the writer is a bad person. Feedback should be taken for what it is—something to help the student learn and grow as a scholar. The advisee, of course, can ask questions about the feedback so there is no confusion about where to go next with the ideas. Also quite appropriate, if the advisor does demand drastic changes, is to ask how what already has been written might fit with the suggested changes: “I’m quite excited about the explanatory schema I’ve developed for making sense of my findings; is there a way you see that schema fitting with what you are suggesting?”

The process of backing up an advisor is never separate from issues of face. Face is the image that someone wants others to see and believe. Just as students want to present themselves in certain ways, advisors also want to manage the impressions others have of them. Like the student, they want to be seen as competent, professional, and reputable. When there is disagreement, a student can threaten the face of the advisor—usually unintentionally—by saying what first comes to mind, either directly to the advisor or to others behind the advisor’s back, without thinking about how the advisor might receive the information. Criticizing, blaming, attacking, and disparaging are all face-threatening acts that generate embarrassment, guilt, anger, or frustration for the advisor. A student committed to an effective working partnership acts in ways to ensure that the advisor experiences none of these as a result of an interaction.

A number of ways are available for communicating so that the advisor saves face. Students can be tactful—speaking in thoughtful, diplomatic, respectful ways. They can frame issues in ways that preserve the advisor’s face—asking to talk about a “minor” issue that has come up or asking for clarification about feedback rather than complaining or arguing about what the advisor has written. If an advisor has not read a dissertation chapter, for example, despite having had it for two months, the student can preface a request for quicker feedback by saying something like, “I know how busy you have been recently with your responsibilities on the university search committee for a new provost. . . .” In

essence, behaviors that save face help the advisor remain committed to the project and willing to be there for the student.

One way for students to remind themselves to think about issues of face is to imagine how they will feel in the future as a result of having engaged in a particular kind of communication. Will they feel embarrassed? Stupid? Guilty? Unprofessional? Students can also imagine how their advisors might feel as a result of an interaction. Will they feel angry? Inadequate? Frustrated? Unenthusiastic? Taking a moment to imagine how both parties might feel after the conflict ends can help students choose to communicate in ways that foster respect and enable the advisor to save face.

### ***Appreciating the Advisor***

Although academicians do not do it as often as they should, appreciating is another strategy that can be used by students who wish to facilitate a successful outcome of the mission to accomplish their degree. A major way students can show appreciation is to do their best to follow their advisors' guidelines, suggestions, and advice. They can be attentive to suggestions about coursework, about how to study for and write comprehensive exams, about how to prepare for and manage a defense, and about how to revise the thesis or dissertation. Nothing irritates an advisor more than giving direct advice but not having it followed, whether in preparing for a prospectus defense or in revising a thesis chapter.

Explicit demonstrations of appreciation are also appropriate. A student can directly thank an advisor for support, for the quick turnaround of a manuscript draft, or for help with a job talk, for example. This can be as simple as a verbal "thank you" at the end of a conversation, putting a thank-you note or card in the advisor's mailbox, or bringing the advisor a cup of coffee when the student stops for one on the way to a meeting with the advisor. At the final defense, a card, gift, invitation to dinner, or other demonstration of appreciation is a nice touch.

Disseminating information about advisors' positive qualities is another way that students can show their appreciation for what advisors do for them. Advisors appreciate when students talk favorably about them to other students and faculty. Students also can nominate their advisors for awards in the department, at the university, or in the discipline as a tangible sign of appreciation and acknowledgment.

The advising relationship is a reciprocal one. Just as students like to have their needs met and to achieve certain outcomes as a result of the advising relationship, so do advisors. Advisors want to feel that they are not just giving and giving and getting nothing in return, and appreciation reinforces the mutuality and reciprocity of the relationship.

The advisee, then, is not at the whim of the advisor in an advising relationship. In both the establishment and maintenance of the advising partnership, the student has considerable agency and can help orchestrate a healthy, productive working relationship with the advisor. When such a partnership exists, there is greater likelihood of a successful mission—the timely completion and awarding of the graduate degree.

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## ***Developing an Intellectual Community***

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When envisioning a graduate program, professors might seek a Platonic ideal in which students are immersed in an intellectual atmosphere characterized by burning ambition to contribute new knowledge, eager grasping of explanatory theories, and a demand for methods to uncover heretofore hidden truths. These same students would insist on drafting multiple versions of term papers, theses, and dissertations to achieve the best in academic composition. They would read professional journals, download the most recent studies, and gather in voluntary groups to excitedly discuss what they just learned. Sensing a competitive world, they would emerge from graduate school ahead of schedule and with half a dozen refereed articles on their resumes.

This Platonic ideal of graduate students' intellectual life does not describe the current state of most graduate programs. Nonetheless, graduate programs in communication are experiencing examination and innovation in an attempt to improve the graduate student experience (Claussen, 2007; Cohen, 2005; Heathcott, 2007; Wasley, 2007). The Pew Charitable Trusts produced a study entitled *Cross purposes: What the experiences of today's doctoral students reveal about doctoral education* (Golde & Dore, 2001). The Woodrow Wilson Foundation (2000) launched a "Responsive Ph.D." project that resulted in 41 best practices ([www.woodrow.org/responsivephd/](http://www.woodrow.org/responsivephd/)). More recently, the Carnegie Foundation for

the Advancement of Teaching summarized its “Initiative on the Doctorate” in Golde and Walker (2006). The communication discipline has been involved in some of these efforts to infuse new ideas into the traditional model of graduate education. Communication departments participate in the National Science Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts’ (1993) “Preparing Future Faculty” program (<http://www.preparing-faculty.org/>). Jody Nyquist, a communication specialist and Associate Dean at the University of Washington, produced another Pew-funded “best practices” list available at <http://www.grad.washington.edu/envision/> (Heathcott, 2007).

These reports suggest that graduate programs can promote an intellectual environment that pushes graduate students and faculty toward the Platonic ideal. Graduate students who take advantage of these opportunities and those outside of their programs will move forward quickly toward developing their own intellectual community. To further this end, this chapter covers three important areas in the lives of graduate students: some best practices of graduate programs for developing an intellectual community, suggestions for involvement in professional associations to promote an active intellectual life, and online networking possibilities graduate students can employ to advance their intellectual fortunes.

## **DEVELOPING AN INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY IN GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

One of the authors was invited to be the “outside member” of a doctoral dissertation defense at Howard University, our nation’s premiere historically African-American university. At many universities the final defense of the dissertation is a somber and sober affair. Even when announced across campus, the committee may not have much of an audience to witness this candidate morphing into a real Ph.D.

Not so at Howard University: the committee was present as was the graduate student. The room was full of fellow graduate students, the candidate’s husband, baby, extended family, and a large entourage of supportive friends. The atmosphere was festive. The committee asked the candidate some penetrating questions about theory, method, and findings, but being surrounded by a supportive audience rendered the questioning more cordial than usual. This kind of defense with a supportive atmosphere is the first in our series of best practices presented briefly here to demonstrate how graduate programs provide students with opportunities to develop an intellectual community. Once provided, graduate students need to make the most of these opportunities.

### ***Task Dimensions that Shape an Intellectual Community***

All graduate programs have a substantial task dimension that includes papers written for courses, tests over content, and an extensive paper, thesis, or dissertation. These tasks also include oral components: defense of the thesis, comprehensives, or dissertation defense. Graduate faculty hope that these benchmarks of progress will allow for the development of an intellectual community. Some

programs, however, move beyond hope and build in features that enhance the task dimension by encouraging participation in an intellectual community. Below is a sampling of such activities that graduate programs are encouraged to undertake and in which graduate students are encouraged to become involved.

*Mandatory teaching assistant orientation.* Many colleges and universities with teaching assistants have a mandatory orientation that is a couple of days to a week long. Orientation includes discussion about grade book responsibilities, required items for the syllabus, textbook policies, mentoring practices, plagiarism rules, etc. Orientation also provides graduate students the opportunity to meet faculty, learn their teaching and research interests, and possibly select an advisor thereby inviting students to approach faculty about their shared interests. The chapter in this handbook by Hartelius and Cherwitz provides more advice about how to choose your faculty advisor.

*Required publications.* Some universities require two to three refereed articles accepted for publication before the doctoral student can schedule the comprehensive examination. Since faculty members are required to publish regularly, the graduate students and the faculty collaborate to the benefit of both parties. Of course, faculty members are expected to publish more than the graduate students. A publication requirement of this sort produces a strong task demand that invites collaboration within an intellectual community.

*A visiting senior scholar program.* Graduate programs without a sizeable faculty benefit from inviting visiting scholars. In one program, two senior scholars teach a one-week, 3-credit course every summer with readings assigned before the course begins and a publishable paper produced after the course. Outside scholars bring cross-pollination to the intellectual environment.

*Collaborative research teams.* Perhaps nothing invites vigorous research more than a program that has high publication expectations for both faculty and graduate students. The faculty and graduate students who work together on research projects are the same faculty and graduate students who get publications, positions, and promotions.

For obvious reasons, the task dimension of a graduate program will always take precedence over the social dimension. Nonetheless, the value of the social dimension should not be underestimated. The next section provides guidance on how to develop an intellectual community through enhancing the social dimension of a graduate program.

### ***Social Dimensions that Shape an Intellectual Community***

A balanced graduate program is one that values both task and social dimensions. The program nourishes relationships knowing that graduate students who get to know each other as friends are more likely to collaborate on research tasks as well. Here are some best practices in the social dimension of developing an intellectual community.

*First Friday.* On the first Friday of every month graduate students are invited to a local eatery to eat and drink with each other. In fact, the graduate students create the event, publicize the event, and are the participants in the event.

Faculty can be invited, but typically they are not the featured guests at these social events.

*Brown bag/potluck/afternoon tea.* A number of graduate programs and students locate or create a time slot in which nobody is assigned to teach or take a class and everyone is invited to either bring a bag meal or participate in a snack or meal furnished by the faculty or the graduate students. Both students and faculty use this time to present new ideas, practice for convention papers, or even pilot a research talk or teaching segment to be used to secure a job.

*Athletic or trivia prowess.* Many graduate programs pit graduate students against faculty in some athletic or trivia event. In spite of the age advantage students might have in athletic competitions, graduate students sometimes find to their dismay that an older faculty member was a varsity volleyball player in her youth and still has the skill to help her team win. These events can help graduate students and faculty see that the other group is not so one-dimensional. Moreover, faculty and graduate students who play together also learn to work together productively.

*Common meeting/eating area.* The mail room, water cooler, lounge, or coffee area can provide social opportunities for faculty and students to interact in positive and potentially productive ways. The structure of the facility can invite cooperation or promote conflict. For example, one university has a “conference table” that really serves as a lunchroom every noon for any faculty or graduate students who would care to participate in some interesting debates over disciplinary or political issues.

*The battered chair syndrome.* One department chair decided that the Master’s students who were TAs needed new office furniture. After all, their desks had missing drawers, the desk tops had been inked and carved, and the room had 15 sprung chairs. When the new furniture was delivered, the department chair arrived to see the new TA bullpen, only to find that the first item inside the door was an old yellow vinyl chair largely held together by gray duct tape. The department chair wanted this dumpy reminder of the past removed, but the TAs insisted that the chair remain as a symbol of their happy, dumpy past. Further, they explained, the chair was endowed. Symbols of a community, such as the battered chair, are powerful because they help maintain the community they represent.

The previous section provided some best practices within graduate programs that facilitate the development of an intellectual community for graduate students. Nurturing relationships between student cohorts and their faculty facilitates the development of intellectual communities (Seifert & Mandzuk, 2006). The following section discusses opportunities provided by professional associations to assist in the development of intellectual communities for graduate students and early career professionals.

## **DEVELOPING AN INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY IN PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Recently, the Carnegie Foundation monitored graduate programs in six disciplines over a five-year period. The researchers found that these programs had



made much progress in improving their graduate students' ability to teach, but that they were less stellar in helping them learn how to tackle research and scholarship (Wasley, 2007). A well-balanced intellectual community needs to promote both teaching and scholarship. Departments can achieve this balance through active participation in the many professional associations available in our discipline at the local, regional, national, and international level.

### ***The Local Level***

Communication graduate students have multiple opportunities to co-create and co-develop an intellectual community locally. Students can participate in departmental and college-wide seminars, workshops, and conferences. They can join research teams and co-author scholarly studies and papers with nearby faculty that may be published through college-sponsored outlets. They can work with faculty members to extend classroom projects into forms that benefit the college at large. Graduate students also should look beyond the local level for opportunities to become intellectually active.

### ***Moving Up from the Local Level***

Through experience at the local level, students gain familiarity with presentation and conference formats and begin to feel comfortable participating in state, regional, national, and international associations. These associations provide junctures of scholarly activity but are generally more competitive and challenging to navigate than the opportunities available at the local level. Students are probably well advised to begin small and, then, move into involvement in larger associations.

### ***Paper Submissions***

Each association has smaller units that might be named divisions, sections, councils, interest groups, caucuses, associations, or commissions. Regardless of the name, most of these units provide opportunities for the submission of competitive or non-juried papers and to become active by serving as a reviewer (i.e., paper reader), chair, or respondent on panels presented at the association's convention. Graduate students also may get involved by competing for offices within the unit.

*Submitting papers to state and regional associations.* Beginning graduate students should consider submitting papers to state and regional associations. Nearly every state has an association. Information about state associations can be found online. Most state associations have annual conventions, which bring together faculty and students from the immediate and nearby states. Calls for papers for these conventions generally are advertised six to eight months before the date of the meeting.

The four regional associations in the communication discipline include the Central States Communication Association, the Eastern Communication Association, the Southern States Communication Association, and the Western States Communication Association (see websites listed in Table 6.2). The Western States Communication Association generally hosts its conference in February

while the other three associations host their conferences in April. Most often people from the designated geographical area participate in regional associations, but people from other regions can be found on the convention program as well. Communication professionals from any part of the United States, or world, are welcome to participate and some more senior scholars may even attend two or more regional meetings. Graduate students might find that the cost is prohibitive to attend regional meetings that are outside their geographical area or to attend more than one regional association's conference.

*Submitting papers to national associations.* A number of national associations provide outlets for the dissemination of knowledge and research in the communication discipline. The National Communication Association (NCA), the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), and the Broadcast Education Association (BEA) are three central organizations. As graduate students move through their programs, they should consider joining one of these organizations, submitting papers for potential presentation, and attending the annual convention. The annual meetings are large in participation numbers and presented papers. A beginning student might be overwhelmed by the thousands of attendees and by a schedule that features hundreds of presentations per hour. Attending with other graduate students and faculty members helps decrease any apprehension for a first-time conventioner.

*Submitting papers to international associations.* International organizations are another avenue for intellectual development. Two organizations are the International Communication Association (ICA) and the World Communication Association (WCA). ICA is a large group that meets within the United States and in other countries. WCA is relatively small and always meets in countries other than the United States. Because of the venue, WCA is expensive. International organizations provide good prospects for more advanced graduate students or faculty members in their early years of development.

*Submitting papers to boutique associations.* In addition to state, regional, national, and international associations, a variety of smaller associations with a specific focus are flourishing. These boutique associations have probably become popular in response to the large size of the national and international associations because they provide a specific content-targeted conference experience. Students interested in forensics, journalism history, argumentation, personal relationships, small group interaction, or the basic communication course will find related associations. For suggestions of relevant topic-focused associations, talk to people with similar interests and search for these online.

*Navigating paper submissions.* To navigate the many associations and the multiple opportunities they provide, develop and investigate ideas that might be appropriate to share. Classroom assignments, research teams, and working with a professor or in other collaborative research settings provide this opportunity. Most graduate research is not single-authored but is shared with a more experienced professional.

Next, consider an appropriate outlet. Presenting a paper before submitting a manuscript to a journal is often the best approach. Beginning scholars have better opportunities for paper selection and feedback when they present their research paper at a state or regional meeting. Students learn where to send papers from professors and learn about the details of submitting their work

through online sources about the organization. Follow the guidelines completely and carefully. People who submit research reports that do not conform to the appropriate style guidelines will likely be disappointed by a rejection. In contrast, a polished paper may even be a contender for a student paper award.

Once a paper is accepted, register for the convention and attend. The presentation will probably be slated for about ten to fifteen minutes and should be timed accordingly. Do not read the paper verbatim, and do not include every detail from the written report. The principles of extemporaneous speaking taught in fundamentals classes are relevant here. Students should be prepared to respond to and take notes on questions and comments from respondents and audience members. Students should carefully consider this feedback as they decide if they will edit and polish their work for potential publication.

### ***Becoming Active in Associations***

At the same time as graduate students present papers, they should attend the business meeting of the interest groups which accepted their papers for presentation. Learn about the issues that concern the interest group by active listening. Introduce yourself to others who do similar work. Do not be shy about meeting established professionals; they are generally flattered by the attention. Volunteer for opportunities that present themselves. If the chair of the interest group asks for volunteers to read papers, to record the minutes of the meeting, or to provide other functions, volunteer.

This same process should be continued at regional, national, and international associations. This experience will hone writing skills, allow the opportunity to practice interpersonal skills, and improve the student's ability to conceptualize ideas. Students should follow through on tasks and other promises made because the discipline is small, and people will recall a person's willingness and ability to complete tasks. Those who do well will be offered additional opportunities to serve.

The previous section addressed the ways in which associations provide opportunities for the development of an intellectual community. Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, and Hutchings note in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that intellectual communities "create physical spaces" for members to flourish (2007, p. B6). Graduate programs do this by how they incorporate physical space into the task and social dimensions of their programs. Associations do this through the conferences they organize. The next section addresses how the Internet provides virtual space that can be used for the same goal.

## **DEVELOPING AN INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY ONLINE**

Graduate students begin to co-create their intellectual community with their first emails to faculty, staff, or administrators. By using online tools, they create a niche market for themselves. They find a location that is not yet saturated by those in the communication field. Some evidence that the online community is not yet saturated comes from books for beginning academics which, in their

litany of advice for new Ph.D.'s, either entirely abstain from mentioning the relevance of online opportunities for furthering academic careers (e.g., Hall, 2002; Heiberger & Vick, 2001, Phillips, Gouran, Kuehn, & Wood, 1994) or which mention briefly only basic online technological tools such as email (e.g., Lucas & Murry, Jr., 2002, p. 245).

Online networking provides lower risk, higher comfort opportunities for people new to the profession to hone their networking skills and develop their intellectual community. Moreover, those who dislike the back-slapping and forced conviviality of a big convention can find solace using the Internet to begin to develop an intellectual community. Although the Internet provides unlimited opportunities to develop an intellectual community for those who are computer savvy, there are online tools that are fairly common and easy to use regardless of technical ability. This section of the chapter will focus on the more recent and less explored Internet opportunities that may be used to create an intellectual community: Listservs, Internet forums, blogs, resource-oriented websites, and social networking websites.

### ***Listservs***

Professional listservs are invaluable in developing an intellectual community. With little effort recipients receive emails directly to their email inbox. For example, list members may receive calls for papers and panelists, announcements of available teaching positions, and requests for book reviewers. Beyond these opportunities, listservs invite discussions related to topics of shared professional interest and have searchable archives that reveal the history of a thread of discussion. Professional associations host listservs for their members. The National Communication Association's listserv CRTNET (Communication Research and Theory Network) focuses on communication pedagogy, research, and service and currently has 5838 subscribers. Often this source is the first to reveal newly available jobs. More information on this listserv may be found at <http://www.natcom.org/nca/Template2.asp?bid=207>. For websites that index related listservs see Table 6.1.

### ***Internet Forums***

Discussion boards (a.k.a., message boards), newsgroups, and bulletin boards provide locations for asynchronous discussion to occur. This discussion is displayed

**Table 6.1 Websites to Find Listservs of Potential Interest**

Title	URL
"The Comprehensive Internet Reference" for Listservs	<a href="http://www.tile.net/lists/">http://www.tile.net/lists/</a>
Penn State Listserv Directory	<a href="http://lists.psu.edu/cgi-bin/wa?HOME">http://lists.psu.edu/cgi-bin/wa?HOME</a>
Communication Institute for Online Scholarship (CIOS) Listserv Directory	<a href="http://www.cios.org/www/forums.htm">http://www.cios.org/www/forums.htm</a>

publicly on the Internet as posts and provides the opportunity for other users to see and comment. They are well-suited for inquiries in need of quick answers or that require feedback from many people. Often message boards provide searchable archives as well. Because discussion boards are usually centered on a specific topic or theme, graduate students can co-construct an intellectual community comprised of those who regularly read and respond to posts on the message board. The Humanities and Social Sciences Online message board provides varied opportunities of interest to those in the humanities and social sciences and is available at <http://www.h-net.org/>. *Chronicle for Higher Education Forums* useful for academics to exchange ideas on issues related to pedagogy, research, and service are at <http://chronicle.com/forums/>.

### **Blogs**

Blogs (i.e., web logs) are consistent diary-type entries on websites that provide a first-person perspective about topics spanning from everyday activities to specialized topics such as basketball statistical analysis. Like personal websites, blogs allow familiarity by highlighting a person's unique perspective. Additionally, they provide the opportunity for discussion about topics addressed in the blog. Those who visit a blog may respond to entries by either emailing the blogger or using the message board/ discussion board, if available. Specialized blogs create intellectual communities where experts on a topic communicate with each other and share their ideas. Non-experts visit these sites to gain further insight into the topic and to interact with experts. Several websites are valuable to help people locate blogs of potential interest (see Table 6.2).

### **Resource-oriented Websites**

Professional, resource-oriented websites are distinct from personal websites. They are more likely than personal websites to attract random visitors. For example, a resource-oriented website hosted by a professional organization like the National Communication Association can provide considerable information from convention dates to available publications. Resource-oriented sites develop intellectual community by providing a location for community members to exchange ideas, communicate, and share information. Resource-oriented websites

**Table 6.2 Websites to Find Blogs of Potential Interest**

Title	URL
Stanford Blog Directory	<a href="http://blog.stanford.edu/taxonomy/term/43">http://blog.stanford.edu/taxonomy/term/43</a>
Blog Scholar	<a href="http://www.blogscholar.com/">http://www.blogscholar.com/</a>
Technorati	<a href="http://www.technorati.com/">http://www.technorati.com/</a>
Blog Catalog	<a href="http://www.blogcatalog.com/directory">http://www.blogcatalog.com/directory</a>
Blog Flux	<a href="http://www.blogflux.com/">http://www.blogflux.com/</a>
Google Blog Search	<a href="http://blogsearch.google.com/">http://blogsearch.google.com/</a>

may be created, maintained, and hosted by anyone but oftentimes an organization such as a college or a professional association hosts the site. E-journals and E-zines host their own websites as well for their periodicals. See Table 6.3 for professionally oriented websites that may be useful to communication graduate students for developing an intellectual community.

**Table 6.3 Resource-Oriented Websites**

Title	URL
International Communication Association	<a href="http://www.icahdq.org/">http://www.icahdq.org/</a>
National Communication Association	<a href="http://www.natcom.org/">http://www.natcom.org/</a>
Central States Communication Association	<a href="http://www.csca-net.org/">http://www.csca-net.org/</a>
Eastern Communication Association	<a href="http://www.ecasite.org/">http://www.ecasite.org/</a>
Southern States Communication Association	<a href="http://ssca.net/">http://ssca.net/</a>
Western States Communication Association	<a href="http://www.westcomm.org/">http://www.westcomm.org/</a>
Communication Institute for Online Scholarship	<a href="http://cios.org/">http://cios.org/</a>
ComLinks Web Navigation	<a href="http://www.cios.org/encyclopedia/comlinks/websites.htm">http://www.cios.org/encyclopedia/comlinks/websites.htm</a>
NYU Faculty Resource Network	<a href="http://www.nyu.edu/frn/">http://www.nyu.edu/frn/</a>
Research Resources for the Social Sciences	<a href="http://www.socsciresearch.com/">http://www.socsciresearch.com/</a>
Theory.org.UK	<a href="http://www.theory.org.uk/">http://www.theory.org.uk/</a>
ComFile	<a href="http://commfaculty.fullerton.edu/jreinard/Internet.htm">http://commfaculty.fullerton.edu/jreinard/Internet.htm</a>
Evolution of Communication	<a href="http://library.thinkquest.org/26451/frames.html?tqskip1=1&amp;tqtime=0402">http://library.thinkquest.org/26451/frames.html?tqskip1=1&amp;tqtime=0402</a>
The Communication Initiative Network	<a href="http://www.comminit.com/en/mainpage/36">http://www.comminit.com/en/mainpage/36</a>
Ron Rice's Interesting and Useful Websites	<a href="http://www.comm.ucsb.edu/faculty/rrice/ricelink.htm">http://www.comm.ucsb.edu/faculty/rrice/ricelink.htm</a>
Jim Roiger's Cyberhome	<a href="http://www.uamont.edu/facultyweb/roiger/language.html">http://www.uamont.edu/facultyweb/roiger/language.html</a>
Online Communication Studies Resources	<a href="http://www.uiowa.edu/~commstud/resources/index.html">http://www.uiowa.edu/~commstud/resources/index.html</a>

## ***Social Networking Websites***

Social networking websites such as Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn provide an online community designated specifically for networking. Many social networking websites provide these services free. Social networking websites provide space where the user can upload texts and images to create a profile available to others in their network. Users can search for profiles through a list of various contexts where they might know people (e.g., colleges). To protect their users' privacy, social networking websites restrict how these people become part of a users' network. Once in a user's network, users can connect to the contacts of their contacts and, thus, establish new relationships through which they can further develop their intellectual community.

Graduate students should note two precautions about creating an intellectual community through online resources. First, whatever is communicated on a computer is public. Universities and corporations store email messages. Profiles on social networking sites may be viewed by an unanticipated audience. Discussions in a listserv archive may be searched years after the discussion has ended. Authors can find that their draft to a co-author, not yet copyrighted, has unintentionally fallen into the hands of someone who may use it for good or for ill.

Second, an antidote to troubles generated by archived messages, by documents without a copyright, and by unexpected access to online discussion is to always assume a professional demeanor when communicating online. Graduate students demonstrate their abilities and their potential to be colleagues through the way in which they communicate with each other and with others. Online, netiquette is invaluable.

The previous section provided opportunities for the development of Internet-supported intellectual communities. However, developing an intellectual community online works best in conjunction with face-to-face communication. Thus, this section supplements the first two sections of this chapter. The first dealt with the development of intellectual communities through task and social dimensions of graduate programs. The second dealt with the development of intellectual community through paper submissions to and volunteering in professional associations.

## **CONCLUSION**

Despite the Platonic ideal that many graduate programs seek to attain, students may leave their graduate programs well educated in the theoretical, methodological, and applied content of their field but without considerable opportunity to develop their intellectual communities. An assumption that thwarts progress in this area is that students have learned networking skills through mentors, advisors, and teachers by way of the tasks required by their graduate programs. This chapter is replete with ideas about how to establish a viable intellectual community within and outside of a graduate program. The authors hope their advice can be used to the advantage of readers of this chapter as they proceed through graduate school and beyond.



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# 7

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## ***Promoting Discovery and Ownership: Graduate Students as Intellectual Entrepreneurs***

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Graduate students exist in a limbo of potential. They no longer are “just” students; nor are they full-fledged scholars. Their unique place in the academy exposes them to pressures from all sides. Departments expect graduate students to be natural-born teachers as well as productive junior scholars. They are required to begin building programs of research and are reminded that “publish or perish” is academe’s mantra; the transition from student-hood to scholar-status includes rigorous peer review. Meanwhile, the off-campus community voices other demands, insisting that graduate students use and explain their expertise in readily accessible ways. The public anticipates an applicable bang for its tax buck. In short, over the course of one’s graduate study the calls abound: Do more. Write prolifically. Stand out. Teach well. Generate theory. Be pertinent.

There is nothing wrong with high expectations. Indeed, there is nothing wrong with departments requiring productivity or communities demanding accountability. And there certainly is nothing inappropriate about graduate students aspiring to climb the academic ladder. These desired outcomes, however, pose an enormous challenge. They obligate graduate students early in their careers to consider who they are and what they seek. Unfortunately, while most of the time graduate students are instructed to “produce” and “perform,” rarely are

they encouraged to “pause” and “reflect.” With focus increasingly on outcomes, it would be odd to find “reflection time” in the graduate curricula. There is little space for graduate students to contemplate their personal, professional and intellectual identities—the kind of rumination that yields sustained productivity and satisfaction.

To correct this deficiency, we claim, graduate students should become “intellectual entrepreneurs.” Intellectual entrepreneurship is premised on the belief that intellect is not limited to the academy and entrepreneurship is not restricted to or synonymous with business. The academy does not have a monopoly on intellect or intelligence any more than the corporate world “owns” the entrepreneurial spirit. Intellectual entrepreneurship is not about “selling” scholars or scholarship. Nor is it about slogans or commercializing the academy. While amassing material wealth is one expression of entrepreneurship, at a more profound level entrepreneurship is a process of cultural innovation. It is an attitude for engaging and changing the world. Intellectual entrepreneurs seek opportunities, discover and create knowledge, innovate, collaborate and solve problems. They undertake the responsibilities and tolerate the inevitable uncertainty that comes with genuine innovation. They leverage their intellectual capital for social good.

This chapter introduces intellectual entrepreneurship as a vibrant and constructive philosophy for graduate education. Specifically, it recommends particular strategies to graduate students for becoming intellectual entrepreneurs. This is a process that should not be delayed. Graduate students must begin thinking like intellectual entrepreneurs long before graduation. What we advocate is not a career path or an area of specialization. Intellectual entrepreneurship is not another auxiliary program or curriculum vitae add-on; it is an educational philosophy and lifelong pedagogy for learning. For graduate students, intellectual entrepreneurship is an opportunity to brand their identities, devising strategies and marshalling resources for accomplishing their goals. Intellectual entrepreneurship empowers graduate students to invent and re-invent themselves throughout the course of their academic/professional lives, always imagining what is possible, and acquiring tools to bring their visions to fruition.

## **BACKGROUND AND THEORY OF INTELLECTUAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

A transformation is underway in higher education. The conditions for research and teaching are reshaping the modus operandi of academic institutions. Recent heated debates address “the Idea” of the university and its role in society (Gibb & Hannon, 2006). The U.S. Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education reports, “As higher education evolves in unexpected ways, this new landscape demands innovation and flexibility from the institutions that serve the nation’s learners” (2006, p. xi). More to the point, “universities face enormous challenges in the 21st century: waning fiscal support, a loss of public confidence, and a persistent lack of diversity” (Cherwitz, 2005a, p. 48). These challenges require universities to grapple with several serious and complex issues. The first issue is accountability. Perhaps more than ever before we are cognizant of the relationship between universities and “stakeholder communities” (Gibb

& Hannon, 2006). Close attention now is paid to universities' capacity for delivering much-needed professional and vocational as well as intellectual training. Among the questions posed are: Do universities serve society in optimal ways (Pretty, 2007)? Do they respond to urgent, material needs? The second issue concerns the effectiveness of doctoral education. Many question how well we prepare students and whether Ph.D. skills translate for lay audiences and into productive "off campus" careers (Anderson, 1999; Devine, 2001; Leatherman, 1998; Nyquist, 2002). Professional development, while helpful, appears to some as "after the fact" and disconnected from disciplinary education (Cherwitz, 2007). Third, diversity in the academy remains illusive, particularly at the graduate level (Hurtado, 2007; Raspberry, 2005). Old recruitment strategies show limited success. Fourth, while imploring students to make authentic and informed choices, universities lack methods for teaching them how to do so. Many graduate and undergraduate students do not grasp fully what opportunities are available and how best to determine which ones are most appropriate for them. Large research universities are a case in point, containing a wide array of "student resources" but offering few spaces for learning how to harness and integrate them.

The current model of graduate education is based on "apprenticeship, certification, and entitlement" (Cherwitz and Sullivan, 2002; Cherwitz, 2007, p. 22). This is the path that departments chart for their students. On paper, this model of education seems suitable because its effectiveness is empirically measurable. Graduate students know this model from personal experience. They work closely with an academic advisor in a relationship resembling artisan apprenticeships. Frequently this relationship functions mimetically, cloning particular types of scholars. It is not uncommon for graduate students to take up their advisor's scholarly interests and/or civic agendas. This is natural; the apprenticeship process is tantamount to a kind of baton-passing in which the pupil carries on the master's program. It culminates in disciplinary and institutional certification. Graduate students complete a series of tasks, each rendering a higher level of academic accreditation. They write theses to earn a Master's degree. To be labeled "Ph.D.," students take comprehensive exams, defend research proposals, and write dissertations. Each step—hoop—garners a new reward, until one day the final certificate qualifies the certified for employment. The assumption is that a degree automatically can be "cashed in" for something else: a job, a title, etc. Traditionally the path from apprenticeship through certification rewards successful students in such a way as to generate a sense of entitlement.

Intellectual entrepreneurship radically alters this model of graduate education, introducing instead a trajectory of "discovery-ownership-accountability" (Cherwitz, 2007, p. 22; Cherwitz and Sullivan, 2002; Shaver and Scott, 1991). From the outset, students are encouraged to discover their personal, intellectual, and professional interests and to make explicit and thoughtful connections among these goals. As intellectual entrepreneurs, they function as explorers and ethnographers of their discipline and their lives. Rather than being assigned or defaulting to research questions, they are invited to formulate their own. Discovery is the means of forming collaborative relationships. A student who realizes that her current advisor does not facilitate the research program she envisions should, as an intellectual entrepreneur, approach a different faculty member. Genuine

discovery eventually leads to ownership. Graduate students who build their own research program and teaching philosophy are more intimately connected to their work. They have an entirely different claim to it than graduate students who merely do as expected. And graduate students who own their scholarship and pedagogy assume greater accountability. Accepting accountability for an enterprise for which one was responsible is more easily accomplished than answering for something over which one has little control. Imagine as an illustration an inventor, laboring with enthusiasm, discovering the pieces that fit together, owning the discovery, and accepting accountability for the outcome. Why shouldn't graduate students be intellectual entrepreneurs, operating with an inventor's outlook?

### **CASE STUDY: THE INTELLECTUAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP (IE) PRE-GRADUATE SCHOOL INTERNSHIP**

There are countless ways of being an intellectual entrepreneur. Indeed, one is limited only by intellect and entrepreneurial spirit. In most instances, graduate students do not need campus infrastructure to infuse intellectual entrepreneurship into their routines. Formal university support is not required. To illustrate how the mindset of intellectual entrepreneurship can be manifested, we introduce a case study: the University of Texas at Austin Intellectual Entrepreneurship Pre-Graduate School Internship. Our goal is to demonstrate what a programmatic embodiment of the intellectual entrepreneurship philosophy is. While replicating the internship at other institutions is certainly possible, that is not our argument and is beyond the scope of this chapter. We are not promoting a particular program; rather, we wish to articulate a vision and philosophy of education empowering graduate students to become productive and resilient "citizen-scholars" (Cherwitz and Sullivan, 2002).

The Pre-Graduate School Internship is a learning incubator for undergraduate and graduate students. Offered for academic credit on a one-semester basis, it is open to students from all colleges and departments. As "interns," undergraduate students work one-to-one with graduate student mentors, investigating their chosen field of study. They explore those aspects of graduate study making it distinct from the undergraduate experience (e.g., conducting research, writing for scholarly audiences, participating in seminars, serving as teaching and research assistants, publishing articles in professional journals, becoming members of scholarly organizations, preparing for an academic or professional career, etc.). Additionally, interns attend closed sessions, a "safe space" where they candidly exchange insights on what they're learning about themselves, their disciplines, the culture of graduate school, and the academy. The meetings address issues like graduate school admission and funding, as well as the value of an advanced degree—concerns germane across disciplinary boundaries. At the end of the semester, interns write reports reflecting upon their experiences and share them with their fellow interns.

The program operates with minimal centralized organization. Interns and mentors pair up in organic ways, often based on previous relationships. A graduate

student teaching assistant may identify a particularly motivated undergraduate student and approach that student about the internship. The next step is a conversation between the would-be intern and mentor during which they design a “syllabus,” a list of projects, activities, and assignments that match their shared interests and goals. These are then formalized in a contract submitted to and approved by the program director.

For graduate student mentors, the Pre-Graduate School Internship affords professional development. It complements conventional teaching experiences with something more dynamic and autonomous. Many communication graduate students serve as teaching assistants for lower division courses like public speaking. In contrast to those courses, which typically have a pre-set syllabus, the internship structure is less didactic and more flexible—it builds “from the student up” (Cherwitz, 2007). Its design is negotiated between mentor and intern; no two internship contracts are identical. For this reason the mentoring experience is similar to the kind of relationship that faculty members develop with graduate students. Serving as mentors prepares graduate students for the professoriate, departing from the traditional educational model. Tapping the needs of each intern, graduate mentors function as academic coaches and learning facilitators rather than instructors spoon-feeding knowledge.

Below are excerpts from graduate student mentors who have participated in the program. As their statements reflect, mentoring is both personally gratifying and professionally energizing. Each graduate student mentor narrative reveals precisely what it means to be an intellectual entrepreneur. Collectively, these comments constitute the basis for our recommendations about how to become intellectual entrepreneurs.

- As a graduate student mentor, this course allowed me to co-design a curriculum, an unusual opportunity for an A.I. and one that will assist in job searching as well as in future work. Even more exceptional was the chance to conduct an informal, one-to-one course whose topic allowed me to reflect on my own graduate school career and further refine my goals.
- Being an IE Pre-Grad mentor is different than teaching a regular class in that the student has to define the project in all stages and organize his time and efforts to finish it. This made the IE internship a valuable course.
- As rewarding as it was for [my intern] Jill, I have to say it might have been even more rewarding for me. From a professional standpoint, graduate students entering academia will eventually need to learn to manage graduate students under them. While graduate students have always had the option of getting volunteers to assist them, the IE program formalizes this into a true mentor-mentee relationship, giving me valuable insight into what kind of advisor I will be one day, where my strengths are, and where I still need to improve. I doubt that anything available to us is closer to the role we will fill later in our careers.
- Acting as a mentor through the IE Pre-Grad Internship has given me a new perspective on my academic discipline and my role within it. I probably gained as much from the experience as my mentee did. It was terrific watching him discover something and to see him examine what it means to be a graduate student through honest eyes.

- My mentorship was enlightening and useful for future instructional opportunities. As a possible candidate for academic employment, working with students on research projects will be a fundamental responsibility. Surprisingly, I was reminded of the issues confronting graduating seniors and prospective graduate students. Those issues include the formulation of research problems, design of research projects, and execution of those projects. Additionally, I had to balance the time I could spend with the student with other responsibilities. Such lessons in time management must be learned to become a successful faculty member.

As these comments indicate, graduate students who take on this “faculty” role experience what it means to be an intellectual entrepreneur. They are challenged to design a curriculum responding to and sustaining their interns’ passion and curiosity.

What attracts undergraduate (and graduate) students to the Pre-Graduate School Internship is that it is student driven. It is an entrepreneurial laboratory licensing students to investigate the natural connections between education and their own personal and professional aspirations. It invites students to consider how higher education prepares them to serve their communities in productive ways (Hurtado, 2007). This is especially important for underrepresented minority and first-generation students who, not coincidentally, comprise nearly fifty percent of the Pre-Graduate School Internship roster (Cherwitz, 2005b). For many of them graduate study is not a realistic option; their families and local communities, which shape from childhood how students think about education, often discourage graduate school (particularly in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, where education may seem more disconnected from the rough and tumble of the real world). In the Pre-Graduate School Internship students re-conceptualize the potential of graduate study. They re-envision academic disciplines as useful lenses for analyzing and solving problems. Consequently, pursuing graduate school becomes a viable option for addressing real-life problems.

Graduate student mentors are keenly aware of the challenges interns face. Their testimonials direct attention to the populations and problems the academy frequently neglects. Consider the following excerpts from mentors who worked with first-generation or underrepresented minority interns. Their narratives shed light on how graduate students become intellectual entrepreneurs.

- As both a graduate student of color and a first-generation college student myself, I live the pains, challenges, and triumphs associated with persistence through an education system designed for mainstream youth. My motives for serving in this capacity were to somehow share with her much of the knowledge gained about the graduate school experience through my lived experiences, academic pursuits, and from the advice of my own mentors—Latina/o and/or first-generation college students themselves.
- My motives for mentoring fellow Latinos, especially Latinas, came from my own experiences as a Latina undergraduate at a large university. I’m the youngest of ten children and daughter of two extremely hard working Mexican immigrants who sacrificed their dreams for mine, but who lacked the academic skills to guide me through the maze of financial aid bureau-

cracy, writing a cohesive and compelling research paper, and navigating the intimidating world of undergraduate life.

- As a Latina, but especially as a first or second generation Mexican-American, there are certain cultural traits that are engrained in our beings which cause for us to at times doubt our strength, capabilities and our position within the dominant society as well as within our own Latino culture. If I can share my story—my insecurities, failures and triumphs with someone so that she knows that she isn't alone in the process and so she can find the strength to continue working toward her goals—I'll know that I'm doing my part to help another hermana as well as mi comunidad (community).
- What my intern has experienced so far, as opposed to my undergrad experience, is a prime example of the adversity she will experience if she pursues a graduate education [. . .]. I am speaking from experience as a graduate student [African-American] at UT. I have not received much encouragement since I have been here, and I am preparing her to be aware of this potential type of treatment in the future. Students of color and first generation college students *need more guidance and encouragement!* This type of support must start in the classroom and the university itself.

As these passages demonstrate, graduate students can have a powerful impact on one of the most critical issues facing higher education. Increasing diversity on campus is an opportunity—one that begins with a personal commitment to thinking like an intellectual entrepreneur.

## **STRATEGIES FOR BECOMING AN INTELLECTUAL ENTREPRENEUR**

While the Pre-Graduate School Internship illustrates the philosophy of intellectual entrepreneurship, it certainly does not exhaust programmatic possibilities. What it underscores is that graduate students at any university can become intellectual entrepreneurs. What must be asked is: What are the available means of becoming graduate student intellectual entrepreneurs? What does the intellectual entrepreneurship mindset entail? Below are four ways of structuring the graduate student experience in accordance with the intellectual entrepreneurship philosophy. The four recommendations have different levels of salience for graduate students at different stages of their education; all, however, are strategies that can be adopted from the first day of one's graduate program.

### ***Make Deliberate Choices***

Making choices may sound simple but is sometimes easier said than done. For graduate students, many choices are pre-determined. A clear path through post-graduate degrees is already blazed. When graduate students begin their Master's or doctoral programs, they typically are assigned an academic advisor; faculty members share the advising load by dividing new graduate student



cohorts among themselves. These pairings are expected to last productively for years. Implicit departmental norms and prior practices often discourage students from changing advisors, even though technically they are allowed to do so. Expectations are part of academe's institutional culture, covertly constraining graduate students' decisions.

Becoming an intellectual entrepreneur means consciously reflecting on available alternatives and making choices that serve one's unique goals. It means considering how different courses of action lead to different outcomes. In terms of an advisor, it is imperative that graduate students select the best possible mentor. The right academic advisor can mean the difference between two to six exciting and stimulating years and an eternal endurance test. Graduate students should ask: With which faculty member do I share research interests, methodology, and/or theoretical orientation? With whom do I connect on an interpersonal level? Who keeps the same hours as I do and has the same attitude toward a work-life balance? Who will allow me to participate fully in my own education, supporting whatever career choices I make? Asking these questions is essential. The worst strategy for picking an advisor is letting someone else, including the department, do the choosing—a strategy, which despite being well-intended, is thoroughly paternalistic and antithetical to optimal learning. Instead, graduate students are best served by letting choices emerge organically. However, they should select a mentor with deliberate intent.

Picking an advisor is only the first in a series of important decisions graduate students make. As their scholarly interests take shape they must also consider what different personal and professional dimensions comprise their identity. Graduate students are more than the sum of course credits and conference presentations. They also are members of multiple communities: sons and daughters, partners, parents, businessmen/women, etc. Graduate students have many different interests and personal priorities that according to the traditional paradigm may not belong in academe. For example, graduate student activists often are warned that, while it is okay to maintain this "hobby," it should be done on their own time.

Intellectual entrepreneurs make deliberate choices, discovering and creating the natural connections between personal, intellectual, and professional aspirations. Rather than reacting defensively to the academic establishment's skepticism, intellectual entrepreneurs lead with their passion; they initiate by explaining what they do and why they do it. They declare: "Here are my beliefs about the world and my own place in it; here is how those beliefs inform my theoretical framework as a scholar; and here is what my research productively brings to the problems my community faces." Consider the following illustration. A graduate student in organizational communication is personally concerned with the increasing number of homeless families in Austin, Texas. He *chooses* graduate seminars about non-profit organizations and organizational leadership. He *chooses* an advisor who works closely with a local shelter. His eventual dissertation topic focuses on inter-organizational relationships in something called CAN, the Community Action Network. Choosing to behave like an intellectual entrepreneur means designing one's research projects relative to other personal and professional ideals.



### ***Reconceptualize the Meaning of Scholarly Invention and Production***

Universities, especially large research institutions, make it easy to measure success. They employ quantitative metrics to tabulate the products of scholarship; producing a certain number of articles in top-tier journals gains tenure, and raising a threshold number of extramural grant dollars leads to promotion or merit salary increases. Even though graduate students are not yet part of the tenure and promotion cycle, they experience a related form of product-oriented evaluation; perhaps one single-authored publication means receiving the department's prestigious fellowship, and numerical course instructor survey data determines who is awarded summer funding. Early in their studies, graduate students learn about the academic coin of the realm. Every item—every line on the curriculum vitae—is a triumph; it is proof of productivity.

The intellectual entrepreneurship philosophy invites graduate students to rethink what they produce and why. It interrupts the chorus of voices that clamor for more of the same thing. The strategy we are recommending is not a call for decreasing scholarly rigor or vindicating those who produce weak or no scholarship. Framed in that manner, intellectual entrepreneurship would be discarded as something other than and in stark competition with scholarship. Instead, we encourage graduate students to broaden the scope of their work and its contribution. They should consider whether their research speaks to more than one audience. To be sure, publishing an article in a peer-reviewed journal is an accomplishment worthy of praise and celebration. The audience that one is likely to reach with such a publication is important; a continuous dialogue among specialists is vital to disciplinary health and knowledge. However, there is more to scholarly productivity than academic publications. Journals and books consumed by a handful of academics need not be the exclusive end of scholarship.

Many communication graduate students harbor insecurity about the relevance of their scholarship. They worry that their research is less useful, especially when compared to more tangible inventions produced by disciplines like engineering. Those who study social processes typically think of themselves as “critics” more than “producers.” Initially, therefore, it may be hard to imagine what graduate students in communication can “export” of value to those outside of the ivory tower. To counter this misperception, the “export” metaphor must be recast. Graduate student intellectual entrepreneurs interrogate the assembly line (export) model of research—not because they cannot “make it” on those terms but because they know that their scholarship is worth more. Criticism is indeed a type of invention. Scholars who analyze and deconstruct communication practices invent; their inventions, however, assume a different form than those of engineers and scientists. For example, while not always explicitly stated nor thoroughly developed, criticism can inform and improve communication practices; critics simultaneously can deconstruct and engineer communication—but only if they choose to do so. Intellectual entrepreneurs dare to explore the inherent relationship between theory and action, understanding that their discoveries might actually change the world by producing new and more effective ways of communicating. Intellectual entrepreneurs think of their scholarship as inventions, owning those

inventions and contemplating what good those inventions can render beyond a curriculum vitae.

### ***Pursue Allies Inside and Outside of the Academy***

As discussed above, intellectual entrepreneurship replaces the traditional metaphor for the relationship between academe and the community. Instead of a one-way “knowledge transfer” model, wherein universities export their inventions and discoveries to be put to practical use, a dialogue begins. Scholars recognize that they are not the only experts and teachers are not the only ones with lessons to share. As Pretty (2007) notes:

Pedagogy is no longer restricted to teacher transmission of established chunks of knowledge. Learning now includes student engagement outside the university, through practical response to real life challenges, within new environments where they have the opportunity to work with a range of experienced and professional people. (pp. 57–58)

Simply stated, academics have just as much to learn from professionals and community leaders as the latter do from academics. There are natural allies for different kinds of research spread across a university campus and within the community. In view of the complexity of challenges facing the world, the idea that academic researchers unilaterally and exclusively provide answers to “real life” problems is archaic and absurd.

Graduate students need not revolutionize the academic enterprise to become intellectual entrepreneurs. Their best strategy may not be to challenge philosophically the above mentioned tradition. A more prudent plan is to create change by enacting it one case at a time. As future leaders of their discipline, graduate students have the power to influence how scholarship is defined. They immediately can start reshaping the idea of what it means to be a “scholar” by forging productive town and gown dialogue. Graduate students can become the kind of “engaged scholars” who, emboldened by an entrepreneurial mindset, coordinate the efforts of researchers from different disciplines and professionals from different sectors of society.

Some of these interdisciplinary and on- and off-campus collaborations already exist. Interpersonal communication scholars frequently team up with researchers in sociology, psychology, and family sciences. Rhetoric scholars incorporate theory and artifacts from American studies, history, composition, and political science. Media scholars interact with those in design fields and radio-television-film. Organizational communication researchers connect with community groups, businesses and corporations to address a variety of concerns. This is only the tip of the iceberg; the real challenge is to discern new, unimagined, and unexplored possibilities—to move beyond communication’s obvious and traditional cognate disciplines as well as to collaborate and partner with non-academics. We must ask: Are there disciplines with which interpersonal communication has not partnered that are capable of generating fresh perspectives? What are the disciplines with which organizational communication has yet to discover common themes? Why shouldn’t rhetoric, which sometimes is thought of as esoteric and purely theoretical, re-embrace its classical heritage, seriously exploring its

contributions to the world of prudential affairs? To ask these questions—to broach cross-disciplinary and community collaborations with the potential to create outcomes larger than any one academic field—is to be an intellectual entrepreneur.

These questions are apropos for graduate students because they expose uncharted terrains upon which young scholars might build research agendas and professional careers. Imagine a research project about sustainable development involving rhetoricians, ecologists, economists, engineers, and urban planners—one that produces both academic knowledge and public action. Imagine research focusing on addiction and family relationships that brings to the table interpersonal communication scholars, biochemists, neuroscientists, psychiatrists, ethicists, and governmental leaders—research that generates changes in both personal and public policies. By envisioning these possibilities and including people from a variety of academic disciplines and sectors of society, and by participating in these “action seminars,” graduate students will become intellectual entrepreneurs—“citizen-scholars” who produce academic knowledge and leverage that knowledge for the greater good. What is especially attractive is that this new way of thinking about graduate education and research addresses the question of how to make scholarship accessible and socially relevant, thus directly responding to several of the serious challenges faced by higher education delineated earlier in this chapter. Deeply complex yet understudied issues like environmental sustainability and addiction provide incubators where academic and non-academic communities can team up to solve problems. Society’s most vexing issues require inter- and cross-disciplinary collaborations—not because such partnerships are trendy but because, without them, solutions remain unattainable. To be sure, becoming a graduate student intellectual entrepreneur is a challenge; yet adopting this mindset can immediately offer potential for enormous personal, professional, and intellectual payoffs.

### ***Assume an Integrated Sense of Responsibility and Agency***

Graduate students often have a hard time establishing a personal sense of ownership of their work. They do what their professors and departments expect without demanding much autonomy. This is particularly true in the early stages of graduate education, before students complete course requirements. Graduate study may seem like an endless series of tasks designed and predetermined by others. This disconnect exacerbates the difficulty of assuming personal responsibility. It means that, if not personally connected to the products and processes of their scholarship, feeling responsible is unlikely. Nevertheless, much is at stake in this relationship between graduate students (junior scholars) and their work. How can we expect future scholars to ask original questions, be creative, and make new discoveries when their education is based on a didactic model of learning rather an entrepreneurial one, where ownership and accountability are paramount?

By contrast, graduate students who mentor undergraduates, exposing them to the realities of the academy, assume responsibility not only for themselves and their work but also, in some small sense, for the future of the university.

As seen in the earlier cited narratives, by mentoring underrepresented minority or first-generation undergraduates, graduate students unearth new opportunities for those populations; they have a modest yet significant impact on the university by changing it from the ground-up. Consider, moreover, how this relationship engenders a sense of personal agency. It empowers graduate students to be decision makers, despite the initiation practices of academe's culture. It places graduate students in charge of designing and implementing a curriculum, enabling them to create *their* pedagogy. Mentoring is but one example of graduate students assuming agency and functioning as intellectual entrepreneurs.

It is never too early for graduate students to ask: What is the terminus of my research and teaching? To what ends will these activities eventually be used? Am I ready to take responsibility for the consequences of my scholarly discoveries and inventions? Does my teaching philosophy educate the kind of students of whom I can be proud? When graduate students pose these questions they assume ownership of their education. They cease thinking of themselves as minions, now recognizing the power they possess to shape their world. This leads to an epiphany: Like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, graduate students discover they "had it all along." It is at this turning point that the relationship between graduate students and their work must change. If graduate students find they are not producing scholarship for which they can be responsible, then a reconceptualization must transpire. These turning points represent the essence of being an intellectual entrepreneur, providing as well an important way to safeguard the ethics of the academy.

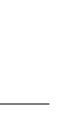
## CONCLUSION

Whether a scientist or a humanist, an intellectual entrepreneur is someone who takes risks and seizes opportunities. Intellectual entrepreneurs discover knowledge and utilize that knowledge to make a difference—striving to "do well by doing good." They embody a particular vision of the academy that is revolutionary yet incremental; although the philosophy challenges the academic standard at its core, becoming an intellectual entrepreneur requires only modest changes. That is why it is never too early to start. As this chapter describes, there are several strategies that graduate students might implement to become intellectual entrepreneurs: making deliberate choices, reconceptualizing scholarship, pursuing allies inside and outside of the academy, and assuming an integrated sense of responsibility and agency for their education.

While this chapter draws examples from The University of Texas Intellectual Entrepreneurship Pre-Graduate School Internship as a way of illustrating how to become intellectual entrepreneurs, our objective has not been to promote a particular program. One size may not fit all; what works at one institution does not necessarily transfer to another, nor should it. The intellectual entrepreneurship philosophy, however, is vibrant, constructive, and potentially useful to students at all educational institutions and at all levels of learning. What intellectual entrepreneurship counsels is that graduate students examine their professional, intellectual, and personal commitments and the connections among them, owning and being accountable for their education with a new-found intent and zeal.

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# 8

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## ***Writing a Thesis/ Dissertation: Transitioning from Reporter to Scholar***

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In graduate school, students receive validation for showing what they know. Students collect, digest, and report on knowledge generated by others to verify their understanding of the content. They consume and re-present existing scholarly insights for the primary purpose of explaining to a professor the depth of understanding they possess about the ideas of a theorist, school, movement, or text. In other words, students learn skills that enable them to be successful as reporters rather than scholars.

Because they are rewarded for their reportorial skills in graduate school, students often apply the same skills when they tackle their theses and dissertations. The writing of a thesis or dissertation, however, requires the skills of a scholar, which are substantially different skills from those that work effectively in completing coursework or the comprehensive exam. If students continue to apply the reporter model rather than the scholar model to the thesis or dissertation, they are likely to become stuck and to have difficulty finishing their project.

The scholar uses writing in a different way from the reporter. Reporters use writing to list facts that validate their understanding of a concept, while scholars use writing to point to their own original insights about a text or data set. Rather than reporting what is already known, scholars endeavor to create new knowledge. Regardless of the specific methodological tradition in which the student is working—for example, critical, rhetorical, historiographic, or quantita-

tive (i.e., Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000; Stacks & Hocking, 1999)—adopting a scholar model enables students to approach the tasks of choosing a topic and designing the study, writing the literature review, analyzing data, and writing up the study in ways that facilitate efficient completion of the project.

## **CHOOSING THE TOPIC AND DESIGNING THE STUDY**

Choosing a topic for the thesis or dissertation is one place where students often enact the reporter rather than the scholar role. They seek a topic using a process that relies on what others believe is important. Much like a reporter, they go every which way, trying to sniff out a story that someone else has created instead of generating their own. The typical forms that this process assumes include searching through literature to see if something strikes the student as interesting or chatting for a few minutes with the advisor or other committee members about an idea, hoping for a response that sanctions an idea as an appropriate topic.

A conceptual conversation, in contrast, gives students a means for choosing a topic from the perspective of a scholar; the conversation produces a topic from the student's own interests rather than the interests of others. A conceptual conversation is an extended discussion a student has with someone to create a plan for the thesis or dissertation. The discussion is designed to help students conceive of their projects by funneling their knowledge and preferences efficiently and effectively into an appropriate topic. This conversation gives the student a specific time period—usually no more than a week—to make all of the key decisions about the thesis or dissertation. The interaction occurs before the student writes the proposal because the decisions that are made in this conversation become the key components of the preproposal—a plan that includes the key decisions about the project that then becomes the basis for the proposal.

Ideally, the conceptual conversation should involve the student's advisor as the conversational partner. Sometimes, though, advisors are not the best conversational partners for any number of reasons—perhaps an advisor does not have the time required to engage in this kind of conversation, maybe a student does not know the advisor well, or a student might feel intimidated by his or her advisor. If this is the case, another faculty member, a fellow graduate student, a friend, a spouse, or a partner will work just fine. Knowledge of the student's discipline is not required to be an effective partner in the conversation.

To set up the conversation, the partners need to set aside a block of uninterrupted time—ideally, two to three hours. If they do not figure out the student's topic in this amount of time, they will want to schedule another session as soon as possible to maintain the momentum that has been generated. This meeting should be held in a place where the participants will not be interrupted—in someone's home or at a coffee shop, for example, rather than in an office at school. Students should bring to the conversation their interests, their enthusiasm, and perhaps a tape recorder to record the conversation. The partner should bring



a commitment to spend a significant amount of time with the student, excitement about what the conversation will produce, a tablet to write on, and a pen or pencil.

What happens in the conversation is that the student's partner asks questions designed to help the student identify some key pieces or elements that will be a part of the thesis or dissertation. To generate these key pieces, the partner might want to ask the student questions such as these:

- “What are your major interests in your discipline?”
- “What personal experiences have you had that were particularly meaningful for you that are relevant to your discipline?”
- “What coursework did you take that you found most exciting?”
- “What theories and concepts are most interesting to you?”
- “Are there some ideas you have studied that you are curious about and want to explore in more depth?”
- “With what kinds of data do you enjoy working?”
- “Do you have ideas for specific data, texts, or artifacts you would like to study?”
- “Are there resources to which you have access that could provide participants or data for your study? Do your volunteer activities or your job offer any of these resources? Is there someone you know who could give you access to these kinds of resources? Is there an archive, organization, or upcoming event in your community that is ripe for analysis?”
- “What approach or methods do you like to use when you do research?”
- “What are your career goals?”

As students answer the questions, their partners should encourage them to continue talking by asking exploratory, open-ended, follow-up questions. Partners should listen closely and take detailed notes about what the student says, leaving the student free to focus on thinking and talking. The partner should also note in some way the ideas that seem most important to the student as they are articulated.

When students begin repeating themselves and are no longer adding new information to the conversation, they probably are finished articulating their ideas. This is the time for the student and the partner to identify the key pieces that emerged from the conversation that the student wants to make sure are included in the thesis or dissertation. Ultimately, the student wants to identify seven key pieces for the thesis or dissertation. These constitute the plan or preproposal for the dissertation. The key pieces are:

1. A research question to guide the study
2. Some data to analyze
3. An approach to or method of data collection
4. A process or method for analyzing data
5. The areas of literature that will be included in the literature review
6. Reasons why the study is significant
7. Outline of the chapters of the thesis or dissertation

Students should not worry if they know some key pieces they want in their project but not all of them. They might know the data they want to analyze and the method they want to use to collect those data, for example, but they

do not know the research question, the method for analyzing the data, the categories of the literature review, why the study is significant, or how the dissertation will be organized. The goal at this time is simply to identify the key pieces of which the student is certain.

Following identification of the key pieces that the student is sure about, the student and the conversational partner turn their attention to creating the preproposal for the thesis or dissertation. The preproposal is a one-page summary of the key pieces of the thesis or dissertation. To create the preproposal, the student and the conversational partner fill in the pieces that they did not identify earlier in the conceptual conversation. They work to determine what the other pieces of the dissertation design are going to be that will align with the pieces articulated initially. They would figure out, for example, what research question could be asked about the data, the categories of literature derived from the research question, why the project is significant, and so on. (If the conversational partner is not an academician, filling in the pieces to create the preproposal might be difficult simply because that individual lacks knowledge about research design. If this is the case, filling in the pieces might best be done with a fellow graduate student or the advisor.)

When the preproposal has been developed, with all of the key decisions summarized on a single sheet of paper, the preproposal should be assessed for internal consistency among all of the elements. A good preproposal is one to which positive answers can be given to these questions:

- Does everything align with the research question?
- Are the data a good example of the phenomenon you want to study?
- Can your question be answered with the approach or method you propose?
- Are the categories of the literature review derived from the key terms of the research question?
- Do the reasons for doing the study relate to the research question and the categories of literature covered in the literature review?
- Do the chapters you are planning make sense given your data and your method?
- Can the study be done with the resources and time that you have available?

The conceptual conversation, then, creates a topic for the thesis or dissertation that is of interest to the student because it is developed from the student's preferences and resources. The topic emerges organically from the student's articulation of ideas and not from any agendas of others. When the scholar model rather than the reporter model is applied at this crucial first step of the project, the student is off to a good start in efficiently completing a high-quality project.

## **WRITING THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

When students write literature reviews for papers in classes or for comprehensive exams, they report information to validate their knowledge of a topic. They present the ideas that come from others to show how much research they have done and how much they know about a topic. In a thesis or dissertation, in contrast, learning the literature is not an end in itself. Instead, literature is used

to make an argument concerning how the proposed study engages the various perspectives and extant knowledge on that topic.

The first step in the literature review, of course, is to gather the literature in the categories identified in the preproposal. When students have gathered all of their books and articles and see all of them stacked in front of them, they are likely to feel utterly overwhelmed. Just reading all of the works seems like an insurmountable task, much less keeping track of everything and putting it together in a meaningful way. A five-step method is available to make processing and writing the literature efficient and manageable and to produce a literature review from the perspective of a scholar instead of a reporter: (1) rapid reviewing of sources, (2) systematic analysis, (3) sorting and categorizing excerpts from the sources, (4) creating a conceptual schema, and (5) using the schema to organize and write the literature review.

Reviewing literature for the literature review involves skimming rather than deep and comprehensive reading. The student begins by selecting a book from the stack of literature and opening it to the table of contents. The student looks through the table of contents to see what chapters appear to be relevant to the literature review. If a chapter seems relevant to the project, the student turns to that chapter and reviews the section headings. If a section seems relevant to the study, the student skims it, looking for these things:

- Claims and findings about the constructs being investigated
- Definitions of terms
- Calls for follow-up studies relevant to the project
- Gaps in the literature
- Disagreements about the constructs being investigated

The student reads each page in the section, looking for any sentences, paragraphs, or excerpts that include one or more of the above items. This reading is not done to extract deep meaning or to remember. Instead, the student is skimming, looking for ideas relevant to the categories of the literature review. When a relevant idea or passage is identified, it should be marked with a line in the margin (in pencil if the book is borrowed from a library).

After coding and marking all of the books and articles in this way, the student goes to a copy machine, pages through each book or article, and copies all of the pages that have lines in the margins (erasing pencil marks before returning books borrowed from a library). After making a photocopy of a page, the student should write an abbreviation for the source and the page number in the margin of each marked passage on the photocopied page. The student then cuts out the passages marked from the photocopied pages. At the end of this process, all of the sources combined make a huge pile of slips of paper containing excerpts from the literature.

The next step is to sort the pieces of paper according to like topic. Everything that is about the same idea goes in the same pile. When the sorting is done, the piles should be put into envelopes and the envelopes labeled. What these envelopes represent are the major ideas relevant to the project and thus the major areas of the literature review. The ideas represented by the envelopes then get transformed into a conceptual schema or creative synthesis for the literature review.

A conceptual schema is a way of organizing the literature review to show how the relevant pieces of the literature relate to one another. The schema allows students to tell a story about the content of the literature review. This creative synthesis is not a chronological description of literature in which the student takes each study in turn and discusses it in chronological order. Such reviews are tedious because they do not make an argument or connect the studies to one another. A literature review organized around a conceptual schema, in contrast, is organized by major topics and not by individual studies so that the new study is positioned within the theoretical conversation of the field.

Students have the mechanism for creating the conceptual schema for the literature right in front of them—the envelopes containing the passages from the literature. The next step is to type a list of the labels that are on the envelopes, using a large font size and leaving a couple of spaces between each of the labels in the list. The student then cuts the labels apart, lays them out in any order on a table or desk, and begins to play around with the possible relationships among the topics represented by the labels. Perhaps the literature can be organized by different influences on a phenomenon, components of a phenomenon, functions, outcomes, models, ways of doing something, elements of a process, or multiple perspectives on a phenomenon.

By moving the labels into different patterns, the student can try out different ways of organizing the literature. The resulting schema should encompass all or most of the labels in a way that makes sense and that connects the major areas of the literature. The schema also should help the student enter the theoretical conversation of the discipline about the topic in a meaningful and insightful way.

The student then selects a section of the literature review to write, starting at any place in the schema because the student understands the various sections of the conceptual schema, how they relate to one another, and an order in which to discuss them. The student finds the envelope with the excerpts related to the topic of the selected section, takes all the excerpts from that envelope, and lays them out on the desk. By playing with different ways of arranging them, the student can create a mini-conceptual schema that presents the argument about literature in that area.

Now comes the magical part because the literature review almost writes itself. The student starts with the first excerpt and types it into the computer. The student literally writes through the pile by typing in the second excerpt, the third excerpt, the fourth excerpt, and all the way through to the last one. Of course, introductions, overviews, arguments about the excerpts, and transitions have to be added between the excerpts, but those are easy because the student is clear about the argument being made.

Because students are using the ideas of others, the substance of the literature review is not theirs, of course. But how they present the literature review and the connections they make among the pieces of the literature are students' own unique inventions. By coding their literature to create an innovative conceptual schema, students have begun to do original scholarship—the work of the scholar instead of the reporter—and have an excellent start on the proposal for the thesis or dissertation.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Because there are well-established procedures for analyzing quantitative data and students who are using such data are likely to be familiar with them, the focus in this discussion of coding data will be on qualitative data—whether texts like speeches, newspaper articles, or literature; transcripts of videotapes of focus groups or interactions; printouts of online discussions, or transcripts of interviews. The process of coding these kinds of data tends to constitute a major obstacle for many students. One reason is because, when students are generating insights for a paper, they are likely to engage the reporter model, just as they tend to do with the other tasks in the thesis or dissertation process. In this case, students typically begin with a theory they believe will explain the data. They plop the theory onto the data and then conclude that the data support the theory. A student using the reporter model, for example, might believe that a particular set of interview data can be explained by Baxter and Montgomery's (1988) theory of dialectics in relationships. Analyzing the data then takes the form of looking quickly through the data and marking any clusters of contradictions they see—*integration-separation* and *stability-change*, for example. The student then concludes that the interviews can best be explained as enacting various dialectics.

The scholar model of analyzing qualitative data, in contrast, uses detailed, systematic analysis to generate original insights from data. The insights that emerge often surprise and challenge the student because systematic analysis discourages the use of conventional explanations in the form of existing theories and thus allows the student to see something new in a body of data. Analyzing data within the scholar model involves five steps: (1) using the research question to identify units of analysis, (2) identifying and labeling the units of analysis in the data, (3) organizing the units of analysis into meaningful categories, (4) creating an explanatory schema, and (5) using the explanatory schema to organize and write up the results.

Using data rather than an existing theory to generate the answer to a research question is what allows a scholar to make a unique contribution to a field. The first step in finding that answer involves identifying units of analysis, which are derived from the research question. For example, if the research question asks how parents transmit political beliefs to their children, the unit of analysis would be methods of transmission of political beliefs, whatever form those might assume.

To code for a unit of analysis, students systematically and carefully review the complete set of data, searching for any occurrence of the unit. Whenever they find an example of the unit of analysis, they write a code next to the excerpt in the margin that captures the essence of the excerpt at a literal level. For example, if the student is coding interviews for methods that parents use to transmit political beliefs to children and encounters an example where a parent says the family watches and discusses Fox news together, the code would be "watches and discusses Fox news." Next to the code, the student should provide a shorthand citation to that data source and page—something like "2-9," for example, to reference interview 2, page 9. The student continues moving through the data, identifying and coding units of analysis.

A variety of kinds of software are available for coding qualitative data such as NUDIST and ATLAS.ti, and students often are tempted to use one of these

software programs for coding their data. Use of such software, however, replicates the reporter model because it creates substantial distance between a student and the data, diminishing the student's ability to understand the conceptual connections among the units of analysis or categories of the data. This diminished understanding of these connections often leads students to approach qualitative data as if it were quantitative data and to skip the discovery of insights that produce interesting results (Seidel, 1991).

When students have finished coding the data, they make a copy of the pages of the data that contain the marked excerpts and cut the individual excerpts out of the copied pages. They then sort the codes into similar groups or categories, putting all like topics together. For example, the student who is searching for methods parents use to transmit political beliefs might group the excerpt "watches and discusses Fox news" with another that says "discusses school books" and a third that says "explains president's state of the union speech." Together, these excerpts create a pile of examples that have a shared method of transmission—"explicit discussions." Other piles that might emerge from sorting the excerpts might be "modeling behavior," "corrective rewards," and "punishing silences." The labels for the piles, then, are not determined before the piles of excerpts are created but emerge from the shared similarity of the excerpts within a category. Once all excerpts are sorted into piles, the student assigns labels to each pile, puts the piles of excerpts into separate envelopes, and labels the envelopes.

The next step in the coding process is to create an explanatory schema or theory that answers the research question using the data. To do this, the student types a list of the labels created for the piles in a large font size with several spaces between the labels, just as was done for the literature review. Then the student cuts the labels apart, lays them out on a large bare surface, and works to arrange them into a pattern that explains the unique relationship among the categories that represent the data. Again, the movable labels allow experimentation with many different ways of organizing the categories that emerged from the data.

An explanatory schema is a more insightful way of presenting the results of coding data than what is often produced in qualitative studies—simply listing six or seven methods of transmission, for example, that parents use to convey political beliefs to children. While this simple listing of methods is one possible organizing schema for sharing results in a thesis or dissertation, this finding is unlikely to explore or explain rich connections among those methods of transmission and is also unlikely to generate a new theory about them. When the student arranges the labels into an explanatory schema, significant relationships among the categories are often discovered that were neither obvious nor expected beforehand. The student may discover, for example, that all of the methods that parents use to transmit political beliefs to children reproduce the actions that a traffic cop uses to control the flow of traffic. This discovery would create an explanatory schema that metaphorically presents parents who are transmitting their political beliefs as traffic cops. Such a relationship is able to generate new knowledge by contributing a new theory to the discipline.

## **WRITING UP THE STUDY**

As students sit down to write, they often find themselves staring for hours at an empty computer screen or doing anything but writing. Once again, the

difficulty is often that they are applying a reporter rather than a scholar model to their work. Reporters have formulas to follow in writing up their stories, and they largely insert a story into that formula. In contrast, because it is designed to produce new insights, a thesis or a dissertation requires organizing findings and writing them up in ways that are unique to the particular project. The student must generate the particular means out of the project itself.

The most common way in which students are likely to respond to the requirement to produce original scholarship is by enacting roles that enable them to do things other than write. Four of the most common of these roles are the housekeeper, the model employee, the patient, and the proxy critic. These roles are appealing because they provide rewards to students at a time when they feel the need for some kind of affirmation. After all, they are not getting the rewards that would come if they were actually making progress on the thesis or dissertation.

### ***Housekeeper***

A student sits down to work on the thesis or dissertation and decides that the kitchen cupboards need cleaning or the laundry needs to be done or the plants need to be watered or e-mail needs to be answered. What is going on with all of these variations on the housekeeper role is that the student is doing things other than writing in the belief that the completion of these tasks will make writing easier. This student believes that the conditions in the writing environment must be perfect before any writing can get done, so a great deal of time is spent trying to make those conditions perfect.

### ***Model Employee***

Students enact the role of the model employee when they have a job to do—paid or otherwise—and let the demands of that job push their writing aside. Because there is never an end to what individuals can do on the job when they are busy being perfect employees, the tasks multiply to fill the time available. Graduate students often adopt the role of the model employee when they spend a great deal of time over-teaching—preparing far too much for each class. Students also can be model employees in their personal lives, choosing to be the perfect spouse, partner, or parent. Although these students know their priority is to finish their thesis or dissertation, they keep busy with less important, short-term tasks. Once they are immersed in the busyness of some other area of their lives, there seems to be no room for any other high-priority task such as working on the thesis or dissertation.

### ***Patient***

The patient is the role students adopt if their scholarly work consists largely of trying to cure themselves of whatever is preventing them from making progress on their writing. Students can assume a patient role in various ways—by joining support groups, going into therapy, or focusing on physical ailments. In the role of the patient, students give power to some condition and allow it to stand in the way between them and a completed writing project. Their response is to do the work that reinforces and highlights the disease so that it becomes the



thing on which students focus their attention, and they count this as work on the thesis or dissertation.

### ***Proxy Critic***

Some students will write a sentence and immediately begin to wonder about what they have just written. “This isn’t good enough,” they say to themselves, and they stop writing. These students feel like they need approval before they can proceed, but, of course, there is no one who will approve every sentence at the moment it is written. In this case, students have assumed the role of the proxy critic—an imaginary editor or critic who stops the flow of ideas by assessing them prematurely. In this role, students are forgetting that writing and editing are two separate processes. The first process is getting the ideas on paper, and the second (and separate) step is to scrutinize and revise.

### ***Writing Regularly***

What is common to the roles that students adopt to keep them from having to write is that the roles allow students to do things other than write. Thus, to counter these roles, students must make writing a regular, recurring activity. Key to writing regularly is to work on writing according to a schedule. Even if a student has just an hour or two to devote to writing each day, those hours should be scheduled, and writing during those hours should be a sacred part of the day. Students who believe they have no time during a day for regular writing should chart their daily activities for a week or two in half-hour blocks. They undoubtedly will discover that they are spending time on nonessential activities that could be used to work on the thesis or dissertation.

If writing in a sustained fashion for an extended period of time proves difficult, students might want to try the 40-minute cycle. This is a system in which a student does 40 minutes of sustained work, takes a 20-minute break, and then repeats the cycle. The 40-minute cycle prevents students from becoming physically tired and burned out. When they feel like they cannot face working on the thesis or dissertation, knowing that they just have to complete two or three 40-minute cycles seems like something that is possible to do.

Some students have trouble keeping themselves on a schedule. They can easily slide into adopting or perpetuating a housekeeper or a patient role, for example, and never quite get around to making or sticking to a schedule in which they really do work on the thesis or dissertation. These students might try keeping a record of how many hours they write each day and sharing that record with someone at the end of every week. Without a commitment to sharing their records with someone else, students easily can convince themselves that they will begin writing “tomorrow.”

When students are done with their scheduled writing period for the day, they should stop and put their writing aside. They have met their goals for the day, so there is no reason to feel guilty. Students may be tempted to keep writing if they are making good progress, but learning to stop at regular times for breaks is an important part of learning to write regularly. Stopping at the end of the designated time keeps students from becoming hungry or exhausted, both of



which make writing difficult. Plus, stopping at a point when they are eager to write more makes it easy to begin writing at the next session.

Writing a thesis or dissertation involves many processes that students have done before in their graduate study—choosing a topic for a paper and designing research studies, writing literature reviews, coding data, and writing papers. But if students approach these activities in the ways they did for their coursework or comprehensive exams—using a reporter model—they will have a difficult time successfully completing a thesis or a dissertation. The thesis or dissertation requires accomplishing these various processes using a scholar model, one in which students generate original insights and theories instead of relying on the insights and theories of others. The more quickly and completely students adopt and apply the scholar role as they engage the various processes of the dissertation, the more efficiently they will complete their projects and the more original their contributions will be to the communication discipline.<sup>1</sup>

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# 9

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## ***Getting Published: Four Keys for Participating in the Scholarly Dialogue***

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In a twist on the familiar dictum to “publish or perish,” the renowned organizational communication scholar, Charles Redding, used to quip that “Professor So-and-So had demonstrated that it is possible to publish *and* perish.” With his passing, Charles proved his own point . . . but the fact that his influence infuses the communication discipline to this day hints at a fundamental truth: *Scholarly publishing matters because it is the primary means of disseminating our ideas and data to the larger scholarly community.* Certainly teaching matters (and the best teaching is irreplaceable); impassioned debates over cold beers matter (and good beer, while replaceable, is hard to beat), but by publishing their work, theorists and researchers can contribute to the scholarly dialogue in a way that is unmatched by other modes of communication. If thinking about publishing in such terms seems to be a bit overblown, in a much more concrete way, one’s publication record is accorded significant weight in both hiring and promotion-and-tenure decisions (and, indeed, may be the most important factor at Research I institutions). Even for those graduates who choose to leave the academy to pursue careers in profit or non-profit sectors, a record of scholarly publication can only enhance one’s attractiveness to potential employers.

Scholarly publishing takes various forms (e.g., books, invited chapters in edited books, refereed articles and chapters, book reviews, encyclopedia entries), and many of the principles developed below apply equally to any of these sorts

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of manuscripts. That fact notwithstanding, the primary focus here is on getting published in refereed journals. It is certainly possible that a graduate student might develop a book-length manuscript for publication, or that he or she might be invited to contribute a chapter to an edited volume (although it is more likely that a student would be afforded the opportunity to co-author such a piece with a more senior scholar), but, far and away, the most common path to publication in the early stages of one's career is the one that leads to refereed articles.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE SUBMISSION–REVIEW–PUBLICATION PROCESS**

A colleague once told this story of his first experience submitting a paper for publication: He put his manuscript in the mail and sat back waiting for a “thank you” letter and notification of the issue number in which his piece would appear. What he received instead was a pair of scathing reviews and a rejection letter!

During the author of this chapter's tenure as editor of *Human Communication Research* there were several occasions when people submitted manuscripts that the reviewers soundly rejected, but those papers actually had potential. If the authors had only had a better grasp of the way the submission–review process works, they might eventually have been accepted. Consider how likely you would be to walk away from a night of poker as a winner if you did not know the rules of the game: Hand after hand, you would just be randomly selecting which cards to keep and discard (and almost certainly taking a whuppin' in the process). In a similar way, the prospective author might throw manuscript after manuscript at the wall, hoping “something would stick.” To suggest that the submission–review process is analogous to a “game” might connote an unfortunate, and unwarranted, note of cynicism, but there are “rules,” and knowing them makes it a lot more likely that you're going to “win.”

When submitting a manuscript for publication, whether it is an electronic or hardcopy submission, authors should review the target journal's submission guidelines and carefully adhere to those guidelines. Journals typically specify page limits, format requirements, number of copies to be sent, etc., and a failure to follow such guidelines, even if something seems arbitrary or capricious, is a surefire way to stack the deck against yourself. Along with your manuscript you should include a cover letter. Some journals' submission guidelines go so far as to specify the contents of the cover letter, but when that information is absent, the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* provides a useful guide to the elements to be included in the letter. You should not submit a manuscript to multiple journals at the same time, and the editor should be advised when there are similar papers (e.g., based on the same data set but reporting different analyses) either published or under review.

Once the editor receives the manuscript, he or she should promptly acknowledge that fact. This is less an issue with today's electronic submission processes, but when submitting a manuscript via the mail, an editor should notify an author that the submission has been received within a week. The editor will

then make an initial determination of whether the manuscript is in proper form and addresses a topic suitable for the journal. Manuscripts that simply are not ready for review, or that are not in keeping with the mission and focus of the journal, typically will be rejected at this stage (although a helpful editor may offer feedback about re-working the paper for possible submission). For those manuscripts that pass this initial screening, the editor will identify two or three scholars with expertise in the area to serve as reviewers. Often these reviewers are members of the journal's editorial board, but a journal receives far more manuscripts than could be processed by that group. Therefore, many reviewers serve on an ad hoc basis—lending their time and expertise at the editor's request out of a commitment to the discipline and their interest in the topic.

The editor usually asks reviewers to provide their evaluations within a specified span (one month or six weeks are typical, but these periods do vary). Very often, reviewers do not meet their due dates, but it is incumbent upon the editor to follow-up with tardy reviewers to ensure that a manuscript does not languish at the bottom of someone's "to do" stack. The review process normally takes two to three months, but there are many horror stories of authors who have waited far longer to receive word of their paper's status. An author who has not received a response after three months should feel free to contact the editor to inquire about the manuscript. (And you call tell him or her that you read here that that's what you should do!)

Reviewers will provide the editor with three types of feedback: (1) comments to the author(s), (2) confidential comments to the editor, and (3) a publication recommendation. It is important to keep in mind that the editor often sees a more candid evaluation than that provided to the author. Specific publication recommendations made to the editor vary somewhat from journal to journal, but they usually reflect categorical judgments along the following lines: "accept," "accept pending revisions," "revise and resubmit," and "reject."

The editor will then carefully review the manuscript, weigh the reviewers' comments and recommendations, and make a publication decision. He or she will write a decision letter to the authors and provide them with the reviewers' "comments to the author(s)." It is quite rare that a paper submitted to one of our field's top-rung journals would receive an outright acceptance on first submission. For our best journals, even "accept pending revisions" judgments are rather unlikely. Statistically speaking, of all manuscripts submitted, most receive "revise and resubmit" or "reject" decisions.

In the decision letter, the editor will summarize the comments of the reviewers and, for papers that receive "accept pending revisions" and "revise and resubmit" verdicts, outline the points that need to be addressed in a revision. The editor may also ask to be informed about whether the author will undertake a revision and set a date for resubmission.

When submitting a revision the author should include a cover letter in which he or she details the way in which each of the reviewers' and editor's comments have been addressed. The editor will typically return the revised manuscript and cover letter to the original reviewers. It is possible that, upon revision, problems that were not apparent in the first version will emerge, and the paper will be

rejected. It is also common for reviewers to feel that their earlier criticisms have not been adequately addressed, and for them to ask for yet another revision. In some cases a paper may go through multiple rounds of revision before it is accepted for publication.

Once a manuscript is accepted, it enters the production phase of the publication process, and this may extend over some months. At some point the author will receive a set of page proofs which is the typeset version of the manuscript. Very often the page proofs will contain typesetting errors, and it is essential that the author go over them very carefully to detect any such mistakes. The author should use the standard proofreader's marks given in the *APA Publication Manual* to indicate any corrections or changes. Changes to the content of the paper at this stage are strongly discouraged because they may necessitate resetting the entire article. Also at this stage, the author will receive a copyright agreement which assigns the copyright for the article to the journal's publisher or the association that owns the journal. Finally, the day arrives when the issue with your article lands in your mailbox. It is a gratifying experience, one to be savored, but not for too long: If you're doing it right, you've got a revise-and-resubmit sitting on your desk that needs to be turned around, and you're also collecting data for another study.

## **A HIERARCHY OF CONCERNS: THE QUESTION, PROJECT, MANUSCRIPT, AND JOURNAL**

The modal number of refereed publications by Ph.D.s in the communication discipline is one! Fewer than half of the people who earn their doctoral degree in communication will ever publish more than a single refereed article (Hickson, Bodon, & Turner, 2004). The submission–review–publication process might seem somewhat daunting, and that probably contributes to this publication statistic, but there are specific steps that one can take to enhance the chances of success. As an approach for exploring ways to nudge the odds in one's favor, it is instructive to think about the research and publication enterprise in terms of a four-tiered hierarchy of concerns.

### ***Level 1: The Research Question—Significance of the Problem***

At the most fundamental level of the hierarchy is the nature of the research question the author is seeking to address. The questions that drive a research project vary in their significance or importance, and as one would expect, when reviewers judge that the question pursued in a manuscript is trivial, they are unlikely to recommend that it be accepted (see American Psychological Association [APA], 2001, p. 6; Ryan, 1982). As Darryl Bem (1995, p. 172) so succinctly put it, papers are very often rejected because, "Nobody will give a damn."

What sorts of features, then, distinguish "significant" from "trivial" research problems? It may not be possible to give a definitive and exhaustive answer,

but considerations of “coherence,” “pragmatics,” “heuristics,” and “aesthetics” certainly matter.

*Coherence Considerations.* At root, “coherence considerations” concern how a study fits with and extends established understanding. According to Sam Becker (1984, pp. 2–3), “The most important questions . . . are ones whose answers will serve to refine, amplify, or . . . confirm some part of what we currently take as knowledge in our field” (see also Chesebro, 1993, p. 378). But satisfying coherence considerations does not just involve locating the project within the matrix of what is assumed, believed, and known. What is most important is the potential for pursuit of that question to reshape or extend that matrix. For example, does a question lead us to re-think what is currently accepted or to see relationships between what had previously been treated as disparate phenomena? In contrast, the framing of problems may address coherence considerations only minimally, in the sense that they incorporate established assumptions, terminology, and methods but do not really have the potential to reshape what we know. Reviewers recognize trivial extensions of research paradigms (e.g., “the effect of green ties versus blue ties on credibility”)—what the *APA Publication Manual* (2001, p. 5) refers to as “exhaustion of a problem,” and research questions that “beg the obvious” (see Pacanowsky, 1976, for a delightful parody).

*Heuristic Considerations.* Heurism refers to the capacity to stimulate even more research. The most compelling research projects are those that suggest new avenues of inquiry and application—those that open up new possibilities. You have almost certainly read articles that were exciting because you could see ways of running with the ideas and findings. Just like you, reviewers are sensitive to the heuristic implications of a project, and those that do not seem to lead anywhere tend not to fare as well in the review process.

*Pragmatic Considerations.* Communication is a practical discipline—one concerned with understanding how people can function more effectively in their roles as message producers and processors. The most highly regarded research questions, then, tend to be those that have practical implications for people’s lives. (In fact, the National Communication Association now publishes an online magazine, *CommCurrents*, which focuses on making the scholarly research published in our journals accessible and useful for the lay public.)

*Aesthetic Considerations.* There are layers of beauty, elegance, and order that characterize virtually all communication processes, but they often go undetected or underappreciated. A truly compelling research question reveals some element of this aesthetic world. In the way that a significant question is framed, it can yield an “ah ha” moment of insight and realization; we find these problems “fascinating,” “engrossing,” and we delight in their contemplation.

## **Level 2: The Research Project—Quality of Execution**

Posing a significant research question is a key first step along the path to publication, but obviously, coming up with a great idea or problem does not ensure a great research project in pursuit of that problem. Because reviewers are usually (but unfortunately not always!) scholars actively involved in conducting and publishing research in the same subject area, the author should expect that



they will have had first-hand experience in dealing with the conceptual and methodological issues pertinent to the research problem. As a result, it is both important and strategic to be particularly sensitive to whether and how those issues have been addressed. Whereas at the first level of the “getting published” hierarchy manuscripts get booted because they do not pass the “So What/Who Cares?” test, at this level they are jettisoned because “You Didn’t Cite X, and You Didn’t Do Y.”

It is at this level that one’s graduate training and research experience really comes to the fore. Via training and experience a scholar learns to anticipate likely criticisms concerning the execution of a project, and thereby avoids or addresses them at the outset. This is a tremendous advantage—you can short-circuit lots of objections when you are on top of the substantive and methodological issues pertinent your project. Even then, though, reviewers will almost certainly . . . no, make that *certainly* . . . seize upon actual or perceived shortcomings in the project, and these will constitute the “teeth” of their reviews and, very often, the major considerations informing their publication recommendations.

Concerns with quality of execution crop up at every phase of a scholarly project. In surveying the literature, it is important to know what has already been done and how what you’re doing differs from and extends that literature. In collecting data, it is essential to avoid textbook errors in study design, sampling, and measurement. In the analysis phase, you’ve got to apply appropriate analytic techniques (e.g., do not violate statistical assumptions); and, when you’re doing something new, make a clear and compelling case for your approach. In drawing conclusions from the data and analyses, be cautious about making claims that extend beyond your findings: Do not lose sight of what population actually was sampled, what actually was measured, and what actually was found.

Again, reviewers are especially tuned in to considerations such as these. Few things stick out like not knowing what you don’t know and not knowing what you’re doing. At the same time, it is important to distinguish between “fatal” and “nonfatal” problems in carrying out a project. Essentially, nonfatal problems are those that can be addressed via a revision: A review of literature can be bolstered to fill in gaps, data can be re-analyzed using more appropriate techniques, and discussions can be re-written so that they more accurately reflect the findings, limitations, and conclusions of the project. Unfortunately, fatal errors are another matter, and they are not easily exorcised. Problems in the design of a study such as a confound in the manipulation of the independent variable, lack of reliability and validity in operationalization of the dependent variable, bias in sampling, and so on, typically cannot be overcome.

### ***Level 3: The Manuscript—Quality of Presentation***

An interesting problem, pursued via a well conceived and well executed study, still does not ensure a positive outcome in the review process. A third tier of concerns, then, involves the quality of exposition and manuscript preparation. As Alexander and Potter (2001) observe, many manuscripts are rejected not because the research is bad, but because the writing is not very good.

Quality of presentation encompasses a number of distinct concerns, more than can be developed here, but several are particularly important to mention. The

first of these involves the basic mechanics of writing: grammar, punctuation, spelling, and so on. Inadequacies in these areas (and similar problems like typographical errors, an incomplete reference list, references in the wrong format and other failures to adhere to the journal's format guidelines, incorrect quotations, etc.) are more problematic than authors sometimes suppose. It might seem that these are minor details, to be corrected somewhere (by someone) along the path to publication, and that such little things should not obscure the overarching significance of one's ideas and data, nor should taking the time to get the manuscript in proper order be allowed to delay the process of bringing one's work to an unenlightened community of scholars.

In point of fact, however, problems in the basic mechanics of writing and manuscript preparation can really stack the deck against an author in the review process. The standard reviewer's comment goes something like this: If the author was this cavalier about manuscript preparation (something we *can* see), then what confidence can we have about the care with which the data were collected, handled, analyzed, and reported (something we *can't* see)?

The second aspect of presentation quality of particular note involves the need to develop a "reader-centered" model of scholarly writing. The ultimate purpose of scholarly writing is to communicate one's ideas and findings to others, and to accomplish this end, the author needs to write with the reader in mind. In orienting to the task of developing the manuscript, the author should ask: (a) what his or her reader likely knows, believes, and is willing to assume at the outset, and (b) what he or she wishes the reader to know, believe, or assume at the end of the paper. With these two endpoints in mind, the task becomes one of moving the reader from the starting point to the conclusion, along the most direct possible path. As the narrative unfolds, each successive step should seem reasonable (sound, systematic, perhaps even necessary). Now, this in no way is meant to suggest that the author should think about what he or she is doing as leading the reader to some surprise ending—as Potter (2001) says, the author does not want to make the mistake of "writing a mystery." The reader should know where you're going; you simply want to make sure that the path to getting there is one he or she is able and willing to follow.

Adopting a reader-centered orientation, and actually carrying through in implementing that perspective, results in several readily discernable features in scholarly writing. Foremost among these are clarity, conciseness, and anticipation.

*Clarity.* Readers cannot follow along with you if they cannot follow you. Not too long ago, this chapter's author encountered the following sentence in a paper: "With respect to the interaction styles' influence on changing epistemological styles, the key difference between these styles is the establishment of a trusting relationship between the instructor and the students with one style, and not the other." Sentences such as this do not make the final cut when one is writing with the reader in mind. And concerns with clarity extend beyond the level of sentence construction. The reader-centered writer strives for clarity to the point of transparency at every turn: developing the rationale; stating the research question; describing the method and results; and discussing conclusions, limitations, and implications.

*Conciseness.* A key element of the reader-centered model is not simply to move the reader from point A to point B, but to do so by the most direct possible path. As a result, reader-centered manuscripts do not, for example, have long, tedious literature reviews; instead, they cut to the point by focusing on and framing previous findings and issues in ways that bear directly on the current project. More generally, they do not deviate from the strait-and-narrow narrative path by chasing after tangential points. If you've immersed yourself in a literature and project you are, quite naturally, going to be brimming with ideas, nuances, and minutiae, but that does not mean that you should try to incorporate all that; stick to the path and point of *this* manuscript. As Bem (1995) recommends, the writer who has included tangential material probably needs to do (at least) two additional drafts of the paper—the first where all those tangential ideas are moved to footnotes, and the second where those footnotes are deleted.

*Anticipation.* In constructing a manuscript's narrative path, the writer needs to be able to anticipate the steps that the reader may be unable or reluctant to make. Are there assumptions that need to be made explicit and defended, terms that need to be defined, theories to be explicated, methods to be described and supported? By being on top of the literature, knowing what informed readers are likely to grant and what is controversial or problematic, the writer is in a position to meet potential objections. Now, this is not to suggest that a writer should set for him- or herself the task of converting the reader to the other side of an ideological divide; rather, the more modest (and do-able) aim should be to make a reasonable case for the course he or she has taken.

#### ***Level 4: The Journal—Where to Submit the Manuscript***

One of the secrets of scholarly publishing is that journal editors face just two fundamental problems: They have too few submissions, and they have too many submissions. That is, they always need high quality work to fill their issues, but they do not need manuscripts that, for whatever reason, have little or no chance of being accepted. Deciding where to submit a manuscript has very real consequences for whether it is likely to be published. In many cases, submitting your work to the “wrong” place, even if it is sound and well-written, can make it highly unlikely that the paper will fare well in the review process.

Doubtless, the most important recommendation for selecting where to submit your work is to be familiar with the journal. At one level, being familiar with a journal means being familiar with its focus and content; you cannot necessarily judge a journal by its title. You need to know what topics and methods are reflected in the articles published over the last few years, what the journal's editorial mission statement says, who the journal's current editor is, and whether he or she has published an “editor's statement” since taking the reins. The need to be familiar with a journal's focus and content suggests a very basic litmus test: If your paper doesn't include a single reference to an article published in a particular journal, you may want to think twice (or three times) about sending it there (assuming, of course, that the journal has been around for a while).

The best way to become familiar with a journal is, of course, to have immersed oneself in its contents in the course of reviewing the literature and designing and conducting one's own project. In some cases, however, it may be desirable to cast a wider net by researching the *Iowa Guide* (available online: <http://iowaguide.uiowa.edu/>). This resource provides useful summaries of many communication journals' focus, editorial policies, etc.

Being familiar with a journal also involves recognizing that journals differ in their prestige and impact, and that, to some degree, reviewers' evaluation standards and expectations (as well as their experience and expertise), may covary with these factors. A very rough ranking of journals in the communication discipline probably goes something like this: (1) general readership, or "flagship" journals (e.g., *Communication Monographs*, *Communication Theory*, *Human Communication Research*); (2) journals devoted to publishing in specialized areas (e.g., *Communication Education*, *Management Communication Quarterly*); (3) journals published under the auspices of regional associations (e.g., *Communication Studies*, *Communication Quarterly*, *Western Journal of Communication*); and (4) journals specializing in shorter research reports (e.g., *Communication Reports*, *Communication Research Reports*).

Alternatively, there are other, more objective ways of assessing journal quality. One common metric (and one often invoked by tenure and promotion committees) is acceptance rates (on the premise that the best journals are the most selective). By itself this is an imperfect measure, though, because authors often "self-select" out of more prestigious outlets so that lesser journals end up with low acceptance rates because they receive large numbers of low-quality submissions. Another index of journal quality is the Thompson Scientific *ISI World of Knowledge* ratings of journal impact (available online through institutional subscription), which are based on the number of citations in subsequent publications that a journal receives (the idea being that the best journals will publish articles that are cited often). While useful, the ISI rankings have various limitations, among them the fact that many communication journals are simply not included when it comes to counting subsequent citations.

There is a third sense of what it means to be "familiar" with a journal, and this can sometimes be elusive. Journal editors face a daunting job of processing a large number of manuscripts in a timely fashion, and communication has been very fortunate over the years in drawing from its ranks to enlist the services of a long list of distinguished, diligent, and fair editors. Nevertheless, there have been occasions when editors have gotten far behind in processing manuscripts and issues have not been published as scheduled. When things do go seriously awry, that fact is often widely known, and conferring with mentors and peers may help to head off launching a manuscript on a one-way flight into a "black hole."

## GETTING PUBLISHED: THE FOUR KEYS

Time to pay off on the promissory note given in this chapter's title—beyond the basics we have covered so far, just what are the "four keys" to take with you?

### ***Set a High Personal Standard***

There just aren't many shortcuts along the path to scholarly publication (and good reviewers can usually tell where corners have been cut). At every phase of a project, from initial formulation of the research question to editing page proofs, nothing will serve you better in the long run than setting out to do things "right."

### ***Take the Plunge***

It is very unlikely that an editor is going to contact a graduate student and ask to publish his or her work; you've got to be willing to send your stuff out and deal with the feedback you receive. There are many reasons for the fact that the modal number of publications in the field is one, but prominent among them is that bright, capable scholars are sometimes reluctant to subject themselves to critique—you've gotta be tougher than that.

### ***Be Persistent***

The odds are pretty high that a quality manuscript submitted to a selective journal will receive a "revise-and-resubmit" decision. Revise-and-resubmits are a good thing—it means that you're still in the game and that the editor must have seen some promise in the project. Don't give up on a revise-and-resubmit manuscript, and don't let it languish. But in striving to "be persistent," don't be foolish. Not all "revise-and-resubmits" are created equal. Is the editor encouraging in his or her summary of what needs to be done? Have the reviewers or editor set a nearly impossible bar? Are the flaws "fatal" and just have not been labeled as such? There are times when it's best to move on.

When revising your manuscript, read the reviewers' comments carefully, and put them away. A couple of days later, lay aside your emotion, and read them again, even more carefully. Recognize that responding to a "revise-and-resubmit" involves preparing two documents: the revised manuscript and the cover letter detailing how you've responded to the reviewers' comments. Of the two, the cover letter is often the most important.

In those cases where a manuscript is rejected, the same advice applies. Read the reviews carefully and draw upon them to strengthen the paper. Don't just turn around and send the manuscript to another journal. Other reviewers are likely to seize upon the same points, and there is a certain chance that you will get one or more of the same reviewers (and they do not take kindly to being ignored).

### ***Enjoy the Process***

It is easy to focus on the ultimate objective of the submission—review—publication process (i.e., actually getting the paper into print), and there is certainly great satisfaction in that accomplishment. That said, it is also important to enjoy the process of getting there. Orienting only to way-stations along the path of scholarship (e.g., "when I get this published," "when I get a job," "when I get tenure") leads almost inevitably to burnout. If, however, you take pleasure in

designing and executing the project, in crafting the manuscript, and even in learning from the reviews, you'll always will be an active contributor to the scholarly dialogue. Savor it all.

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# 10

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## ***Finding Your First Job: The Job Search and Interviewing Process***

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**B**y the time students begin their first job search, it is usually too late to significantly improve the qualifications they bring to the job market. Students must take best advantage of their time in graduate school to develop the experience and credentials they will need to get the type of job they are seeking. Still, the job that a graduate student eventually acquires is by no means determined solely by what the person has done in graduate school. The difference in job-seeking success between two applicants who seem to have similar credentials from graduate school can be striking. Some of the difference in success can be attributed to the intangibles a person brings to the job—interpersonal skills, charisma, vision, and likeability—and to factors no one can control, such as the candidate’s fit with job openings in that particular hiring cycle. Yet the manner in which a person conducts the job search also plays an important role in determining the outcome of that search. Some candidates take best advantage of their qualifications, while others fail to realize that potential. This chapter is written to help graduates be as successful as possible in their job search and interviews, whether they are seeking a position in academe, business, or other professions.

### **THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS**

Although the application and interviewing process can vary among different companies and universities, there is a standard pattern followed by most employ-

ers. This section provides an overview of job search fundamentals, beginning with what candidates need to do before applying for any job.

### ***Before Sending an Application***

The first step for candidates is to identify positions of potential interest. Before looking for available positions, job seekers need to consider what type of employment they seek. Communication graduate students may seek jobs in professional fields such as human resources, marketing communication, and consulting, as well as research and academic positions. Applicants seeking jobs in industry should consider the type of work required, opportunities for advancement, and even ethical considerations regarding the nature of the industry. No matter what the position, seek out advice and models of résumés that are generally accepted in that particular field. Informational interviews are an excellent way to meet individuals who already hold the desired job as well as to learn more about various paths to different careers.

Perhaps the most important consideration for those seeking a tenure-track teaching position is their preferred balance of teaching and research (see Kuehn, 1994). Different expectations of teaching and research will determine both teaching load (typically ranging between two and four classes per semester) and number of publications expected for tenure (which can range widely, with expectations typically between 1–15 articles). Other potentially important considerations include whether the school has a graduate program and whether the school is a public or private institution. The matter of whether a school is publicly or privately owned has numerous implications, but for many people, the biggest issue is the opportunity to work at a school operated by a particular religious denomination.

Once candidates have carefully considered their own preferences, they can review academic job openings in places like *Spectra*, CRTNET (Communication Research and Theory Network listserv: [www.natcom.org/CRTNET](http://www.natcom.org/CRTNET)), and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Students can identify corporate job openings in industry publications, newspapers, and Web sites (e.g., Monster.com, Career-Builder.com), as well as professional organizations' websites (e.g., The Society for Human Resource Management: [www.shrm.com](http://www.shrm.com)). Job seekers should then learn more about the programs or companies whose job ads look appealing to see if their interests fit with the nature of that position.

For teaching jobs, a “goodness of fit” between the applicant and the institution can span an infinite array of characteristics including areas of concentration the department offers, nature of classes taught, typical class size, research facilities available, service expectations, department support for research and professional development, definition of suitable scholarship, parental or caregiver accommodations, department culture, and more. For jobs outside the academy, graduates should consider the nature of the tasks and industry, hours, travel, and compensation. Many professional positions pay better than academic jobs, but they usually require more administrative work and offer less flexibility and control over one's own time. Also, professional jobs typically require more interaction and interdependence on other employees than is required in academic positions.

Another issue to consider is the number of job openings to which one should apply. Graduates should apply to enough positions to maximize their opportunity to find a job, yet not so many as to overwhelm those writing recommendation letters. A rule of thumb is to apply to all jobs that look truly exciting, and then a few jobs that seem adequate in case the seemingly ideal organizations do not make offers.

For all jobs, applicants should consider the culture and climate of the department and whether they want to place themselves within such an organization. Corporate and departmental cultures differ widely in terms of their competitiveness, social support, conflict, sociality, hierarchical structure, diversity, and inclusiveness. Given the range of research that indicates the power of jobs to shape individuals' identity (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005), job applicants should take stock of the type(s) of current employees and work culture and ask themselves questions such as: "Will I enjoy or grow within this environment?" and "Do I want to be like these people?"

### ***Sending Application Materials***

After deciding where to apply, the process of preparing materials begins. The matter of what to include in an application package is simple: Send whatever is specified in the job ad. Virtually every school will ask for a cover letter, curriculum vitae, recommendation letters, and a statement of either research interests or teaching philosophy. In seeking employment within the academy, most research-oriented universities will ask candidates to send articles or conference papers while most teaching-oriented schools will ask for evidence of teaching effectiveness. Jobs outside the academy will ask for a résumé, statement of professional goals, and often other documents relevant to the profession they represent. These employers will frequently request a list of references rather than the letters themselves. When professional positions are applied for through a Web site, job applicants should keep in mind that many résumés are filtered through key words (e.g., team, leader, project management). As such, it can be helpful to include in one's application the potential key words that the employer used in the job advertisement.

*Cover letter.* Although some people on hiring committees skip applicants' cover letters and go straight to their résumé or curriculum vitae when reviewing files, others read cover letters carefully before looking at other material. Many employers in business decide whether or not to even look at an application file based on the cover letter alone. The bottom line is that, especially in business, the cover letter is critically important in an application. The cover letter allows an applicant the opportunity to succinctly make a case for why he or she is worth considering, which can influence how—or if—the rest of the file is evaluated. Furthermore, points made in a cover letter (if made well) routinely find their way into hiring committees' discussions. The key is to make the cover letter inviting to read. This letter must be individually written for each application and should be about  $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pages in length (*never* over 2 pages) for most industries.

A good cover letter begins with a statement that the applicant is applying for the job (identifying which position, if several are posted) and is best organized in a way that mirrors the job advertisement. The first paragraphs should highlight

ways the applicant is a good fit with the major elements of the advertised position. Applicants should avoid repeating information in the cover letter that is available in other application materials; instead just note where the relevant qualities are addressed in other application materials and direct readers' attention to those spots. Candidates can also mention relevant information in cover letters that might not be clearly evident in the rest of the application materials (e.g., their career trajectory, the reasons for a break in their employment record or scholarship, how their professional work complements their scholarly work). Finally, a strong way to close the letter is to discuss why this particular position is of special interest to the candidate (e.g., the company's reputation, a university's religious denomination, a particular geographic location, an innovative teaching program, or a person's relationship with that company or school).

In the cover letter, candidates should note their relevant strengths, but do so in a likeable and not boastful manner. The applicant's portfolio can exhibit a person's merits in a more "objective" fashion. The cover letter should focus on goodness of fit and on the unique qualities the candidate would bring to the position that might appeal to the hiring institution.

*Curriculum vitae or résumé.* The curriculum vitae or résumé is the most important single document in a job application packet. Given the importance of this document through one's career, students should spend time creating a strong framework for condensing and describing their scholarship, work experience, teaching, service, and extra-curricular activities. A number of frameworks exist for creating these documents (Jackson & Geckeis, 2003) and students should make use of models that are used by their mentors as well as those used by individuals employed by the organization to which they are applying. Most vitae/résumés include contact information, institutions and dates of earned degrees, publications and conference papers, courses taught, awards and distinctions, work experience, and service (to the profession such as responding to a conference panel, to the department and/or university such as serving as a graduate student leader, and to the public such as *pro bono* communication consulting for a local nonprofit organizations).

While no single organizational framework is necessarily "best," one's curriculum vitae should be well organized (usually in reverse chronological order) and should clearly delineate the role of the individual—and order of authors on a research project, the time spent in a certain position, or specific duties accomplished for a certain project. Include all relevant information, but avoid inflating or double-listing activities, which can cause readers to doubt the veracity of the entire document. Last, the best vitae are easy to read, with plenty of white space and appropriate use of formatting. Business résumés follow the same layout, design, and sequencing guidelines as curricula vitae. However, business résumés are strictly limited to one or two pages and should emphasize experience relevant to the type of job being sought. Many excellent sources offer guidelines for creating a business résumé (e.g., [www.Monster.Com](http://www.Monster.Com) or [www.CareerBuilder.com](http://www.CareerBuilder.com)).

*Recommendation letters.* As evidenced by the significant role of peer review in academic publishing and teaching, the opinions of peers are important in evaluating an applicant's qualifications. The same is true outside the academy—professional recommendations have a significant impact in hiring decisions. As such, the significance of strong letters of recommendation cannot be underestimated

in the job application packet. Strong recommendation letters are the result of professional relationships. Students should begin thinking about who might serve as their references early in their studies and begin developing significant relationships with those people as they take classes and engage in research projects throughout their graduate work.

Students should consider several tips as they choose letter writers. First, students should consider the job position and choose a group of writers who will be considered credible by that particular hiring committee. Sometimes the source of the letter is as important as the content. Generally speaking, students should endeavor to cultivate relationships with well-known scholars or business leaders. Students should have a conversation with prospective letter writers and discern the type of letter that will be provided by each person. Some people will be quite honest if they feel they cannot write a strong letter, while others are reluctant to hurt a student's feelings. An unenthusiastic response or a comment such as "Someone else could probably write a stronger letter" are indicators that this person might not write a particularly glowing letter.

The best letter writers show a depth and breadth of knowledge about the student and can effectively and positively comment on the details of the applicant's job skills and character. Most academic job search committees are also keen on having assurance that the applicant will indeed finish the degree, so it is helpful if the advisor's letter includes a timeline for finishing the dissertation and/or other requirements. Finally, students should have an appreciation for the amount of time and effort it takes to write a good letter. Students should provide letter writers with plenty of time (a month or more, if possible) to write the letter and offer to facilitate the process by providing a description of the job, their vitae, a draft of the cover letter, and addressed envelopes.

*Research portfolio.* In seeking a position as a researcher—whether for a faculty position at a university or for a marketplace analyst in a business—most prospective employers will ask for a research statement. The purpose of this statement is to give the hiring committee a sense of the applicant's research experience and trajectory. For universities, this narrative should show a goodness of fit with department goals, a significant individual research program, and a projection of future directions. These statements are typically one to two pages in length. The best research statement is written simply and accessibly, so that any faculty member can understand the candidate's research agenda and the contribution this research will make to the discipline and to society.

Candidates should send as a writing sample the most impressive examples of their work in their primary area of interest. Ideally, this is a single-authored article published in a top journal on a topic central to the candidate's research agenda. However, few graduate students have such a piece readily available. In this case, applicants should send a copy of their best published article (if any), potentially complemented with a single-authored conference paper or a class paper that is central to the candidate's research agenda. If none of these are available, a dissertation chapter may be the best choice. For a professional job, a succinctly written executive summary or white paper will likely be more impressive than an academic paper.

*Teaching portfolio.* Many employers are interested in evidence that demonstrates the applicant's teaching ability—in the classroom for faculty members and in

training and development settings for business. Such evidence can come in a number of forms, and like the curriculum vitae, the construction of a teaching portfolio will be of use for faculty not only in job applications, but also in tenure and promotion files at teaching-oriented schools. Teaching portfolios commonly include a table of contents, a statement of teaching philosophy, synthesized and contextualized student teaching evaluations, peer reviews, syllabi, sample course assignments and exams, a discussion of the applicant's instructional training and professional development, and examples of student work in the applicant's courses.

The portfolio should highlight the purposes and goals of teaching, adequate preparation, appropriate methods for achieving pedagogical goals, significant results (e.g., in terms of projects developed, student achievement), effective presentation, and reflection on one's own practice (Newton, Singer, D'Antonio, Bush, & Roen, 2002). Also, student evaluations of teaching should be contextualized and synthesized. Numbers do not speak for themselves, and universities have widely variant evaluation processes (a "1.0" rating can have very different meanings depending on the system). Student comments can add depth but are often not considered as credible as numeric averages because the applicant could cherry-pick the most flattering remarks. Qualitative and quantitative ratings will be strongest when mixed with peer reviews, demonstration of instructional activities, and personal reflexivity about pedagogical goals.

*General advice on sending materials.* Several guidelines are important in preparing and sending materials. First, be sure to send everything specified in the advertisement. Failing to do so will make the file incomplete and can remove the applicant from consideration. Second, candidates should proofread everything in the file. Special care needs to be taken that one's curriculum vitae is perfect. Typos and errors in the application file will hurt credibility, reducing that candidate's likelihood of being offered an interview. Finally, for positions that request a hard copy of the application, candidates should staple or secure multi-page documents and place their materials securely into an envelope for mailing. The application is usually assembled as a single file folder for each applicant that may be photocopied for multiple members of the hiring committee. As such, it is wise to avoid inserting materials into plastic page covers, binding them into three-ring ringed folders, or encumbering them in any other manner.

## **INTERVIEWS**

A successful application will lead to an interview. Due to budgetary constraints, most employers utilize a multi-stage process of interviewing that may include telephone or e-mail screening interviews and one or more on-site interviews with various groups of individuals. In academic jobs, the "final" interview usually happens during a one to two day on-site visit. Meanwhile, corporate jobs may require several visits to the site as the applicant sequentially moves through and up the corporate hierarchy as the interview pool is gradually narrowed down.

### ***Screening Interviews***

Most organizations utilize some form of screening interview, either over the telephone or in person. For jobs in higher education, in-person interviews are

most commonly done at the National Communication Association convention in November. The purpose of this interview is to provide more information about the job to the short list candidates (typically 5–10) and decide which applicants to bring to campus for a full interview. This interview is an important step in the search for a tenure-track job. Candidates should expect questions about both teaching and scholarship and are expected to ask questions of the hiring committee. This interview usually includes several faculty members, either conducted in-person by faculty available at a convention or remotely by several faculty on speaker phone or conference call. Expect the interview to be approximately a half hour.

Before the screening interview, candidates should do considerable research. Those seeking academic jobs should learn about the relative strengths and specialties of the school, identify areas of academic concentration, familiarize themselves with faculty members' scholarly interests, know what courses the department offers, and if time permits, look at faculty members' publications or attend faculty members' convention presentations. For corporate jobs, candidates should learn as much as possible about the company's market, portfolio, and organizational structure. Organizations are more interested in hiring candidates who want to work at *their* institution rather than hiring people who are just looking for any company that will take them.

During the screening interviews, candidates should be sensitive about the length of their answers. Interviewers' verbal and nonverbal cues will provide the necessary feedback, even on the telephone. Hiring committees are unimpressed with candidates they must pry information from, but are equally repelled by candidates who do not know when to stop talking. In seeking a faculty position at a university, candidates also need to watch for one potential land-mine: teaching preferences. Faculty who are territorial might feel threatened by an applicant who wants to teach "their" course. Candidates can best answer questions about what classes they prefer to teach by telling the committee which courses the department offers that are of greatest interest. Identify a number of courses but do not seem demanding about teaching any particular one. Finally, candidates should show their best interpersonal skills, being as gracious as possible. It is permissible to end the interview by asking about a time frame for on-campus interviews.

### ***On-Site Interview***

After organizations have selected their finalists, they will bring each candidate in for an on-site interview. Interview lengths vary for corporate positions but typically range from a couple of hours to no more than a day. Written or oral testing may also be part of this process. Companies that do extensive testing may even spread that process across several days. For academic positions, interviews typically last two days and give both the department and candidate a thorough chance to get to know each other. During an academic interview, candidates should expect the following:

- Meetings with the department chair, faculty members, dean, a group interview with the hiring committee, and possibly a faculty member from another department



- A presentation of the candidate's research
- A pedagogical talk or guest lecture in a class
- A meeting or social event with students
- Multiple meals with individual or small groups of faculty and possibly a reception with the entire department

At the time the interview is offered, the chair of the hiring department should inform candidates of their activities and likely schedule; at least a day before the interview starts the chair should provide a complete itinerary. Candidates are welcome to inquire about any information they need to prepare properly—including the goals of the requested presentations, equipment available for presentations, and estimated number of attendees.

*Preparation.* When an on-site interview is offered, candidates should do additional research on the department or company, so they are best prepared for the events ahead. Packing for interviews can be tricky, as candidates should be well-prepared but are limited in what they can bring. The essentials for any interview include a portfolio or briefcase that is easy to carry yet looks professional, presentation notes, an extra copy of the résumé or vitae, support material for presentations (laptop, jump drive, CD, and/or hand-outs), and back-up transparencies of any essential PowerPoint slides. Candidates should also bring notes they have made in preparing for the interview (e.g., information about the department or questions they want to ask while at the interview). Other supplies that candidates sometimes bring include pain reliever, breath mints or gum, safety pins, and other “survival” materials.

Regardless of one's chosen profession, interviewees traditionally wear business clothes such as a suit or other professional attire during their on-site interviews. Applicants are wise to dress in layers to allow for quick adjustments to different temperatures or levels of formality. All candidates should check the weather for their interview site before flying and be prepared with functional footwear in case of inclement weather.

*Recommendations.* Interviewing is a daunting process for many candidates and most everyone feels some degree of anxiety as they depart for an interview. Candidates can ease their nerves by keeping several points in mind. Interviews can be like first dates: Both sides are learning about each other to see if a long-term relationship is desirable. Keeping this two-way street in mind can be comforting, since it means that both parties are equally interviewing each other. Candidates should know that hiring departments want to see them do well, since these candidates rose to the top of their applicant pool. Also, employers want the candidates to have a positive experience, since they will want their top choice to accept the job offer.

Interviewees need to bear in mind that they are “on stage” for the entire visit. Give the best self-presentation possible with all people (including students) and in all settings, including meals, receptions, and while riding in the car to and from events. Because there are many different activities during an interview, applicants should adapt their behavior to the particular context. At times candidates will be expected to engage in a complex discussion of scholarship; at other times, they need to relax, be personable, and talk about something other than themselves (or better yet, ask questions of others).

Candidates need to be aware that interviewing uses vast quantities of a person's energy. Regardless of how outgoing a person is, most people find a full day of interviewing exhausting. Some people might still have energy left at the end of the first day to review their notes for the next day's presentation, but many find even that quite demanding. Candidates should fully prepare presentations before flying to the interview site to ensure well-deserved and necessary rest during their "down-time" at the interview site.

Candidates should consider the questions they will be asked and how they will answer those questions (see Appendix). Applicants should also compile a list of questions about the position and be prepared to ask them at the right time and to the right person. Candidates are wise to consider the context and target when asking questions. For instance, ask the dean about the department's reputation in the university, a student about the university's student culture, an assistant professor about how much the junior faculty are shielded from excessive service requirements, a senior professor about changes in the department over the years, a manager about the company's market strategy, or an entry-level employee about the company's support for career growth or parents with young children. After returning home from an interview, it is polite (although not required) to send e-mails or handwritten notes thanking key personnel with whom the candidate met and talked during the interview.

The preceding discussion provides a general overview of how to plan for and perform during the interview. However, many job seekers have additional concerns. While it is impossible to plan for every interview anomaly, the following discussion covers several of the most common concerns of job seekers.

## COMMON CONCERNS OF JOB SEEKERS

Job seekers encounter several common concerns as they apply for their first positions. While there are no hard and fast rules, the following comments are designed to provide a starting point for reflection and discussion about candidate behaviors during the interview, considering multiple job offers, and salary negotiations.

*Questionable questions and behavior.* Interviews may range from several hours to several days, depending on the position and organization. Candidates at universities will interact with faculty and students during morning, noon, and evening in contexts ranging from a professional classroom to faculty offices to meeting rooms to collegial social events. Given this range, candidates sometimes experience incidents and situations where they are not sure what to do. For instance, should candidates drink alcohol? Anyone who has attended an academic or professional convention will recognize that alcohol consumption varies across universities—from not consuming alcoholic beverages to acknowledging that in some cultures alcohol consumption is common. Avoid being the first to order or drink alcohol. If others order it, applicants may follow suit but should limit their consumption. If hired, there will be plenty of opportunities down the line for socializing. If in doubt, err on the side of professionalism and do not drink alcoholic beverages at any time during the interview.

Given the permeable business/social aspects of the interview, applicants may also be faced with questions that are technically illegal. Most interviewers should

be trained on interviewing guidelines by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to help ensure lack of discrimination due to sex, ethnicity, size, age, religion, disability, and sexual orientation. However, few people outside human resource departments are properly trained. As a result, applicants sometimes report being asked a variety of inappropriate questions, such as their plans for marriage or children, their age, or their religion. In many cases, the motivation for these questions is harmless or even virtuous (e.g., to show interest in the candidate or help him or her find access to resources in the community). However, bias and discrimination are still present and candidates are well-advised to consider this as they interview.

There are several ways to prepare for inappropriate questions. The first matter is for candidates to decide whether they are willing to answer such questions. Being completely open and honest, even when asked illegal questions, may indicate an open easy-going nature and also help candidates avoid being hired into a potentially unwelcoming or alienating departmental atmosphere. However, certain questions are illegal for a reason—their answers may be inappropriately used against an applicant. Candidates should know what questions are illegal and be ready with a response if they do not want to share such private information. Various tactics are available for answering inappropriate questions (Heiberger & Vick, 2001). Among others, candidates can respond with humor, a change of topic, responding to the intent rather than the content of the question (e.g., “You ask whether I plan to have a family? I can’t really answer that, but I definitely would define myself as someone who works hard and plays hard. I think having a social side to me actually helps my work ethic.”), or a direct indication that the question is illegal. As with much of what is discussed in this chapter, the best defense is to prepare for potentially questionable behavior or questions. Applicants should remember that the people they meet during their interview are not only potential colleagues but also potential friends, and that applicants may cross paths with potential employers long after a job interview is completed.

*How many interviews?* First time applicants often wonder about the number of interviews to accept from different prospective employers. Job interviews are costly in money and time for both the applicant and employer, so students should decline an interview if they feel sure that they would decline the job if offered. However, it is generally in applicants’ best interest to experience multiple interviews. Visiting with several potential employers provides the opportunity to learn more about different schools or companies. Reputations can be deceiving and out-dated, and it is often only after an on-site visit that one can appreciate the pros and cons of a potential job. Furthermore, candidates will find value in being able to compare and contrast various departments, universities or companies, geographic regions, industries, and job offers. However, too many on-site interviews can exhaust a candidate and make negotiation difficult as the candidate waits to visit or hear from other places. In general, applicants should accept all screening interviews. Following the screening interview, if a person is lucky enough to have numerous options he or she should be cautious about accepting more than three or four on-site interviews.

*Salary negotiations.* Many first time job seekers are so happy to be offered a position that they completely forget about trying to negotiate. However, job

applicants have much more power to negotiate *before* they accept a job than after they hold a position. Furthermore, a lifetime of raises and perks are often based upon the initial offer. As such, it is in applicants' best interest to carefully consider and negotiate their offers. At the same time, hiring departments typically try to make a strong offer, so applicants want to be careful not to insult their future colleagues with unreasonable demands.

A number of items can be negotiated, and students should thoughtfully consider the priority level of various items that belong in this bargaining mix. First, of course, is salary. It is usually wise to sacrifice one-time perks for a higher base salary, but employers can sometimes dip into various pockets of money available for one-time signing bonuses. Indeed, new employees often receive start-up money to help pay for office furniture, books and journals, moving expenses and a house-hunting trip, digital and computer equipment, and laboratory supplies. Applicants should consider all of the items that could help ease their research and teaching, understand the costs of each, and negotiate likewise.

Other negotiable items for faculty positions include travel money (the yearly standard as well as extra for the first year or two to allow the applicant to return to the graduating institution to finish any co-authored projects), graduate research assistants, summer research support, and teaching load reduction sometime in the first few years. For job applicants who have experience or who are otherwise in a strong bargaining position, the following items may also be negotiable: parking spaces, support finding employment for one's partner (or even a partner hire), and support for constructing a new laboratory or performance space. For jobs outside the academy, job seekers may also wish to think about support for ongoing training or education, a home office set-up, company car, entertainment expense account, and other perks. Although some items—such as health insurance, retirement plans, parental leave, and daycare—may not be negotiable, these items will make a difference in one's standard and quality of living so it makes sense to learn about the employer's offerings in these areas *before* the job is accepted.

When is the best time to attempt such negotiations? In most cases, the applicant should not begin negotiating until the job is offered. At the same time, the applicant should be prepared with an answer if an employer asks a question like, "So, what kind of offer would it take for us to hire you?" As such, it is important for applicants to do research on current salaries (for academic jobs, the budgets of public universities are generally available in the "reserve" area of the institution's library), cost of living, their own level of competitiveness, and their job offer priorities. Applicants can also mention their preferred package but simultaneously indicate their active cooperation of working with the university or company in moving toward an offer that is mutually acceptable. If someone at the hiring institution just makes a job offer without any explicit negotiation discussion, applicants may ask something like, "What kind of negotiation room is there in the offer?" and then take the opportunity to talk further. Doing so may feel scary, so students are wise to practice negotiating well before their first job interview (Heiberger & Vick, 2001).

Although successful interviews require a lot of preparation, research, and face-time, they can also be fulfilling and even fun. This process provides an opportunity

for applicants to synthesize their scholarly work, talk about their ideas and experience, and meet with others who are interested in them. Lifelong connections can be made through the application and interviewing process. This chapter provides suggestions to better prepare students for this pathway to advancing their career.

## APPENDIX

### ***Questions Candidates Might Want to Ask***

- What are the responsibilities of the position? What is the relative emphasis on various responsibilities (such as research, teaching, grant-getting, and service in a university tenure-track faculty position)?
- What are work load expectations? How would the organization prioritize different obligations?
- What is the history of the position? How have the last several hires fared in their career success and/or tenure process with the company or university?
- What is the teaching load? What types of courses would I be expected to teach? What level (undergraduate, Master's, doctoral) classes would I be able to teach? How many students should I expect to have in my classes?
- Is there a teaching load reduction for the first year or a teaching leave granted before sabbatical?
- Can course time be bought out with research money? What would that cost?
- What are the service expectations for junior faculty?
- What type of computer resources, software, and laboratories are available?
- What types of funding opportunities are available? For instance, what types of grant opportunities are available for new faculty? What type of support is provided for external grant-seeking? What type of money is available for ongoing training or education?
- Are assistants (e.g., graduate students, interns, administrative personnel) available to help in my research efforts or job endeavors?
- What is the department's reputation in the larger organization or industry? How has this organization changed over the last few years? What are projections for the future? (These are good questions to ask someone in a top leadership position.)
- How much travel and/or entertainment money is generally provided? Can this be supplemented for my first couple years?
- What health plans and retirement plans are provided/available? (Ask for an information packet.)
- What are the perks for one's spouse and children (e.g., travel, education, employment, daycare)?
- What is the culture of the department/organization?
- What are the organization's philosophies or policies about diversity (ethnic, gender, age, religion)? For faculty positions: What are the department's philosophies or policies about methodological and epistemological diversity?
- Is the department managed by a director, chair, or head? Ask for an explanation of departmental governance (for instance, does the head of the

department make all decisions or are decisions made by employee vote? How often are various organizational meetings?).

- Why did you decide to join this organization/department/school? What are your reasons for staying? What would you change if you could? What changes would improve the organization/department/school?
- In addition to these overall questions, ask others about their interests and current projects. This gives the candidate a feel for the organization, provides a “breather,” and indicates interest in the current employees.

### **Questions Candidates Might Be Asked** (Be forthright; integrity is important.)

- Why do you want to be employed by *our* department? Why do you want a job in our company?
- When will you be finished with your graduate degree? At what stage are you now and what do you still need to complete?
- Describe your research agenda/program. How has your research evolved? Where do you see your research program going in the next five years? How has your research prepared you for this position?
- What particular academic and methodological training sets you apart from the rest?
- What courses could you or would you teach? What textbooks would you use and why? What is your teaching philosophy?
- How do you deal with issues of diversity in your teaching and research?
- How do you see yourself fitting in with current employees in our department? What would you bring that we do not have? How would you make connections to others who are here?
- How long do you plan on staying at this job?
- Can you tell me about the research, teaching, work experience and publications listed on your vitae?
- What do you do in your free-time?

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# 11

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## ***Succeeding in Your First Job***

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Following the excitement of graduation, most graduate students enter the workforce as part-time or full-time employees, in the academy or outside of it. A student may have completed his or her Master's degree and secured employment while completing a doctorate. Or a student may have completed a doctorate and begun working full-time for the first time. This chapter aims to uncover some of the personal and professional pitfalls encountered in a first job and to provide advice and concrete recommendations on navigating the shoals and taking advantage of available opportunities.

The chapter specifically addresses the process of socialization into the new role as an employee in either academe or the business sector. Central to success in both venues is developing an understanding of the organizational culture, learning about and meeting expectations for workplace success (in the academy this includes understanding accreditation, assessment, and program review), and developing a positive reputation in one's area of expertise.

### **READING THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE**

Success following graduate school is both learned and earned. Learned as one begins to understand the newfound position as a professional rather than a

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student; earned as one makes meaningful contributions to his or her new organizational home. Organizations, large or small, have particular cultures that need to be understood by new members—whether in an academic or a corporate setting.

During the formal interview and hiring process applicants begin to get an understanding of the organization's culture. Once a new employee arrives on site, his or her socialization into the organization reaches a new stage of development. Both public and private socialization processes will occur with people who are peers, subordinates, and supervisors. In an academic setting, these processes typically occur with other faculty, students, and department chairs; in a business setting, the processes generally occur with co-workers, including one's supervisor and subordinates. Be careful what you choose to self-disclose and to whom—especially in the early days of employment; once a comment is made that information becomes a part of how you will be perceived by others. In addition, employees in academe may learn about the culture by taking advantage of many opportunities to interact with other people on campus who are working on the administration of campus projects and committees, as well as through multi-disciplinary instruction and research efforts. As time permits, become involved in professional associations to expand your horizons external to the organization.

When interacting with others, pay attention to what are considered to be acceptable norms within the organizational culture. While no one will enact a role exactly the same all the time, each employee needs to learn what is expected in particular situations within the organization's accepted norms. For example, if emails should be replied to within 24 hours, try to respect that norm and work within that time frame to find a routine that works best, understanding that the routine may change on various days of the week. Norms for behavior also may relate to intangible factors such professional decorum and dress and even attitudes toward professionalism. An awareness and sensitivity to cultural norms and attitudes, while maintaining the highest level of professionalism, will hasten a new employee's socialization and acceptance in the organization and will enhance one's ability to succeed.

## **FINDING SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE**

While formal, structural elements of an organizational chart are important to track lines of accountability, they do not reveal all of the important information a person needs to successfully function within an organization. Importantly, figuring out what behaviors are appreciated and those that are rewarded is an important step for employment success.

Success in the workplace begins by translating the good will and excitement from your interview and initial hire into positive experiences and resources. New employees need guidance and mentoring from successful others in the organization that can help chart a constructive path and generate a positive history early on in one's career. In the first few weeks on the job, begin to look for colleagues or mentors who could explain what success looks like in the organization and convey what is needed to successfully compete in the workplace.

### ***Skills for Success***

To be competitive in today's work place, graduates must have and be able to use an array of professional skills. With regard to communication, just knowing human communication theory, while valuable, is not enough. You need to put into practice the speaking and listening skills you have learned. Communication skills will make people more productive, help them get along better with others, and allow them to work better in a team-based environment. Learn to write effectively: In addition to academic writing, learn to write memos, executive summaries, and white papers. Expand your skills to communicate well using technology (e.g., email, intranet, etc.) and be flexible and willing to adapt to change.

Learn to deal with crises at work. Having the skills to manage challenges as they arise, quickly and seamlessly, can set you apart from other employees. When not in crisis mode, new employees need to manage their time effectively, which will allow them to complete projects in a timely manner and continue to push their career forward. In short, utilize the theoretical knowledge learned in classes in graduate school but also model the professional and communication skills that you learned. In an academic setting, this modeling can greatly enhance one's credibility with students and faculty. Accomplish tasks in the workplace to meet or exceed the expectations of others. In an academic setting, this means successful performance in teaching, research, and service. One of the most needed areas of expertise when providing service to your department or campus—or any other organization for that matter—relates to the assessment process.

### ***Understanding Accreditation, Assessment, and Program Review***

Regardless of the organizational environment in which one works, periodically aspects of that environment come under an evaluation review. In an academic setting, some faculty members view these events with trepidation, others with annoyance, still others as something to be avoided. However, evaluations and assessment are not going away, and a new faculty member who wants to stand out and be appreciated in a new department can do so by contributing to these efforts in an effective and useful way. Perceived knowledge and expertise in these areas can be a path to advancement, credibility, and even publication.

As a new faculty member, learn to distinguish among three common evaluation practices that occur in most academic settings: accreditation, assessment, and program review. In many ways, these three processes are variations of the same theme (evaluation) and serve the same goal (delivering an improved academic institution and educational system for the students). The federal government, state legislatures, accrediting agencies, administrators, and faculty (ideally) all want to know the same thing—are faculty members doing a good job and how do we know if they are doing a good job? The requirements posed by these groups for answering that question may vary, but they seem to come down to six fundamental questions (Morreale & Backlund, 2007):

- Who are you and why do you exist (Mission)?
- What do you want to accomplish (Goals and Objectives)?

- What procedures will you use to determine if the goals/objectives have been met (Assessment)?
- What are the results of your assessment (Analysis)?
- What changes will you make to your goals/objectives/outcomes/processes based on these results (Application of Results)?
- What evidence do you have that this is a continuous cycle (Continuous Improvement)?

These questions are asked at the regional accreditation level (the institution), the educational program level (assessment), and the department level (program review). Valuable faculty members and administrators know the answers to these questions because they regularly monitor their own processes and outcomes.

*Accreditation.* The most significant of the review and evaluation processes is regional accreditation. Regional accreditation affects the entire university, and an individual department goes through the process along with everyone else on campus. An institution rarely loses accreditation; however, if it did happen, the school loses access to any federal funds, including student financial aid.

Regional accreditation is a powerful force in higher education and is based in a very American concept—self-governance. Accreditation is the means by which higher education evaluates itself through a process of self-reflection and peer review. Sandra Elman (2004) of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities states that “accreditation offers a unique opportunity for all members of the institution: faculty, administrators, staff, students, alumni, and board members to participate in a focused process that results in ongoing institutional improvement” (p. 1). In this process, the focus is improvement. To document improvement, faculty and administrators must respond to accreditation standards, prepare self-studies, and participate in an evaluation visit. Accreditation, like assessment, is not without critics. However, we can be sure of one thing, accreditation, in one form or another, will be with us for a long time. So what does a new faculty member need to know about it and how can he or she be involved in an effective way?

The process itself usually runs something like this. The university begins by developing a self-study. This is generally a two-year process that results in a multi-hundred-page document (along with supporting documentation) analyzing the entire university. In developing the university self-study, each department is required to do a departmental self-study based on the applicable accreditation standards. The departmental self-study is reviewed by the university accreditation team to see if the department’s document conforms to the requirements. This is an opportunity for departmental analysis and reflection; new faculty members can help others in the department to see it that way.

After the self-study is completed, a ten to fifteen member evaluation team made up of faculty and administrators from peer institutions visits the university. This team reviews the self-study and interviews faculty and staff to follow-up on appropriate items. The visit culminates with the visiting team giving the university commendations for areas of excellence and recommendations for areas that do not meet standards and that should be focused on in order to improve.

A new faculty member can become involved in a number of ways: (1) helping with the departmental self study, (2) volunteering for one of the university wide

accreditation committees, (3) providing supporting data, and (4) encouraging others to support the process rather than viewing it as something imposed from the outside.

*Assessment.* Educational assessment has become institutionalized over the past three decades and like accreditation, assessment is not going away, nor should it. Governors and legislators want a better-educated, more competitive workforce. To get it, they want an increased level of student and institutional performance, especially at the undergraduate level; thus they mandate assessment (frequently without knowing exactly what that means). The word “assessment” tends to have multiple meanings but generally it focuses on assessing student learning and the outcomes of educational programs.

Space does not allow us to go into great detail about assessment, but we include here some basic considerations that a new faculty member could keep in mind to help a department with this useful process.

- The goal of assessment is to discover if students are learning what the faculty believes they should learn during a particular course of study. The process involves understanding the quality of the program, not necessarily the individual student or course.
- The development and review of learning outcomes for the major or course of study is of paramount importance. Without clear student learning outcomes, none of the rest of the process makes sense.
- Ideally, learning outcomes address all three areas of learning: cognition, affect, and behavior (“what a student *knows* and is *motivated* to *do*”).
- Every student learning outcome for each course in the department should have an assessment technique attached to it. One assessment technique can address several goals; however, every assessment technique should generate information and findings.
- Multiple measures should be used to address the three areas of learning. Some examples of multiple measures are pre- and post-tests, content examinations, performances, student surveys, portfolios, academic program reviews, and external reviews of program success (by community members, alumni, and employers of students from the program).
- Based upon assessment findings, the department should then determine changes to be made in teaching, learning, and curriculum to improve the curricular program.

A new faculty member can help a department develop a simple, yet effective assessment process that can have a positive effect on the quality of education received by the students, the reputation of the department, and their own credibility.

*Program Review.* In addition to accreditation and assessment of student learning, most departments undergo periodic program review. Program review is sometimes confused with assessment, but it differs in one important way. Assessment, as described in the previous section, analyzes the results of instructional degree programs. Program review analyzes the entire department—all of its programs and activities. This review includes all of the questions noted above and covers such areas as departmental strategic planning, analysis of progress toward meeting the plan, adequacy of fiscal and physical resources, adequacy of faculty resources,

review of faculty evaluation and promotion procedures, student credit hour generation, and similar topics.

If an institution is functioning efficiently, the program review requirements and evaluation activities closely match the accreditation requirements and activities. One process supports and informs the other and meeting one set of requirement likely meets the other. Again, as a new faculty member, you can learn a great deal about the department through the program review process and you can have a voice in shaping the future of the program. In addition, helping the department gather and analyze data makes a significant contribution to the department and one's workplace success.

*Some Advice about Evaluation.* At the risk of sounding prescriptive, this section provides information and suggestions for a new faculty member in an institution facing some kind of evaluation process:

- The usual pattern for accreditation reviews is every ten years. However, a wise school or department maintains awareness of the basic questions of accreditation, assessment, and program review and uses this awareness to encourage all faculty and administrators to engage in an ongoing evaluative process. That way, when the evaluation does occur, the department is prepared. This advice is far easier said than done—most people just want to forget evaluation between the review periods. However, this approach causes a lot of work and stress when the evaluation does actually happen.
- Remember that the goal is to deliver a quality education to the students. How can the evaluation processes be used to improve student learning?
- Honesty and the ability to admit areas of weakness or deficiency are absolutely necessary. Nothing improves without recognition of challenges. However, many faculty members are loath to admit that they might need to improve.
- Data is important. A very successful faculty member is fond of saying “I have right and data on my side!” That should be the goal. Good, solid data is very important.
- Use these review processes as opportunities for publishing. The National Communication Association and many other agencies have periodicals that address assessment and evaluation issues.
- Use these processes as opportunities to participate in discipline and institutional service. All colleges and universities require a degree of service activities of their faculty. Participation in evaluation is an ideal way to contribute to the department and campus and also to build one's vita.

As we noted above, not all faculty members value or appreciate these review processes. However, they are not going away. New faculty who become known as people who contribute effectively to these processes can enhance both their credibility and add very real value to their departments and campuses.

Success in the workplace is directly connected to one's human communication skills, writing skills, and use of technology. In addition, understanding how one's work will be assessed (and requirements for assessing the work of others) is an important to doing well. Workplace success is also associated with building a reputation as a good organizational citizen.

## **DEVELOPING A POSITIVE REPUTATION IN YOUR NEW JOB**

Creating success in a first job involves avoiding problematic or wasteful encounters and situations as well as maximizing any potentially fruitful opportunities. New employees, whether in academic or corporate settings, need to realize that everything they say or do reflects positively or negatively on how they are perceived and ultimately their reputation in the department or organization. Those already entrenched in the organization will form opinions of the new employee based on any observable cues, no matter how subtle. For example, if a new faculty member volunteers to serve on a committee to rethink an important track in the undergraduate curriculum, that new employee's reputation will be immediately enhanced. By contrast, if a new faculty member fails to volunteer or become involved—or worse yet fails to attend faculty meetings or departmental retreats addressing curriculum revision—opportunities are missed to make a visible contribution. This is not to suggest that decisions to participate and contribute to the common good should be motivated by a desire only for self-aggrandizement. Rather, new employees should be motivated by a desire to become a good citizen in their new environment and organization. Success and developing a positive reputation is grounded in doing good work, for oneself, for students, for colleagues, and for the organization where one is employed.

Some keys to developing a positive reputation and being perceived as a good citizen include: participating in both social and professional opportunities and events within the organization, connecting with helpful mentors and collaborators, and leveraging funding resources available within and external to your institution.

### ***Participating in Social and Professional Activities***

Any new employee or faculty member should attend staff or faculty meetings regularly. However, participation in the culture goes beyond showing up where one's presence is practically mandated. Informal opportunities exist beyond the formal events and meetings and, in fact, have even more potential to make a statement about an employee's commitment to the department, organization, or institution.

At a social level, if faculty and staff are invited to an awards ceremony, a retirement party, or a reception for graduate students, try to be there. Employees do not have to sacrifice all their personal time but, some presence and visibility at non-mandated events is a good idea, particularly during the first several years of employment. At a less formal level, take advantage of any opportunity to spend time with senior faculty or staff members. Go out for lunch, or drop by a colleague's office and ask how things are going. Call first, of course, but the gesture will be appreciated whether a casual meeting takes place or not.

People should arrange their schedules to attend and hopefully present scholarship at state, regional, and national communication conferences/conventions or professional meetings. These events represent opportunities for face-to-face interactions with members of your home department as well as colleagues from other campuses. When attending professional gatherings, remember you are a



representative of your department; professional decorum is in order. One's attendance is a credit to the department and usually appreciated by senior faculty or staff members.

### ***Finding and Working with Mentors and Collaborators***

New employees get a good sense of senior faculty or staff members while participating in formal and informal meetings and events. These people may be willing to assist and help new employees meet and exceed employment expectations in their job. The first valuable service a mentor provides is to help others understand the culture of the organization or institution. Spending time with more experienced colleagues and being alert to what they say (and sometimes what they do not say) is the most efficient way to learn more about your new professional home and its values. More senior faculty can also serve as collaborators on teaching, research, and service projects. They could help new employees identify and develop new courses or curriculum that would be valuable to the department. They also may have publications or research projects already in development that one could become involved in or maybe even co-author. They also could provide solid advice about the best ways to provide service to the department and campus; they know which committees are most productive and most visible—information that is not in a new faculty handbook. These mentor/collaborators might help make decisions regarding one's best personal contributions to the department and its programs. For example, if service learning is of interest and is not currently present in any courses, you might volunteer to include this component in a course to add this pedagogical approach to the curriculum. A mentor or collaborator could advise you about the best way to bring this recommendation forward with others in the department.

### ***Leveraging Resources***

To pursue any new pedagogical or research initiatives successfully, new employees may need to seek financing or funding to support their work from within the organization or from external sources. Again, mentors may be able to provide advice about funding sources available in the institution such as the campus grants office. These offices typically send out e-message announcements on a regular basis alerting faculty to special funds and awards available within the system. In addition, visit the office with a project. Most grant officers are more than willing to assist by identifying potential external funding from national and governmental funding agencies and private foundations. However, in academe, new faculty members should be aware that they will need to put some of their own money into their career development. It's your career and owning it financially helps you own it personally. While attending a national convention may cost more than the amount of funding received as a faculty member in the department, consider attending as an investment in yourself and in your future success.

**Table 11.1 Tips from New Faculty for Succeeding on Your First Job**

<i>Reading the Organizational Culture</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read all communications (e-mails, brochures, magazines) that contain information about your organization.</li> <li>• Browse thoroughly your organization's website.</li> <li>• Read all communication initiated by your organization's leaders (e.g., president, chancellor, provost, dean).</li> <li>• Read the annual reports made public by your organization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask lots of questions of your superiors and colleagues with more experience in the organization.</li> <li>• Engage in departmental, campus, university and discipline service activities.</li> <li>• Early on, read all the literature pertaining to your evaluation and promotion.</li> <li>• Be sensitive to cultural diversity in your organization.</li> <li>• Decipher the make-up of the student body.</li> </ul>
<i>Finding Success in the Workplace</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get to know colleagues inside and outside the department.</li> <li>• Make more friends than enemies.</li> <li>• Find one or more mentors.</li> <li>• Ask for constructive evaluations and feedback.</li> <li>• Master your writing, speaking, and listening skills.</li> <li>• Learn to work under pressure.</li> <li>• Always complete your work on time.</li> <li>• Don't be afraid to take risks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer for activities and projects that help you develop professionally.</li> <li>• Learn to say no to tasks that do not benefit your professional development.</li> <li>• Locate and get to know all the people who can make your work easier (e.g., secretaries, librarians, grant officers).</li> <li>• Understand the processes of accreditation, assessment, and program review.</li> </ul>
<i>Developing a Positive Reputation in Your New Job</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present your work at local, regional, national, and international conferences.</li> <li>• Publish your work.</li> <li>• Participate in social activities at the department, campus, and university level.</li> <li>• Network with people on your campus, university, and in your discipline.</li> <li>• Develop collaborative and interdisciplinary work opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get to know major scholars in your area of expertise.</li> <li>• Never turn down invited presentations.</li> <li>• Organize workshops and colloquia centered on your area of expertise.</li> <li>• Expand the curriculum by adding courses in your area of expertise.</li> <li>• Help and support graduate students who are interested in your area.</li> </ul>

Source: Carmen Stavrositu, Ph.D., University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, Communication Department.

## POSTSCRIPTS FOR SUCCEEDING ON YOUR FIRST JOB

The thumbnail summary in this chapter points new employees in the right direction to succeed in a first job in the academy or in the corporate world. This includes suggestions on reading the organizational culture, finding success through an awareness of self and evaluation processes, and developing a positive professional reputation. For yet more advice, give Table 11.1 a quick read. A new faculty member, recently hired and already working in the communication department at a university, provides some straightforward tips for succeeding on your first job.

In addition, other chapters in this handbook explore some of the topics summarized here in greater depth. Go to Chapter 3 to learn more about the process of becoming socialized into the communication discipline. Read Chapter 6 to learn how to connect with colleagues and develop an intellectual community. Chapter 5, while focused on life as a graduate student, provides advice for forming mentoring relationships, which are critical to success on the job. To learn much more about getting funding for research or pedagogical initiatives, check out Chapter 12. Best wishes for success in your first job!

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# 12

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## ***Understanding and Applying for Grants and Funding for Communication Studies***

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**Y**ou have finished the dissertation and landed your first faculty position. You look forward to the tasks ahead and to your continuing development as a productive teacher, scholar, and member of your campus and disciplinary communities. As you look to pursue your scholarly goals, you realize that it would help immensely to have some funding to carry out the kinds of projects you want to do. Or, perhaps, you recognize that your institution expects faculty to generate external funding. You realize that obtaining grants is not just for members of research-intensive universities. Indeed, administrators at many small colleges and comprehensive universities that have only Master's and undergradu-

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Judee K. Burgoon, Center for Identification Technology Research and Center for the Management of Information in the Eller College of Management, University of Arizona.; Celeste M. Condit, Department of Speech Communication, University of Georgia; J. Michael Hogan, Center for Democratic Deliberation, Pennsylvania State University; Mary Lee Hummert, Faculty Development and Department of Communication Studies, University of Kansas; Richard A. Katula, Department of Communication Studies, Northeastern University; Peter Monge, Annenberg School for Communication & The Marshall School of Business, University of Southern California; Shawn J. Parry-Giles, Center for Political Communication and Civic Leadership, University of Maryland; Marshall Scott Poole, Department of Communication, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, National Center for Supercomputing Applications, and Associate Director, I-CHASS.

ate programs view external funding as a means of pursuing their own missions, as well as those of individual faculty members (see Markin, 2008).

Some of you reading this chapter will have already gotten your feet wet during your graduate student years as you worked with advisors and other faculty members who had external funding. A few of you may have applied for funding in not-for-profit work prior to graduate school or in your graduate program as you pursued university-based funding sources, dissertation fellowships, or other internal or local sources of project funding for teaching, research, and community engagement. But many of you are starting from scratch.

In this chapter we address questions that the person at the novice level might have about external funding. Over the past years, we have met with funders and invited them to attend our National Communication Association meetings to talk about external funding applications. We also have surveyed communication faculty who are expert grant getters. We intersperse some practical advice, strategies, and common mistakes that they have shared with us. To provide this overview we discuss (a) funding for scholars in the communication discipline, (b) developing ideas, (c) preparing proposals, and (d) criteria for evaluating proposals.

One caveat before we begin: pursuing funding will differ depending on the funding source, your own purpose and institution, and the area of the communication discipline from which you hail. There are differences in applying for funding from federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and National Science Foundation (NSF), state and local funders, and private foundations. In addition, applying for funding for the humanities and social sciences is somewhat different. That said, we present necessarily general background and approaches, and you will need to research the specific guidelines and conventions of the program to which you are applying.

## **FUNDING FOR SCHOLARS IN THE COMMUNICATION DISCIPLINE**

There are a number of communication scholars who have been very successful at applying for and receiving funding. However, unlike our colleagues in some other humanities and social science disciplines, many of us in communication studies did not grow up with grants. This does not mean that communication scholars are not or cannot be successful at this enterprise, but it does mean that inside the discipline, there is a learning curve that many colleagues must surmount.

In our discussions with program officers at various funding agencies, we find that many of these representatives are not particularly knowledgeable about our discipline. They may hold the same stereotypes that many of us in the communication discipline have faced (e.g., that we are a professional field with journalists, speech coaches, and technical writers being our primary members, or that we solely focus on undergraduate education and service). While there are many well-informed and savvy representatives from our discipline out there who have been very successful at obtaining funding, do not be surprised to come

up against these and other misconceptions. Our professional associations have been hard at work educating funders about our discipline and its research, including developing brochures and overviews (see two documents from the National Communication Association: “Communication as a Humanity” and “Communication Ubiquitous and Consequential” available on the association’s website). This is an ongoing process and your success with funding will help those who follow you. In conversations with Shawn Parry-Giles, he explains:

I hope more communication scholars will pursue such grants because the more often we apply, the more successful we will become as a field in obtaining grants. As we submit more grants, granting agencies also will invite more communication scholars to serve on review boards, which can also make a huge difference.

### ***Reasons to Seek Funding***

In the best of situations, you seek funding because you need resources to undertake innovative scholarship or want to “attract a lot more attention to a project than it might otherwise get” (Michael Hogan, personal communication) or, you want to “‘dream big,’ which is a luxury that most of us don’t have . . . Thus, “it encourages us to think broadly about important contributions we can make with our research and teaching” (Shawn Parry-Giles, personal communication). You may desire release time from teaching or to hire research assistants to help you with tasks associated with your project. You may need to travel to visit a special library to do archival research, to find research participants from populations unavailable in your community, to situate yourself in a particular culture for a period of time, or to offer workshops to educators or community activists. You may need laboratory space, equipment, software, or to hire a transcriptionist. You may need to build an interdisciplinary team of experts. All of these are good reasons to seek external financial support.

When asked for his tips for obtaining grants, Marshall Scott Poole suggests that you think of your grant writing process as developmental and as steps toward doing research you really want to complete:

- Prepare to be rejected the first time around. Think of your comments as developmental in nature rather than judgmental and use them to improve your proposal.
- Obtaining a grant is good for your scholarship. Thinking through things in enough detail to write a credible proposal or application can improve your research even if you do not get the grant/fellowship. You may have to scale back some, but you can usually do the project unfunded if funding does not come through.

While you may have great ideas and are doubtless very passionate about your research, unfortunately, this will not be enough to convince a foundation or funding agency to fund your project. You need to demonstrate the knowledge and skills to be able to carry out your project. You need to excite others enough about your work that they will want to invest funds in you and your project. You need to adapt to funders’ specific agendas, missions, and goals or initiatives. For some scholars this is frustrating—they know exactly what they want to do

and how they want to do it. However, careful audience analysis and audience adaptation are key to grant-getting success because these processes enable you to frame your project in a way that fits particular calls for proposals. Like any successful journal article or chapter, seeking funding takes a lot of preparation and homework up front and many revisions afterwards. Most anyone will tell you that applying for a grant can be as much work as researching and writing any scholarly paper.

A large percentage of grant opportunities are for scholars who have established a track record of research and peer-reviewed publication. Funders are looking for evidence that you can successfully carry out the work. In a conversation with Mary Lee Hummert she advises:

As a faculty member, concentrate on building your research record and developing a program of research. In addition, seek the advice of experienced faculty on agencies and the grant submission process. Get them to read and give you feedback on your proposals. Remember that reviewers want to know that you have good ideas that have been positively reviewed and published by your peers—as well as that you've done some preliminary testing of methods and analysis approaches for the work you're proposing. It's hard to get funded for a project if you've not done anything on that topic previously (or you only have one study on the topic). The bottom line: *persevere*.

Thus, a couple of good places to start are by applying for and obtaining internal or local grants and by collaborating with experienced scholars and working on their projects. Those seeking funding for the first time are encouraged to consider working with experienced Principal Investigators (PIs) when possible. When asked his advice, Michael Hogan suggests that you “work with a faculty-led team working on a grant proposal—in sort of an apprenticeship role—before trying to fashion a grant proposal yourself.” You learn the ropes for proposal writing, reports, implementations and follow-up, and start building a network and track record of experience. Having a track record of success increases your own chances of being funded. As Richard Katula discusses in his attempts and eventual success at obtaining a NEH “We the People” grant that involved workshops for secondary school teachers and community college faculty in the humanities and social sciences:

*NEH will only fund programs proposed by scholars with a demonstrated expertise in the topic area. Use only top scholars and, if at all appropriate, include historians as well as communications scholars. At the very least, have one big name. Make sure you have written commitments from all those involved and include the commitment letters in your application. NEH will not gamble on whether you can produce the program you say you can produce.*

As Katula and others point out, many grant proposals require an interdisciplinary presence on the research team, so get out of your office and develop relationships with others on your campus and in the discipline. Meet people and find out what projects are going on. Offer to join in on funded projects and proposals. Of course, you have to be careful with your time, especially as you are working toward tenure and promotion early in your career. Yet if other scholars' projects



are not too far away from your own developing line of research, you'll find these contacts and this work productive and intellectually broadening. Seek advice from your department chair, mentors, and senior colleagues in the field about when to take and when to forego opportunities.

One place for newer scholars to start is with university-sponsored summer grants designed to support research expenses, with new investigator grants, and/or with university-based seed money to start projects. Mid- to large-size universities have offices dedicated to research funding and assistance. Visit this office and meet with the experts there. These offices often have smaller funds available (e.g., between \$2,000 and \$10,000) to get started. Most require that you apply for a larger grant within a specified period of time. Some campuses will give you the funds to travel to meet with funders in person, or they take groups of scholars to foundations and agencies in Washington D.C., New York, or other locations.

If your campus lacks these resources, ask around to find scholars on your campus with the experience you want to develop and indicate an interest in contributing to one of their projects. You may be surprised at how valuable such collaborations are—for working in multidisciplinary teams, learning tricks of the trade from experienced grant getters, and signaling your interest in doing research that benefits your institution's mission. Moreover, your fundraising or development offices have specialists in foundation grant writing. Your faculty development offices or Dean may pay your expenses to send you to grant-writing workshops. Further, your professional associations, such as NCA and ICA, regularly host panels and summer conferences on grant proposals and networking for collaborative funding. While senior scholars are busy, many are glad to point you in the right direction.

One additional suggestion for newer scholars is to volunteer as a reviewer of grant proposals. Being a reviewer often requires that you have a publication record but you do not necessarily have to have been awarded a grant to be a reviewer. Much like the peer-review process in scholarly journals, most program officers are on a perpetual hunt for reviewers. So if you have identified an institute or foundation to which you would like to apply for funding eventually, volunteering as a reviewer can be a great way to get your feet wet. You will learn what successful (and unsuccessful) proposals look like and how researchers work through the multiple revisions for a successful grant application. In addition, working alongside other scholars on review panels can be a great education and very rewarding (although we caution you it can also be time consuming). If you are interested, send your curriculum vitae via email to the relevant program officer. Summarize in the message your main areas of expertise—content, theory, and method and attach your curriculum vitae. Newer scholars may volunteer as long as you have some publication experience. For the NEH, you may add your name to the Panelist/Reviewer Information System (PRISM) on their website: <http://www.neh.gov/prism/default.htm>

If you are asked to be a reviewer, not only are you representing yourself, but you are also representing the discipline. Do not be surprised if scholars from other disciplines have not read communication scholarship, yours included. This

is an opportunity for you to respectfully and gently educate the submitters as well as your fellow reviewers about our discipline. Many times a reviewer will find him- or herself in the situation of being the first communication scholars some of these colleagues will have encountered. A thoughtful and respectful review can go a long way in promoting the discipline.

## DEVELOPING IDEAS

Begin by weighing the advantages and disadvantages of writing a grant at this time in your career and for a particular project. In a conversation with Celeste Condit, she states the point quite succinctly:

Don't spend time seeking grants that require more time input than the benefit of output . . . If you can submit a two page proposal for funds you really need, go for it. If you have to write 20 pages to get stuff that would just be "nice" or of financial advantage, then don't do it.

Michael Hogan also recommends that you be realistic about the whole grant getting process. He notes:

Getting a grant does *not* make your life easier. Quite to the contrary . . . I like to say that the good news is that we got the grant, and the bad news is that we got the grant. Securing the grant committed us to a lot more work than we ever imagined, and we did not anticipate every cost that we would incur. Thus, we've essentially been forced into applying for more grants. It never seems to end.

If your assessment shows that benefits outweigh the costs at this point in your career, then begin by preparing a brief two to four page concept paper that lays out what you are trying to accomplish in this project. Start with a central research question and develop an argument that is in dialogue and debate with literatures relevant to the study. Specify the data to be gathered and how data will be analyzed. State what you expect to find/show with the research and the broader impacts of your findings and overall research program. Draft out a preliminary budget to determine what kind of funding you need to secure to make this project a reality. Obtain assistance from your grants office so that you have a realistic view of costs, timetables, and deliverables.

Projects designed primarily to "describe," "expand," "explore," or "develop" understanding of a phenomenon are usually too preliminary from the perspective of most funders. Have several colleagues review your concept paper, especially those with research experience and who have been funded, if possible.

Start your search for possible funding sources. Take your concept paper to the sponsored programs (research) office at your university. These are your campus experts and they have every reason to want you to succeed at this enterprise. This office should be able to advise you on the scope and workability of the ideas in your concept paper. While the sponsored program office does not write grant proposals for faculty, they can be instrumental in helping you prepare yours. This office can help you begin your search for funding sources. In addition, this office can help connect you with training in grant writing, if necessary.

Many larger universities bring these workshops to the campus; some campuses will sponsor summer grant writing programs where faculty are mentored intensively, and the end product of the summer of work is a grant proposal. If your campus does not sponsor these workshops, they may be willing to send you to a grant writing workshops. If you are having trouble accessing the sponsored programs office, seek some advice from your dean's office.

You may want to start with the large federal institutes that fund research (depending on your area): National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), National Institutes for Health (NIH), and National Science Foundation (NSF). Study the foundation's organizational chart so that you may determine the programs(s) where your research might fit the best. Look for programs that are ongoing each year and for special calls that may last for one to five years. Depending on your project, you may also look for funding from private foundations. Foundations generally have more specialized or focused missions. For example, the Ford Foundation funds researchers whose mission "is to reduce poverty and injustice and promote democratic values, international cooperation and human achievement" (<http://www.fordfound.org/grants/inquiry>). The William T. Grant Foundation funds empirical research that "focuses on improving the lives of youth ages 8 to 25 in the United States" (<http://www.wtgrantfoundation.org/>). The list of federal, state, and private foundations is virtually endless, and it will take some tenacity and patience to research them.

As you begin locating possible funding sources, study their homepages and abstracts of funded research. Most institutes have posted documents on submitting. For example, the NIH has a document on "Grant Application Basics" at [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/grant\\_basics.htm](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/grant_basics.htm), and the National Science Foundation offers a "Grant Proposal Guide" at [http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf08\\_1/gpg\\_index.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf08_1/gpg_index.jsp).

Read their request for proposals (RFP) in great detail. Pay attention to the projects that have been successful, and study their abstracts carefully. Learn all you can about the program's portfolio of funded research, and see where your research idea, scope, and methodology fit into the work the institute has been funding. Study the background and records of successful PIs as well; most scholars have curriculum vitae on their university websites. From this search you can discern at what stage of their careers these scholars had successful grant proposals and from what disciplines they come. Your sponsored program office should be able to help with this process.

Once you have identified potential funders and have studied their websites intensively, now is the time to contact program officers. Every program is different—some encourage scholars to email program officers with their short concept papers. Some recommend phone calls or visits to the institute or agency. Still others discourage contact at this stage and only look at submitted proposals. Again, read the materials carefully and, if there is a way to get preliminary feedback on your concept paper from the institute or foundation itself, take full advantage of this feedback. While this process can be daunting, remember the central goal of these organizations is to give away funds to innovative, compelling, and significant research! For example, the National Science Foundation welcomes contact with individual program officers and prints their email addresses and phone numbers on the NSF website. If you have colleagues who have been

funded by a particular program, they may also be able to direct you to the agency, institute, or foundation contact persons. Remember, too, that most program officers were themselves researchers (and may be currently involved in research), so most appreciate what you are attempting to do.

## PREPARING PROPOSALS

As we mentioned earlier, preparing a grant proposal is normally quite labor-intensive, especially for the novice. Most have a 10–20% chance of acceptance, like our journal acceptance rates. While proposal acceptance percentages can seem discouraging, remember that, like journals, funders receive many proposals just not ready for review. The challenge is to make sure that your proposal is ready to compete when you submit it. The same qualities for successful publishing apply for grant-getting: those who apply for grants must have an open mind, attention to detail, good mentors or those who can provide advice and critique, a willingness to work hard, persistence, and a thick skin. As Shawn Parry-Giles puts it, “You have to be prepared to fail . . . It’s likely you will fail even multiple times before you are successful.”

Whether this is your first time or you are experienced, any grant application involves intensive background work. Like with any study, a deep reading and understanding of the research literature and relevant theory is critical. Nothing sinks a proposal faster than claiming that research does not exist and have reviewers from one’s own or an allied discipline state otherwise. One very exciting thing about grants is that it usually puts a scholar in the center of interdisciplinary discussions. At the same time, this obligates the researcher to know the literature well and use this to build an argument for the proposed study.

Funders are looking for ideas that are cutting edge, bold, and innovative. From the materials submitted, it should be clear how and why support is needed to carry this work out in a timely way. Funders are looking for work with demonstrable impacts internationally, nationally, or locally. They are looking for work that makes an impact on the PI’s own discipline and especially across disciplines.

It is important to determine local resources to conduct the research. Scan your own campus for scholars who can collaborate on a project, both within your department and without. Many grant proposals must have interdisciplinary collaboration built into them. Even if that is not a requirement, you can often strengthen your team, especially if you can build scholars with grant experience into the project.

It also helps to develop preliminary data or experience before submitting. A scholar who applies for funding having analyzed data and obtained findings relevant to the current proposal has an advantage. Arguing from prior research increases the chances of being funded, as funders are interested in building on success.

It should go without saying that you need to have and be able to demonstrate that you have the methodological skills and experience to carry out the proposed project. While funders are looking for cutting-edge ideas and methods, they need to spend limited funds wisely. They need to be convinced that you have

the training and experience to carry out the research you have proposed. Thus, it is important that the procedures and analysis are within your abilities (or those of your collaborators). Balance the tensions between innovation and methodological conservatism that might come in play with program officers' requirements to locate reviewers who can respond to the work (see below on suggesting reviewers).

Budgeting is an important part of a successful proposal. Scholars who cannot demonstrate a need for funds will not receive them. Develop a reasonable and realistic request for funding. Read the budget guidelines of the program very carefully and build the proposal and budget in line with program guidelines and eligible costs. For example, some programs fund release time for a scholar's time and others will not. While it is tempting to want to use the strategy of "ask for more and settle for less," these professionals read budgets all the time and can detect budgets that are padded with unnecessary and extravagant expenses. On the other hand, under-budgeting your needs may also doom a proposal. Reviewers and program officers want to facilitate researcher's success with realistic budgets. Your office of sponsored programs and/or your business office should be very helpful in budget preparation.

Attention to detail counts greatly when it comes to submitting grant proposals. Begin early, read the announcements, and follow the instructions carefully. When asked advice about submitting grant proposals, Judee Burgoon recommends:

Make friends with your Sponsored Projects personnel and people who are tasked with helping prepare grant submissions so that you are fully aware of all the deadlines and requirements that must be met. There can be nothing more frustrating than preparing the heart of a proposal only to find that you are ineligible to submit because you have not gotten all the passwords to access the uploading site, do not have all the requisite supplementary materials in place, have not gotten your budget approved for submission by your university, are missing necessary signatures or letters of commitment, and so on. Federal submissions through grants.gov, for example, require starting weeks ahead of time to jump through all the hoops, and only certain individuals within the university are even authorized to submit proposals. Knowing these kinds of requirements in advance will spare you from last minute stress and aggravation.

Normally the procedures for preparing and submitting grants are very specific: the number of words or lines in the narrative, number and format of citations, guidelines for presenting budgets, and at times even font style and size. Many of our top scholars with funded projects had horror stories to relate about overlooking font sizes, chasing signatures, and other points. Mary Lee Hummert remarks, "When they say no smaller than 11 point font, they mean it!" Marshall Scott Poole shares this lesson he learned the hard way:

I submitted a major grant to the NIH and it was returned unread, because I had forgotten to include one small assurance section. The grants officer I worked with had not been aware of this, and as a first time applicant, I was unfamiliar with procedures. Since it was a one-time-only solicitation, all my work was for naught.

For his NEH grant, Richard Katula had to learn that framing his project and educating his program officers and reviewers was a necessary step:

I was rejected the first time because one reviewer believed that the way communication scholars study oratory is ahistorical; that is, that we often consider texts as documents in and of themselves and outside of the context in which they were presented. You will not get a grant from a historian for a proposal that seems to be more about literature or criticism than it is about history.

In a situation where the majority of proposals are not funded, it is important to give your proposal every possible chance and enhance your credibility by following the submission guidelines very carefully.

Finally, some granting agencies allow submitters to suggest possible reviewers for their proposal. If this opportunity presents itself, we suggest you take it. Program officers spend considerable time and effort trying to line up competent reviewers for proposals and appreciate thoughtful suggestions, especially if proposals are in new areas or involve novel theories or methods. Select potential reviewers with whom you have no personal or professional connection and who can provide outstanding feedback on your proposal.

## **CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PROPOSALS**

Every institute or foundation will have slightly different criteria for evaluating proposals. In many cases the criteria are included right within the solicitation for proposals. Below we present a summary of criteria reviewers at NSF use. This is a good example as NSF provides excellent guidelines for any proposal:

- What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity?
- How important is the proposed activity to advancing knowledge and understanding within its own field or across fields?
- How well qualified are the investigator(s) to conduct the project?
- To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative and original concepts?
- How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity?
- Is there sufficient access to the necessary resources?
- What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?
- How well does the activity advance discovery and understanding while promoting teaching, training, and learning?
- How well does the proposed activity broaden the participation of underrepresented groups?
- To what extent will it enhance the infrastructure for research and education, such as facilities, instrumentation, networks, and partnerships?
- Will the results be disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding?
- What may be the benefits of the proposed activity to society?

These criteria lead naturally to some common reasons for declining proposals:



- Lack of new ideas
- Theoretical underpinnings/significance unclear
- Diffuse, superficial, or unfocused research plan
- Lack of knowledge of the topic, or of published, relevant work
- Lack of experience in methodology
- Lack of feasibility

When you receive your reviews back hopefully there will be great news of a funded project. More often there is additional work to do. Much like scholars experience when receiving reviews from a journal article, it may be difficult to be confronted with the feedback. You may need to put the reviews aside for a short period and go back to them when you have had a chance to get some distance and time to reflect. It is very helpful to have senior colleagues help you interpret the reviews and many program officers will help as well. Remember we are saying you are asking for “help” and not to argue. It is unwise to argue with a program officer. Put your energies into incorporating what they did not understand or what you need to do to improve into a revision. Unless you are encouraged not to do so, revise and resubmit your proposal again. As the scholars who contributed to this chapter stressed, most proposals take multiple submissions to make it. Recently one experienced program officer at a national foundation told us that some communication researchers are giving up too easily and not resubmitting proposals that show promise.

## CLOSING

We end here with the story of Peter Monge’s experience to summarize many of our main points and to encourage you to try your hand (repeatedly!) at applications for funding. In the telling of his story, Monge points out, success at grant getting is a combination of persistence, creativity, deep knowledge of the field and methods, networking, and a bit of serendipity!:

In my first year out of graduate school (early 1970s) I decided I needed to obtain funding for the research I wanted to do. As a graduate student at Michigan State University, I was fortunate to participate in and eventually serve as research coordinator for a federally funded study of organizational communication processes in the Office of Civil Defense (which became the Office of Emergency Preparedness, and now, the Office of Homeland Security). While I was involved in all aspects of the research, I had nothing to do with writing the proposal or administering the budget. So I really didn’t know how to go about applying for a grant.

After I took my first faculty appointment, I decided to put together a “prospectus,” which consisted of a three or four page description of what a full proposal would look like. I then sent it to about a dozen different federal agencies, including NSF, DARPA, and the Office of Naval Research (ONR). The prospectus described the theory I would test, representative hypotheses, a brief description of research methods, a statement (only a sentence or two, no details) of how much funding I would request, and a paragraph on the potential social implications of the research.



Much to my surprise I received a phone call a couple of weeks later from ONR saying they found the prospectus interesting and were wondering if I could write a full proposal, and oh yes, could I get it to them in less than a week. Needless to say, I dropped everything else and wrote a full proposal, got it through the university budgeting process, which was an entirely new experience for me, and got it to them by their deadline. A week later I received notification from ONR that my proposal was accepted and funded for the full \$20,000 I had requested. Further, they said, they would consider renewing the grant for up to three years, depending of course, on successful completion of this grant as well as submission of new yearly extension proposals. So, I eventually received \$60,000 of support over three years to study communication network processes in organizations.

During the 1940s through 1960s, ONR had funded much of the major research in psychology and social psychology, including propaganda and persuasion, as well as organizational processes. Not only did ONR fund my early research but, through the frequent conferences and meetings ONR convened for their researchers, I was able to meet many of the leading scholars working in these fields. It was a terrific opportunity.

I didn't discover until several years later some of the institutional factors that were involved in my getting the grant. One was that it was the end of their fiscal year and they had, as you might guess, \$20,000 unspent. Any money they didn't award, they lost. So, giving it to me was better than giving it back to the general money pot. Also, most of the ONR grants were for much larger sums of money, awarded to much better-established and well-known scholars. But most funding agencies like to also find promising young scholars, and if it doesn't cost too much, see how well they can do with a small or modest sum of money. If they are productive, they can fund them at higher levels later. If not, they haven't lost much. Finally, I was working in a new area, network analysis and organizational communication, and most agencies want to be on the cutting edge of disciplines. In my prospectus they saw the opportunity to explore research on communication networks and organizational processes.

There are several points to take away from this brief story. First, the different federal funding agencies are very willing to consider the merits of a research prospectus rather than a fully developed proposal. They will usually tell you whether this work is in an area they fund and whether they think the kernel of ideas you express in your prospectus has sufficient merit from their point of view to warrant the development of a full-scale proposal. And, they will be happy to communicate with you over the Internet, via telephone, or in person, if you are visiting their headquarters. Second, the main job of program officers is to give research money away. They are looking for scholars who they think have interesting ideas and the research skills to conduct and publish high quality work. And, they love to find young, burgeoning scholars who are breaking new ground and seem likely to become the leading scholars of the future. In short, they are looking for people like many of you! Third, remember that I

sent out my prospectus to nearly a dozen different agencies. I was funded by only one. That's about an 8% success rate. My advantage was to send out the prospectus to these different funding agencies all at once. What typically happens is that someone sends in an unsolicited proposal or a proposal in response to a Request for Proposals, waits six months for the review process, and then gets turned down. That's discouraging. So, you try again and get turned down again. By the time that has happened three times, you swear off the funding process. I can tell you that I have been turned down several times for funding, but I can also tell you that the more proposals you send in the greater your chances of being funded. Fourth, there are the unknown institutional factors, like when an agency has \$20,000 left to award at the end of a fiscal year, or when a new program officer is appointed who is a leading scholar in the area in which you want funding. Finally, there is the "family aspect" of funding agencies. Remember that ONR gave me eligibility for grant renewal for up to three years. The reason they do this is that they considered their group of researchers to be an extended intellectual family. They want the cross-fertilization and benefits that come from having smart people think through ideas and issues together. If you receive funding, the agency may well ask you to serve as a reviewer on other proposals, attend conferences—and perhaps present your research—on specific topics, and attend workshops that help to formulate the next research agenda the agency wishes to pursue.

I've had a number of multi-year NSF grants over the years and I have known some program officers for more than 20 years (now back at their own universities after a two to four year stay at NSF). They are part of my intellectual community, part of my extended network of scholars who I also know as friends. And for me, that is the long-term bottom line of what started out as a serendipitous attempt of a fledging assistant professor trying to get research support. If you take the long-term view, you see the potential to work with a community of scholars who are interested in ideas and problems that you also find interesting and can spend a lifetime working on together. And, if things go well, the funding agency will provide the money for you to do it. What could be better?

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# 13

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## ***Challenges and Opportunities Faced by Minority Graduate Students***

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The negotiation of place and purpose within a graduate program is essential to graduate student success. Yet the experience is not necessarily the same for all graduate students in communication or any field of study. Minority students (defined as those who differ from the majority based on race, gender, or age) may face different challenges and potentially benefit from their minority status. Efforts have been made on behalf of universities and educators to help students from diverse backgrounds feel included, but according to the literature, the outcomes vary. McKeachie (1999) noted:

The literature on multicultural teaching bears several messages to be considered: 1) all students need to feel welcome; 2) they need to feel that they are being treated as individuals; 3) they need to feel that they can participate fully; and 4) they need to be treated fairly (Adams, 1992; Border & Chism, 1992; Bowser Jones & Young, 1995; Schoem et. al. 1993; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). (p. 221)

This chapter summarizes a study conducted in an effort to allow graduate students and recent graduates of programs in the communication discipline to reflect upon and share their experiences in their own voice.

Critical race theory (CRT), which originated in the legal field, recognizes the importance of voice in understanding experience. Dixon and Rousseau (2005) recognized the “experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin” and explained that CRT is interdisciplinary and especially useful in the study of education (p. 9). They clarified an important point: “The term voice

in the singular does not imply the belief that there exists a single common voice for all persons of color (or of a certain gender or age group). The stories of individuals will differ" (Dixon & Rousseau, 2005, p. 11). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) contended "the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system. . . . Without authentic voices of people of color . . . it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities" (p. 58). There is no better way to help minorities who are considering graduate school or are currently in the graduate school process, or those teaching minority graduate students, than to allow them to hear from those who have been there.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Treatment of minority groups in the higher education environment is well documented in the literature. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) explained:

Multicultural education has been conceptualized as a reform movement designed to effect change in the school and other educational institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and other social class groups will experience educational equality. In more recent years multicultural education has expanded to include issues of gender, ability and sexual orientation. (p. 61)

Communication programs across the country have taken part in this effort. Institutional efforts to address multiculturalism among student populations are paramount to student success. Solorzano, Ceja and Yasso (2000) argued that minority students, faculty, and administrators; a diverse curriculum incorporating the work of minority writers; and support for students of color (and other minority groups) are important in establishing a climate in which students can survive and thrive (p. 176). The results of this study will offer some insight into how communication graduate students interpret and respond to the climate at their institutions.

The graduate education process can be broken into phases and at each level students may have different experiences. Waldeck, Orrego, Plax and Kearney (1997) identified an initiation phase in the graduate school experience. However, the specific skills, behaviors, and strategies necessary for students to succeed are not explored in detail. In addition, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) noted that there are a series of unspoken rules or tacit agreements that students usually come to know through the graduate school experience that prove essential to success. This study addresses this gap in the literature by identifying unspoken rules, specifically beneficial to communication graduate students at both the Master's and doctoral level.

A limited amount of empirical research exists on graduate student experiences in the communication discipline. There is, however, a substantial amount of research and literature regarding experiences of minority graduate students attending research intensive institutions. Williams, Brewley, Reed, White and Davis-Haley (2005) looked solely at the experiences of black female graduate students at predominately white Research I universities. They concluded that

finding a mentor was perhaps the most important element for success of black female graduate students. Ewing, Richardson, James-Myers, and Russell (1996) found that in order for African American students to perform well in graduate school, they must navigate various characteristics, not only academic ability (in Williams et al., 2005, p. 181). An important goal in this study was to have communication graduate students explain in their own words how they navigate the process of graduate school to accomplish their career goals.

## **METHOD**

A convenience sample of current graduate students and recent alumni of communication graduate programs were invited to participate in an e-mail discussion regarding their graduate school experiences. Those identified were also asked to forward the e-mail invitation to their peers who were also attending or were recent graduates of communication programs across the country. The e-mail invitation resulted in a relatively diverse group of 22 participants who agreed to take part in the discussion that would take place over the course of two weeks. The researcher e-mailed participants a single question each day and all students were asked to respond either only to the researcher or to the entire group. The questions were purposefully conversational and informal in an effort to encourage thought and extensive discussion. Participants were also encouraged to hold dialogue with one another about issues they felt were important.

Following data collection, the researcher combed through the responses searching for common themes and patterns. Some questions resulted in answers that could be coded. For example, when students were asked how they chose their graduate program or how they would describe their first year, there were patterns that emerged and numeric values were assigned to similar answers for the purposes of analysis. After coding the data it was entered into SPSS and analyzed using simple frequencies and crosstabs.

Other responses were best left in the participants' own words. Having students explain their experiences in their own words was key to the theoretical basis of this study. Dixon and Rousseau (2005) claim "CRT scholars believe and utilize personal narratives and stories as valid forms of evidence and thereby challenge a numbers only approach to documenting inequity or discrimination that tends to certify discrimination from a quantitative rather than a qualitative perspective" (p. 11). For that reason the results to the questions were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively to determine how participants felt about their communication graduate school experiences. The questions were constructed based on those asked in previous studies—but most were designed to get answers to questions that had not been specifically addressed in the existing literature. More specifically the researcher attempted to create open ended questions that would address concerns of communication graduate students at all levels. The goal was to generate responses and a discussion that could offer insight into individual experiences as well as group consensus.

## **RESULTS**

The respondents in this e-mail discussion were somewhat diverse. The demographic characteristics of the 22 participants are exhibited in Table 13.1. The

**Table 13.1 Demographics of Participants (n = 22)**

Race	Gender	Age
Black 41% (n=9)	Male 18% (n=4)	Age 39 and under = 68% (n=15)
White 50% (n=11)	Female 82% (n=18)	Age 40 and over = 32% (n=7)
Other 9% (n=2)		

majority of participants were female (82%) which is reflective of the most recent data on enrollments and degrees awarded in communication programs around the country (Becker, Vlad & McLean, 2007; NCES, 2004–05). Because convenience and snowball sampling was used, the majority of students were from graduate programs from the southern region of the country.

Accounting for both Master's and doctoral institutions, participants attended schools in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas, Texas, Washington D.C., Pennsylvania, and New York. Of the 22 subjects, 36% (n=8) were working on a Master's degree, 64% (n=14) had completed a Master's degree, and 45% (n=10) were working on or had completed a doctoral degree. After completing a demographic survey, each participant was asked to respond to one question posted by the researcher each day. The questions addressed a range of topics including how participants chose a graduate program, experiences with professors, and recommendations for other students coming behind them.

First, participants were asked "How did you choose your most recent graduate program? What specific elements (cost, location, faculty, etc.) influenced your decision?" There were multiple reasons, but the most frequently reported answer was faculty reputation (n=9), followed closely by location of the graduate program (n=8). On an interesting note, white female students most frequently reported family obligations as the reason for choosing an institution close to home (n=5). White students (n=7) were also the only ones who reported choosing to go to graduate school at the institution where they worked and using employee benefits as a means to defray the cost of graduate school.

Second, participants were asked "In one word describe your first year. What would you tell someone to expect in that first year (academically, socially, emotionally, or otherwise)?" Respondents were asked to come up with a one-word description of the experience of their most recent graduate program. The most common descriptor was "challenging" (n=3), followed by "revealing" (n=2) and "busy" (n=2). To get a better grasp on their opinions, the descriptions were categorized as positive (e.g., "rewarding," "exciting," "new"), negative (e.g., "hell," "hectic," "difficult") or neutral (e.g., "multitasking," "planning"). Overall, descriptions were mostly positive but current doctoral students and Master's program graduates appeared to be slightly more negative in their descriptions of that first year than current Master's students. This finding emerged across both race and gender.

Third, in an effort to identify how students made their way beyond that first year, participants were asked "What got you through graduate school? What



was your support system? Tell me who or what you found that helped you (or continues to help you) get through.” This question was designed to explore respondents’ support systems and/or coping mechanisms used to get through graduate school. Based on their responses, 50% said they depended on the support of peers within their department. African American participants were most likely to report seeking support outside of school through travel or social activities. White female graduate students were most likely to report depending on a spouse for support.

Fourth, in a related question, respondents reflected to “Tell me about your interaction with professors in graduate school. Did you find them approachable? Were you ever invited to collaborate on research? How did you establish and/or negotiate relationships? If you never found a faculty mentor tell me why you think that was the case. For those who are teaching now—how do you think your relationship with faculty shaped your interaction with students?”

Faculty members within the department were identified by 45% of participants as part of their support system: 47% indicated mixed experiences with professors (both positive and negative), 32% reported only positive experiences, and 12% (all three respondents racial minorities) reported only negative experiences. To gain further insight, some of the negative experiences described by participants included explanations such as: “not getting timely feedback,” “abuse of time” by professors for whom they were research or graduate assistants, and dismissive attitudes on behalf of professors who deemed them “not serious” or “too young.” Another important finding was that the only participants who reported finding it difficult to establish a mentoring relationship with a faculty member were over the age of 40.

Fifth, participants were asked “Do you think that your race and/or gender ever helped or hindered you in your graduate school or professional (for academics) experience? Think of interaction amongst students, students and faculty, faculty alone. If you haven’t been affected personally have you seen it affect colleagues, peers, or faculty?” This question explored whether respondents ever felt that race or gender affected their experience in graduate school. On a positive note, only 35% said “yes” and the remaining 65% said “no.” Of interest, African American females and white females reported exactly the same opinion. Among white females, 29% said that race or gender impacted their experience while 71% said race or gender had no impact. The same result was reported by African American females (29% said “yes” and 71% said “no”). Of those who reported feeling that their race or gender negatively impacted their experience, most noted that the experiences occurred with peers in the classroom rather than faculty.

African American students and women expounded upon the benefit of their minority status in graduate school. One white female participant explained that because she was a woman “it allowed me to cry.” African American women most frequently reported their double minority status functioning as motivation. One explained, “If anything, being African American and female was an advantage. Being a double minority was and continues to offer me access to awesome opportunities.” Another black female explained, “The sheer fact that I rarely came across research that addressed the uniqueness of the African American or the feminist experience in American popular culture made me understand where my contribution to the discipline should be.”

Sixth, participants were asked “For those who have gone through or are going through the exam, thesis and/or dissertation process—tell me about your experience. What recommendations would you offer to those going through it or approaching it? What would you do differently? What would you do again because it worked so well?” Regardless of race or gender, all had useful advice regarding the process from beginning to end. For doctoral students, the first step is the comprehensive exams, and one participant who also completed the doctorate warned, “Be scared, but be prepared too. . . . Communicate with your committee before the exam and the defense.” Only participants who completed their dissertation responded about the writing process. First and foremost, participants addressed the importance of selecting an advisor and committee. One respondent noted the political nature of the dissertation process: “Find a really good (professional, dependable, knowledgeable advisor . . . and be very strategic in selecting a committee.” Additional advice was given on behalf of multiple participants including: “Remember that your dissertation does not have to be your best work. A good dissertation is a finished dissertation.” Another explained that the process should be taken in small steps: “Set aside a series of short deadlines to accomplish long-term goals.” Another noted, “Procrastination will kill.” Yet it appears that “balancing personal time and time spent on the dissertation is key.” One participant who also completed the dissertation explained, “I remember finishing my dissertation and feeling like I had lost a year of my life. . . . The disconnect was a little lonely at times, and I think I should have scheduled at least a little ‘me time’ and a lot more family time.”

The final question asked respondents about rules: “To be successful in graduate school there are certain rules that are provided and you must follow them. But what about unspoken rules? Please offer what you believe are the three most important unspoken rules that new graduate students should abide by to be successful.” Their answers were compiled and a list of 10 important unspoken rules was generated (see Table 13.2).

The results show that while graduate students in the communication discipline face challenges and recognize the importance of negotiation of place and purpose, they often manage to maintain a sense of humor about it.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Several interesting insights emerged from this study. When it comes to choosing a graduate program, reputation and location are important deciding factors. Of interest, white participants reported some differences in their experiences. White women tended to stay close to home because of family obligations, and white participants were the only ones who reported using employee benefits to fund their graduate education (therefore choosing their graduate program on that basis). While being close to family and having an employer pay for education are both benefits, these deciding factors are also somewhat limiting. Perhaps these students are not as likely to pursue working with a particular mentor or attending a particular “dream” institution for graduate school. Further study might look into possible disadvantages for mainstream students.

**Table 13.2 The Unspoken Rules for Graduate Students in Communication**

*The Unspoken Rules for Graduate Students in Communication*

1. Take responsibility. There is an unspoken expectation that you are beyond being "Just a student!" A graduate student should be equipped with the appropriate tools to go above and beyond average.
2. Always go to class prepared to answer questions. If there's nothing to say, at least verbally support what others have to say.
3. Don't attempt to overshadow the professor in the classroom discussion. Professors have an earned degree of respect from their peers and colleagues and will expect nothing less from students.
4. Work together with fellow students outside of class. Help each other out, study together, share notes and resources. *These are your future professional colleagues!*
5. If left clueless about an assignment or discussion, ask the professor to explain because the majority of the class might have the same questions but be afraid to ask.
6. No complaining or excuses when it comes to assignments. Just do it no matter how ridiculous it may seem (there is usually a method to the madness!).
7. Come in during office hours (and only during office hours) to pick the professor's brain. Professors love to feel useful and they might become a mentor in the process.
8. When asking for favors (recommendations, signatures, etc.) never wait until the last minute. And be courteous enough to let the professor know if you got the job or scholarship! They want bragging rights!
9. Select the thesis or dissertation topic as soon as possible and gear all research toward that topic in an effort to remain one step ahead in the thesis or dissertation process.
10. Carry aspirin . . . and lots of it!

This study exhibits that faculty members also play an important role in graduate school choice as well as student success. According to Waldeck et al. (1997), "successful student experiences in and beyond graduate school are frequently tied to mentoring relationships with faculty. Mentoring is an effective way for students to establish productive connections with professors" (p. 93). While most respondents identified mixed positive and negative experiences with faculty over the course of their graduate study, overall the good outweighed the bad. As one female Ph.D. recipient who is currently teaching at the university level explained, "For the most part my relationships with professors were awesome. I still have a few of them in my cell phone for safe keeping. These professors far outnumbered the one 'bear' I had [as a professor] and I will be forever grateful."

Respondents also identified faculty as an important part of their support system in graduate school. These results offer valuable insight to academics and administrators, as well as graduate students. Students are indeed impacted by their relationships with professors and therefore efforts should be made to encourage positive relationships from early on in the graduate program on both ends

(students and faculty). The majority of participants reported mixed experiences with professors. African American students reported looking for support outside of school and white women were most likely to rely on spousal support. This finding (though not generalizable) suggests that perhaps some minority students are not getting the support system they need at school. Yet it does not appear that faculty relationships alone are to blame.

Of interest, participants reported more negative experiences with peers than professors in their graduate school experience. Most respondents did not find that their race or gender ever impacted their experience. Those who reported negative experiences noted that race or gender came into play in relationships with peers. Daniel (2007) reported a similar finding for African American students: "Interpersonal conflict with white peers was identified as a factor that negatively affected their graduate experience" (p. 37). Although this topic was not explored in this project, future research might examine if majority students feel that their minority peers are at an advantage because of their minority status—leading to difficult interactions.

The qualitative data clearly show that women and African American students saw the benefit of their minority status. Waldeck et al. (1997) noted a similar result: "Consistent with their cultural orientation, African Americans may be more comfortable in situations demanding assertive behavior" (p. 105). African American students also tended to look outside of school for support. Daniel (2007) also found that "minority students reported that one of the most difficult aspects of the graduate education process is the cultural and racial isolation they experienced" (p. 30). One African American female student quipped that a colleague recommended that the way to survive graduate school was "a good bar and a good church!" Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) noted that there needs to be more attention focused on the growing tensions that exist between and among the various groups that gather under the umbrella of multiculturalism.

Perhaps the most important lesson from this study is the fact that participants of all backgrounds acknowledge challenges in graduate school—but they also had a plethora of strategies to overcome them and find success. For those in the graduate school process or considering it, the results of this study should serve as a refreshing reminder that rarely is anyone alone in their experience. The reported list of unspoken rules, coping strategies, and advice for getting through the dissertation or thesis process will hopefully be beneficial not only to those in the minority—but to all graduate students in the communication discipline.

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## ***The International Student: Choosing Graduate Education in Communication***

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In very simple terms, “communication studies” is a discipline associated with various aspects of communication, ranging from dyadic interpersonal communication to technologically mediated communication. Graduate study in the communication discipline includes scholarly emphases such as interpersonal communication, organizational communication, rhetoric, philosophy of communication, public relations, advertising, journalism, mass communication, and telecommunication. In the United States these topics may be combined in one university department, or there may be separate departments dedicated to the study of various aspects of communication. Chapters one and two have already discussed the communication discipline in detail. This chapter addresses why communication is an attractive option for graduate students from outside the United States, including characteristics of graduate education in the United States, recommendations for making the best of one’s years as a graduate student, suggestions for funding the education, and possible options after completion of the degree.

Research indicates that the United States is the largest educator of foreign students (Regets, 2001). The number of foreign students as a percentage of total graduate students has been increasing since 1975 (Chellaraj, Maskus, & Matoo, 2005). While “graduate studies” may mean different things in various countries, in the United States, graduate education refers to education after a Bachelor’s degree to pursue degrees including the Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Science (M.S.), Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A), and the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.). In the United States, students are allowed to pursue a doctoral degree after earning a Master’s degree. Some universities combine the Master’s and doctoral degrees.



For specific information about that option, students must first contact the department at the university (or visit the website) where they want to apply. Each university has different rules with regard to their graduate program.

This is an opportune time to study communication in the United States. There is no scholarly inquiry that has not been influenced in some way by communication. The communication discipline combines, incorporates, and links itself seamlessly with a wide variety of other disciplines. Being interdisciplinary by nature, not only does communication incorporate other disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, and philosophy, but also creates new areas for research. For example, research in health communication might combine principles of advertising, psychology, and interpersonal social support to study how messages can alter attitudes and behaviors to facilitate the process of giving up smoking. The explosion of and access to new media technologies, even in the remotest of nations, has opened new vistas for researchers. In many non-western countries the “communication” discipline can be interpreted to mean a variety of things—including an engineering degree in telecommunication or other technical fields. However, most non-western countries are not engaged in research on the theoretical nature of human communication, a central feature of programs in the United States.

## **SUCCEEDING DURING THE DEGREE PROCESS**

As exciting and invaluable as the learning experience is, being in an entirely new culture can be unnerving even for those who are conversant in English and/or may have visited the United States for short periods of time prior to attending the university. Simply knowing English and having watched American television shows does not prepare students for cultural differences that might require for some adjustments. The following sections are based on the author’s personal experience and email interviews with several former and present international students who came from India, Germany, Romania, Cypress, Taiwan, and Bangladesh to study in the United States. While most of the participants took jobs in the United States following graduation, some opted to work outside of the United States or return to their home country (see Appendix A for the questionnaire emailed to the participants and Appendix B for participant responses). This section elaborates on what an international student may expect during graduate education and how a degree from the United States in communication may be maximized in our global age.

### ***Social and Cultural Adjustment***

The loneliness, nostalgia, and emotional pain that an international student can feel in a new country, mainly due to interaction with an unfamiliar environment, has been referred to as “foreign student syndrome” (Sandhu, 1994; Furnham, 2004; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). When international students first arrive to the United States, they may not show any recognizable signs or symptoms, while concurrently suffering from an extremely high level of anxiety and related problems. While students in any circumstance may be overwhelmed by the rigorous demands of the graduate student life, international students have

fewer resources than their American counterparts to resolve their adjustment problems (Khoo, Abu-rasain, & Hornby, 1994).

Scholars suggest that intrapersonal factors that influence a sense of self are more important in the cultural adjustment of international students than interpersonal factors that relate to culture or environmental surroundings (Furnham, 2004). Intrapersonal factors, such as a sense of loss of contact with one's native community, a sense of inferiority due to loss of social status, and a sense of uncertainty due to the ambiguous time period that is required to complete a degree and the employment prospects after the degree, usually result in homesickness, a feeling of alienation, and a perceived dislike from the host community. Interpersonal factors such as culture shock, communication problems (especially for non-English speaking students), and a disruption of one's regular family life can usually result in an identity crisis, loss of self-esteem, and a sense of meaninglessness.

Research has long shown that written and spoken fluency in English does not guarantee conversational comfort with the language, especially when one is interacting with native English speakers (Light, Xu, & Mossop, 1987). International graduate students may feel that even though their comprehension of English is at native level, they feel incompetent when conversing with someone in colloquial American English. Socially, some students expressed feeling awkward in certain situations and found it difficult to ask for help. Although students may come from countries that uphold communal values higher than individualistic values, the difference in cultural values inhibited them from identifying with both American students and other international students. Students from western countries expressed less internal conflict and adjustment requirements than those from non-western countries, particularly India and Taiwan.

Students may experience "foreign student syndrome" to a greater or lesser extent. There are support services available for students who feel out of place. There are counseling services available on all university campuses that can be used free of cost. The following paragraphs provide information that will greatly reduce the anxiety and fear of adjusting in a foreign culture, along with suggesting ways in which international students can feel a part of the community and create a second home in the United States.

All universities have a department dedicated to providing assistance to international students, including social, academic, and sometimes even legal support. The role and responsibility of the department varies according to the size of the university and the number of international students for whom they provide services. The international student office can directly answer questions about how many students enrolled at the university are from your home country and what assistance is available to the international students with regard to getting socially involved both on and off campus. As is the experience of the author of this chapter, once a student has been granted admission by a department, the first contact will be the international student office. Although the office personnel usually contacts students soon after they have been admitted, students may want to start communicating with the international student office as soon the decision has been made to attend the university. In addition, most universities, to assist their foreign students with their English writing skills have established "writing centers." Students from native English speaking countries volunteer at these

centers and are ever willing to help international students with assignments and sometimes even computer skills.

Most universities run programs that are designed to aid international students in establishing a community around the campus. Two of the most common programs, although they may be known by different names at different universities, are Host Families and Community Involvement. Many families in the United States are interested in exposing their children to people from different cultures and countries. A Host Families program pairs international students with interested families who invite students to share a meal with them on American holidays (mainly Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter). These meetings serve a dual purpose. While the families welcome international students into their community and hope to alleviate homesickness, students teach them about their culture. In the simplest form, this is a cultural exchange that may lead to life long friendships. For example, the author of this chapter has kept in touch with her host family for the last fifteen years. Host families usually become a home away from home. They also become a great resource for learning about American culture, protocols in social situations, what to wear, expectations in a social situation, and most important, the best places to shop for groceries and other commodities. In addition, students who report positive interactions with host nationals have less socio-cultural problems (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

Community Involvement programs usually ask interested students to deliver lectures about their home country to local schools, churches, and sometimes universities. International students may be invited to be a part of a panel on diversity. Although students may feel the pressures of graduate school do not allow them the time to get involved in the community, some people actually recommended getting involved in community both as a cure for loneliness that one can feel and as a way to better understand the culture of the United States.

In addition to options available through the international student office, international students may also take the initiative and come up with other ways of getting involved in the community. For communication students, there is an added advantage of enhancing their resume. The author of this paper is interested in culture and television production and started a television show that featured each country represented at the university. The show aired on the University cable television station and became both an informative show for the community and work experience that enhanced the creator's resume. One international student who had background in engineering volunteered as a computer assistant at the local library, another volunteered to teach English as second language to new immigrants as a part of adult literacy program run by the local library, and a third asked the languages department at the university about tutoring and translation. Each student may want to consider his or her special skills that may be contributed to the community (see Appendix B).

Every university has some form of cultural evening organized by and for the international students. These evenings may be organized as one event for all the international students if the numbers of foreign students is quite small, or they may be organized by global regions (e.g., Africa, Europe, Latin America, etc.). Often referred to as international or cultural nights, these events allow international graduate students several opportunities to volunteer their services. They also provide the chance make friends from other countries who have shared

interests, may be facing the same issues, and might be able to help with academics and other basics such as housing (which may change several times during your course of stay in the graduate school).

If an international graduate student is not comfortable with his or her English speaking skills, most universities run a conversation partner program which pairs international students with American students who wish to learn a new language. In the experience of the author, the most commonly requested languages are Spanish, French, Italian, and Chinese. American students wishing to study abroad or opting for careers in foreign services may request a conversation partner for languages such as Korean, Czech, Magyar (Hungarian), or Russian. Just like meeting a host family, participating in this program can be rewarding for both parties and usually results in long term friendships.

For graduate students who can be considered of minority races in the United States, such as Asian American, African American, or Hispanic, there may be other adjustments. No matter how long a person has lived in the United States and how “American” he or she may sound or feel, students often get asked, “So where are you from?” The same is true for international students—and the answer may create even more questions (e.g., “Laos? Is that in Africa?”)! While constantly being asked where they are from and having to give coordinates of their home country on the map can be alienating, international students can use these experiences to provide a better understanding about their country to Americans. Avoid taking such incidents personally, and instead consider how one might serve as a cultural ambassador in educating others about one’s culture. Studying in a country outside of one’s home country is a learning experience on several levels. International graduate students are not just getting a degree, they are getting an education. In addition, while providing answers to some of the questions people ask, international students may discover new things about their own nation.

International students may be concerned about racism and other forms of discrimination. Though the questions are valid, universities in the United States are generally more welcoming of differences due to their continued association with people from non-western countries. Nevertheless, should students feel that there is a cause for concern most university international student offices are willing to provide help. International students should not undermine the power of their experience. Personal experiences have often led people to find new ways of thinking about human communication; students can empower themselves by transforming experience into research.

### ***Academic Adjustment***

There are certain marked differences between education in the United States and other countries. The most significant aspect is the expectation of acquiring a level of theoretical flexibility across disciplines not available in higher education in other countries. Four distinct characteristics of a communication graduate education in the United States are: an expectation of class participation, engaging in extensive reading, accomplishing multiple written assignments, and qualifying candidacy and/or comprehensive exams.

*Class participation.* There are certain impressions attached to various countries with regard to academic and social culture. Some of these images are real for an international student, but they may be interpreted differently by one's peers and colleagues in the United States. For example, some graduate students stated that their home countries did not encourage in-class discussion and expressing their views. However, in the United States their reticence was interpreted as lack of knowledge or failure to complete the class readings. Students need to learn to verbally express their views in class. One of the most important aspects of graduate school in the United States is to identify a position on an issue and have the ability to defend that position. While scholars are free to change their views, they are known for their facility for explaining the logic behind their ideas. Class participation is the first step toward presenting ideas, where they may be accepted, supported, or completely refuted.

*Readings and written assignments.* The purpose of substantial readings and written assignments is to familiarize graduate students with the history of and arguments for trends in the communication discipline. Reading a variety of authors is also essential to develop one's voice as a scholar by discerning one's position on contemporary issues. Almost all the graduate students, including those from western countries, said that although they were used to working hard in school in their home country, they needed to adjust to the intensive reading for graduate classes in the United States. Once the students understood the significance of reading, following a structured syllabus, and deadlines for assignment, they enjoyed the process.

International students often face a dominant challenge in the library (Baron & Strout-Dapaz, 2001; Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 1996). The facilities at the libraries in the United States are likely to be different from those in students' home country. Therefore, international students will benefit from attending an orientation tour of the library and consulting with the librarians to get acquainted with various research options, databases, and archives.

*Candidacy and comprehensive examinations.* Unlike other countries, including many western countries, both masters and doctoral students in the United States must complete a required number of courses/credits to familiarize them with the latest theories and trends in their chosen area of communication study. Students can use these classes to hone their area of research interest, develop their oral and written expression, and most importantly to engage in debate with those of differing opinions.

In some programs, a candidacy examination or preliminary examination is required. This is usually undertaken after the first year of coursework in a doctoral program and is designed to appraise student abilities and potential as a researcher. In addition, some Master's programs and all doctoral programs require each student to successfully pass a comprehensive exam following completion of the student's coursework.

Comprehensive exams are the last exams that graduate students take before writing a thesis or dissertation. The purpose of comprehensive exams is to test students' knowledge and understanding about communication and to determine their readiness to work independently, (albeit under the guidance of an advisor), on a thesis or dissertation project. A student who has cleared both candidacy

and comprehensives is considered ABD (all but dissertation). The details of what is entailed in these exams differ from university to university.

*Flexibility in American education.* One of the advantages of the United States educational system is a flexibility that allows students to apply for graduate study in a discipline in which one has not previously completed coursework. This option may not be allowed in your home country. That is, for admission to some graduate programs, students need not have an undergraduate degree in communication to pursue a graduate degree in communication. If your undergraduate education was not in communication, then one should contact the academic advisor for your program soon after you get admitted to request names of basic textbooks that can provide background information. If a student chooses to study mediated communication, one must have some interest in media (be it print, audio, visual, or the Internet) and apprise oneself of the media situation in one's home country. These events may later serve as a spring board for graduate research.

Graduate education can pose challenges for American students who may travel from one state to another to pursue their studies; international students face the additional challenges of language, cultural, and, in some cases, religious barriers. While most of the interviewees stated that they had some apprehension about being a foreign student in the United States, with time they eased into the program both academically and socially and learned the "very American qualities" of taking initiative in research projects and expressing their views even if they were different from the rest of the class. International students will enhance the quality of their sojourn if they recognize and undertake the challenge, which holds the potential for a life-altering experience. Graduate students, especially from developing countries, are usually concerned about funding graduate education, which can be very expensive. The following section will discuss the possibilities of getting assistance with education and living costs in the United States.

## **FUNDING FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION IN COMMUNICATION**

A major concern of international students is how to finance their graduate education in the United States. Unlike American students, international students as non-United States citizens are neither eligible for federal loans nor are they allowed, under any circumstances, to work more than twenty hours a week. As unfair as this may sound, this is primarily done to protect foreign students from overworking or being distracted from their main goal of getting an American education.

Almost all the international students interviewed for this chapter stated that they received financial assistance for the education, in addition to using some personal funds and working in the United States. All of the respondents recommended an assistantship in the department as the most important form of financial support a student may get. Most United States universities have a highly competitive process for selecting part-time teaching assistants or research assistants from among the full-time students in the department. The definition of a "full-time graduate student" can vary between universities in the United States but is a term generally applied to students who are either enrolled in



three graduate courses or working on their dissertation/thesis after completing their course work and comprehensives. Due to budget cuts, many programs that offer a Master's degree are suspending assistantships, although most doctoral programs continue to have assistantships available.

Both teaching and research assistantships provide full tuition waiver, which is a substantial amount of the expense graduate students incur in financing their education. Along with the tuition waiver, students receive a small stipend. Most foreign students make-do with that amount, as working off campus is not allowed. In case a student's home department cannot offer an assistantship, try to secure an assistantship in another department at the university, (at least for the first semester), which allows international students to prove their dedication and resolve to get a graduate education. The author of this chapter started both her degrees without an assistantship from her home department. At the doctoral level she was able to secure a scholarship in a department of education due to her computer skills for the first semester; thereafter, her home department offered her an assistantship.

Following are some options to finance a graduate education, other than a departmental assistantship:

- There are several scholarships that a student may avail before they arrive in the United States. Fulbright scholarships are one such option. Students have to apply for them in their home country. Scholarships should be applied for well in advance of seeking admission to a graduate program in the United States, since it may take up to a year or more to secure a scholarship.
- You may seek financial sponsorships from international philanthropic organizations such as Rotary, Zonta, Masons, Order of the Eastern Star, faith based organizations, or an employer back home. The internet is an unlimited repository of information; research the options well to find possible sources of funding.
- In some cases international students may also qualify for university financial aid. Check with the international student office and the financial aid office.
- Students should use any exceptional cultural or professional skill they may possess (e.g., athletics, music, computer skills, fluency with several languages) to procure scholarships that can help to further their educational career goals.
- Large research universities tend to have opportunities for research participation or teaching languages or a subject that a graduate student pursued in a prior degree.

The advantage of obtaining a scholarship is that it enables students to devote all of their time to their education. Most scholarships come with a time limit, and therefore students who secure them are under pressure to finish their degree within that period, which actually works well for students in the long run.

### **EXPLORING OPTIONS AFTER COMPLETING THE DEGREE: STAYING IN THE UNITED STATES OR RETURNING HOME**

Students may have questions about whether or not to stay in the United States permanently or for a short period of time after graduation. These questions



seem to become more predominant the closer one gets to degree completion. There are certain legal considerations that students need to keep in mind and prepare accordingly.

### **Legal Considerations**

International students are only granted a few months grace period to stay in the United States after completing a degree or defending a dissertation. Since employment laws are always subject to change, it is advisable for students to contact the international student advisor at least a year before they plan to graduate. Students should check on the latest laws and regulations from the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) for citizens from their country.

Under normal circumstances students get a one year/twelve months practical training period after completion of every degree, during which students can be employed in any job that utilizes skills acquired in the United States. Students still remain on a student visa (F1) but are considered on “practical training” which refers to an employable status. If a student came to the United States on a cultural exchange visa (J1), he or she is required to switch to a practical training visa (F1). While on a practical training visa, students are permitted to change employers during this time. Usually foreign students decide during their graduate education whether or not they intend to stay in the States. If students wish to extend their stay in the United States, they will need a long standing position that will allow them to transfer their temporary work visa (practical training visa) into a work visa (H1-B), which is given out for maximum of six years. Those wishing to stay permanently in the United States then apply for permanent residency (often called a Green Card).

### **Professional Options**

Graduate students are often concerned about employment options after degree completion. A graduate degree equips the student with more than just the knowledge of theories and scholars. During graduate school students learn many skills such as analyzing documents, research methods, and compiling research reports that can be useful to many organizations. The following section suggests a few options that may be available after completing a graduate degree in communication.

*Teaching.* At most universities in the United States, employees are required to have a doctorate before they are allowed to teach. However, community colleges frequently hire faculty members who have completed a Master’s degree if they have considerable amount of related work experience. Publications, though important for all professional jobs, are paramount in academia. Teaching positions allow scholars to continue with their research while imparting knowledge to students.

*Industry.* The author of this chapter entered a doctoral program primarily for her love of teaching and research but realized well into the program that not all who opt for a graduate degree intend to teach. Today, multinational companies actively seek professionals with a combination of skills, namely research and practical experience, and in addition allow the option of working in one’s home country.

*Non-governmental organizations/international organizations.* Not-for-profit organizations often seek media experts or policy analysts with an academic background. Organizations like the United Nations, World Trade Organization, The World Bank, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, International Rivers Network, and many more offer competitive salaries and provide the option for scholars to see their research put into action. Working for such organizations can be very rewarding.

If students ultimately want to be a teacher, they can still first opt for some practical experience which can later be worked into a publication. Universities are often looking for people with work experience in the communication field. These suggestions apply whether or not an international student wishes to stay in the United States. One major advantage of globalization is that today's workforce is mobile; students should use it to their best advantage in deciding on a career option.

## **PARTICIPATING IN AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION COMMUNITY**

In the interconnected age of media, collaborative research is not only viable but also expected from scholars. Cross-cultural research takes an increasingly poignant role as globalization juxtaposes conflicting cultures together. As a global citizen with first-hand experience of more than one culture, international graduate students are placed appropriately to comment on more than one culture. The author of this chapter and most of the interviewees utilized their experiences in identifying topics for their dissertations and other publications.

Technology allows us to remain "virtually connected" to our colleagues, regardless of where we are based. Combined with technological convenience, the need for cross-cultural research gives us the opportunity to merge experience, knowledge, and wisdom. Many of the respondents for this chapter stated that they conduct cross-cultural research and have been engaged in that research since their graduate education. The author of this chapter collaborated with scholars from different parts of the globe on three studies in the past two years. The experience has been very rewarding both on an academic and a social level. Although the collaborators meet only during conferences, communicating via email and the telephone bridges geographical distance.

In addition, communication technologies allow us to access international news within seconds after the occurrence of the respective events, enable us to notice universal trends, and highlight the global influence of media. While scholars in the mid-twentieth century waited for years to gather cross-national data, today we have the luxury of collecting data in real-time. Furthermore, comparative and collaborative studies have the potential to enrich our understandings of other cultures and dispel any misunderstandings.

## **SUMMARY**

International students face a much bigger challenge than American students during the course of graduate education. However, these challenges also allow them to become more diversified researchers, especially if they undertake research

that addresses international or intercultural communication. Although some concerns about social and cultural adjustments in a new culture are justified, international students to the United States can reduce their anxiety by participating in community involvement programs offered by their university. International students can capitalize on their strengths and better prepare themselves for the demands of graduate school by being aware of differences in graduate education between the United States and their home countries. This is an exciting time for the communication discipline. The suggestions given in this chapter are designed to assist graduate students in making the most of graduate education in the United States.

### APPENDIX A

Please provide us with the following information

University Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Currently you are a:
  - a. Graduate Student
  - b. Assistant Professor
  - c. Associate Professor
  - d. Lecturer
  - e. Lecturer, and a Graduate Student
2. Is your undergraduate education in communication as well?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
3. Please write the exact title of all your degrees so far: your undergraduate degree, BA/BS/MA/MS etc., and also the concentration (Telecom, Media Studies, Philosophy, Sociology, etc.)

Degree BA/BS/MA/MS/Ph.D.	Major	University

4. Altogether, how many years have you been in the U.S.?
5. How many of those years were spent as a student?
6. How many degrees do you have from the U.S.?
7. Why did you choose Communication studies? If your undergraduate degree is not in communication studies, then why did you choose to switch to communication?
8. Is Communication Studies a well-recognized option as a major? Was it when you were a student?

9. If your undergraduate degree was not in communication studies, have you been able to incorporate your past experience/training/education into your research? If so, then can you please give us an example?
10. Do you think communication studies fits well with what your undergraduate training?
11. Why did you choose to study in the U.S., as opposed to any other country?
12. How did you fund your education?
13. If you are/were on an assistantship how did you find out about the program?
14. Which of the following exams did you take before being admitted into the program?
  - a. TOEFL
  - b. GRE
  - c. TSE (Test of Spoken English)
15. How helpful was the university where you first started as a student in helping you find housing?
16. If you already have a graduate degree from the U.S., did you avail the option of practical training in the U.S., or did you directly get a job that allowed you a permanent work visa?

## APPENDIX B

### ***Suggestions from International Graduate Students***

- Even though the ubiquity of the internet makes us assume that computer use is widespread, it is the experience of the author that even in the twentieth century, many students in many developing countries are not well acquainted with computers. Ensure that you get some experience of working on computers, before you come to the U.S.
- Once in the U.S., work on upgrading your computer skills, especially try to focus on software that may be of help during your sojourn as a graduate student, e.g. Microsoft Word, Excel, SPSS, or SAS.
- Keep up with the class readings, and make notes. Due to the number of readings, you may have to learn to speed read. Following the timeline for readings reduces class anxiety.
- Hold on to all your text books, especially if you are a doctoral student. You will be using these books frequently even after you graduate. So do not be tempted by “buy back” deals on campus. These books will return much more to you in the coming years.
- Participate in academic and/or industry conferences as early in the program as possible. Even when you do not have a paper to present. This will provide you with an understanding of the kind of research being conducted and help you find your own niche.

- Get involved with student organizations at communication associations, e.g., International Communication Association (ICA), National Communication Association (NCA), or Association for Education of Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). These organizations are always looking for volunteers to hold an office position, which gives you great visibility and enhances your resume. Furthermore, the contacts that you make here may later lead to collaborations on projects.
- Reviewing papers for ICA, NCA, AEJMC, BEA etc., is another very good way of keeping pace with developments in the field. Being a respondent or panel chair at a conference is another very good way of getting involved. You will need to contact the head of the division you are interested in volunteering for, (e.g., Political Communication, Development Communication, Gender Studies, etc.).
- Join online groups of scholars in your field, both in and outside the U.S.
- Try to obtain practical experience by volunteering in organizations and work places that may be related to your research area. When looking for jobs on campus, look for jobs in your major even if it involves “menial” tasks like coding; it gets you much more experience than perhaps a better paying job that may be in food service, working as a photocopy assistant in the library, or a security officer on campus, (which pay the bills but do not add to your curriculum vitae).
- While you will obviously follow news from home, an international student in communication will benefit much from following the news in the U.S., which helps in class discussions. Get a portable radio, and listen to both local and national news. National Public Radio is a public service radio in the U.S. and provides a substantial amount of local, national, and international news, along with several cultural programs that help you understand the U.S. culture.
- Getting publications is very important to the success of a professional and a scholar in the U.S. The same standards are increasingly being used in other countries as well. Therefore, always look for opportunities that will allow you to get some publications before you graduate. Check with your professors about any on going projects and offer to help. Get co-authorship even if you have to work for free.
- Maximize your research and effort on the papers that you have submitted as class assignments by continuing to work on them after the semester. These papers may later be used to submit to conferences and eventually a publication.
- Sometimes with the professor’s permission, you might be able to continue working on a paper that you did for a previous class, which got you a B + but is not ready for a conference or publication yet. Reworking the paper allows you the time to prepare it for a journal.
- Most importantly, do not get too stressed out about your thesis or dissertation. Unlike what you may think, your final project is not supposed to be your magnum opus but only a stepping stone to your career. You do it to prove your credentials and hopefully see it as a road that opens vistas of new research for you.

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## ***Reflections on the Process: Advice from Recent Graduates***

This chapter includes seven essays by recent graduates of communication M.A. and Ph.D. programs, each reflecting on the graduate school experience. With an eye toward supporting future generations of communication graduate students, each reflection provides suggestions for success. A variety of topics are addressed, including “Organization: A Cornerstone of Success” by Andrew Ledbetter, “Learning to Think” by Matt Koschmann, “Forging Collegial Scholarly Relationships” by Karla M. Bergen and M. Chad McBride, “Being an Other in Graduate School” by Maria del Guadalupe Davidson, “Becoming Your Own Advocate” by Amanda J. Porter, “Returning to Earn an Advanced Degree” by Karin D. Tidgewell, and “From Business to Academe: Balancing Lessons from Both Worlds” by Martha J. Fay.

### **ORGANIZATION: A CORNERSTONE OF SUCCESS**

ANDREW LEDBETTER, PH.D.

*Ohio University*

When I began my M.A. degree, my career goal was to ultimately join the faculty of a research university. I quickly learned that my lack of organizational skill was a barrier toward this goal. As a teacher, I failed to return assignments in a timely manner. In the classes I was taking, I did not carefully keep an archive of seminar syllabi. This proved problematic when preparing for my comprehensive exams, adding to the time needed to develop themes and form my bibliography. My research program similarly suffered from inefficiency, lack of focus, and lost time. Only as I began my Ph.D. at the University of Kansas did I achieve the organizational coherence appropriate for my career goal. Here, I will share three tips that helped me organize the complexity inherent in academic life.



First, invest in some sort of scheduler or planner. This does not require purchasing an expensive electronic device. A simple Word document can suffice for tracking meetings and outlining future tasks. A less expensive non-technological solution is a paper-based planner or even a simple lined notepad. Regardless of the style, I recommend a scheduler small enough to easily carry every day, permitting consultation and modification of the schedule as needed. At the beginning of each semester, schedule goals and identify specific deadlines for obtaining them. During one particularly busy semester, I even scheduled the articles and book chapters I would read each day. Those who teach may add relevant dates, deadlines, and timetables for returning graded assignments. The time spent doing this helps reveal ideal time slots for planning and performing the tasks necessary for success toward degree completion and attaining one's career goal.

Second, graduate students should familiarize themselves with conference deadlines. The conference deadlines form the rhythm of the academic year and taking this rhythm into account will help budget time. Insofar as possible, deliberately take courses that facilitate conducting research and schedule completion of papers for submission to conferences. Completing a research project in a single semester is challenging; some professors may permit their students to complete a prospectus in one class and conduct the study in another. Ask if this is possible, and take advantage of the opportunity if it is present. Those who foresee conducting original research as an important part of faculty life will want to maintain a continuous pipeline of research with multiple projects in the conception, data collection, analysis, and publication phases. Taking the time to establish this routine in graduate school yields efficient productivity in faculty life, especially during those critical pre-tenure years.

Third, adopt a daily schedule that facilitates scholarly life, as entering graduate school marks the beginning of life as a professional scholar. I entered graduate school directly after receiving my undergraduate degree, and my day-to-day schedule during my Master's program differed little from my undergraduate career. I did my work sporadically, working and resting throughout the day and night. When deadlines were not looming, I sometimes squandered my time on leisure activities; of course, this required busy days and late nights when assignment due dates drew near. My daily routine had little consistency, and my productivity suffered. In my doctoral program, I decided to block out specific times for my work. After I made this change, I was surprised at the coherence and increased productivity this brought to my scholarship and teaching. As someone with an employed spouse and no children, I found it best to generally confine my work to typical workday hours (i.e., approximately 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.). Others may prefer devoting a specific block of time in the early morning, at night, or on weekends to their academic work. I found that placing some boundaries around my work time honors both my academic and non-academic commitments; a schedule prevents the flexibility inherent in academia from overwhelming the other things I value in life.

Excellent scholarship and teaching necessitates the efficient use of time and energy. My experiences in academia thus far have convinced me that organizational and time management skills help us use our scholarly work to serve our students, colleagues, discipline, and community to the best of our ability. These

skills enable us to enjoy all of the rewards that the academic life has to offer, from the freedom to self-direct work to the joy of inspiring college students to communicate excellently. The suggestions I have offered here helped me minimize the stress associated with graduate school, and I hope they might do likewise for others.

## LEARNING TO THINK

MATT KOSCHMANN, PH.D.

*University of Colorado at Boulder*

My time at the University of Texas as a Ph.D. student was an incredible journey of intellectual development and community engagement. Looking back, I see many accomplishments (fellowships, research awards, and favorable reviews from journal editors), but also disappointments (numerous rejection letters from journals, conferences, and grant foundations; frustrations during course work and exams; and missed opportunities with students, colleagues, and research). Yet overall I think my time in the program has been a success: recently I defended my dissertation and accepted a faculty position at the University of Colorado.

Of course none of this happened by accident; it resulted from important lessons I learned and decisions I made during my time as a graduate student. As I reflect on the process of graduate school, allow me to share some ideas that influenced my experience. For me it was all about learning how to think like a scholar, especially in terms of developing intellectual humility, conceptualizing my research, and connecting with other scholars.

First, I thought I knew how to think when I arrived on campus. After all, I had a Master's degree and a successful graduate career thus far. Unfortunately, I entered my doctoral program with more intellectual arrogance than I would like to admit. The first lesson I learned was to have the intellectual humility to explore new ideas and be a life-long learner. For example, I entered my Ph.D. program with strong opinions about the idea of social constructionism (which I preconceived as postmodern fluff) and qualitative research methods (which I incorrectly thought were too subjective and not rigorous enough to count as "real research"). Yet today I assume a social constructionist perspective in my thinking and much of my research is qualitative. How did that happen? Eventually I set aside my straw-man critiques of these ideas and engaged them on their own merits. I encourage students to re-visit some of the ideological commitments developed early in one's academic career and honestly assess these ideas; there may be some intellectual arrogance getting in the way of an important scholarly breakthrough in one's thinking. Consider a bit more intellectual humility and the value of being a life-long learner.

Second, my thinking developed in how I conceptualized my research. I learned the value of "question-driven research." I think many graduate students struggle with this. We are interested in particular issues or communication environments. Rather than drawing upon a topic or context to drive one's research agenda, consider the legitimate intellectual question or problem that guides one's work. I learned the hard way that "this is interesting" is not a valid rationale for academic research. Originally I was attracted to the topic of leadership and the

context of the nonprofit sector, but I kept running into dead-ends. I could write good literature reviews and design respectable studies, but my results were insignificant/irrelevant, and my discussion sections were trivial. My research improved dramatically once I learned that knowledge is developed through identifying important questions and seeking to provide substantive answers.

Furthermore, think about conducting research that is both insightful and interesting. Consider two criteria for evaluating your research: the “duh factor” and the “so what?” factor. First, the “duh factor.” Are the results so obvious that readers simply say, “duh?” While studying corporate layoffs I remember reading an article that concluded people experience more stress and anxiety over their own layoff than the layoff of a coworker. Well duh! Go beyond obvious conclusions and strive to make insightful contributions to our knowledge. In addition, consider the “so what?” factor. I believe we should always ask ourselves about the value of our research in relationship to society. Sure there is important theory-building and conceptual work to be done, but to what end? Consider how your research can contribute to the issues and people that shape our society. Overall, conduct research that is low on the “duh factor” and high on the “so what?” factor; identify projects that go beyond common sense and also have significant implications for the lived-world.

Finally, academics is not just “what” someone knows or even “who” someone knows, it is who knows you (and your work). I am a firm believer that things are what they are in relationship to other things. This applies to developing scholars as well. Regardless of your shining personality, you have to find ways to make intellectual connections in the discipline.

A good way to do this is through “content networking.” This involves developing connections through research and ideas. Send an email message to authors about articles they have written. Talk to presenters after a research panel. Most people love to talk about their work and appreciate that others share similar interests. This can make it easier to approach people in future social situations at conferences and gives people an association to remember when you are on the job market. Good scholars think about how they can develop in relationship to other people and ideas.

As I reflect on the process of graduate school, my advice is to learn how to think as a scholar, especially in terms of developing your intellectual humility, conceptualizing your research, and connecting with people in the discipline. I think the more attentive you are to how your thinking influences your scholarship and the ideas that influence your thinking, the more successful you will be in your graduate school experience.

## **FORGING COLLEGIAL SCHOLARLY RELATIONSHIPS**

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Given the nearly-universal reality of sharing tiny offices with colleagues, the graduate school culture impresses us with the need to forge “collegial” relation-

ships with peers. While it is great to have friends to go to dinner and commiserate with over drinks, these relationships can also provide a potential lifetime of professional/scholarly support. In this reflection, we chronicle how our own collaborative writing relationship started and how it has continued to benefit us once we became faculty members. We urge current students to cultivate similar relationships and experience their short-term and long-term rewards. From reflecting on our working relationship, three “lessons learned” emerged: (a) start small, (b) develop a reciprocal writing/reading relationship, and (c) be creative in bridging interests.

Chad: “On the face of it, we were an unlikely match to work together.”

Karla: “When we were assigned as office mates our first semester of grad school, I was a married 45-year-old mother of two almost-grown children just starting my Master’s program after a hiatus of 23 years from college.”

Chad: “I was fresh out of my master’s program at age 25.”

Even with the age difference, we clicked. We were in the same classes, so we would discuss our assignments and readings, and it seemed natural to discuss our ideas when it came time to write papers. However, we really did not start working together until we enrolled in Dawn Braithwaite’s “Close Relationships” seminar at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. We were both intrigued with Sandra Petronio’s communication privacy management theory. She talked about her study of “reluctant confidants” in impersonal relationships (e.g., flight attendants and bartenders). We both thought, “Are there ever ‘reluctant confidants’ in close friendships?” Our first collaborative study on “Reluctant Confidants in Close Friendships” resulted. We presented versions at two conferences, and the final version is finally in publication.

Looking back, we learned the benefit of starting small. Not everyone works well together, and it is helpful to test the waters on a smaller project. We learned we had different working/writing styles. One of us tends to think about things forever and the other wants to just jump in and do it, but we complimented each other. Although we did not plan a long-term writing relationship, we discovered the potential for doing so. We began our writing relationship by starting small, which enabled us to discover our compatibility without too much investment.

Karla: “And then there was my dissertation, which I would have NEVER finished without you.”

Chad: “Well and you certainly helped me a ton on mine. My analysis was definitely much richer because of your input.”

Chad finished his dissertation in 2003, and Karla was a part of the entire process. As he started analyzing data, he presented initial results to our advisor, Dawn Braithwaite, and to Karla. As he wrote up results and reformulated themes, Karla served as a sounding board and editor. When Karla did her dissertation three years later, Chad reciprocated the sounding board role and read (and re-read) chapters.

While the “payback” was a few years down the road, we discovered the benefits of a reciprocal writing relationship when it came to data analysis and

editing. Since then, we have read and provided comments on manuscripts the other has submitted. In doing so, we have another layer of feedback prior to formal reviews, which has made us more successful individually.

Karla: "Right after my dissertation was done and I was pretty sick of it, I remember you emailing me about a special issue of *Journal of Family Communication* on family caregiving."

Chad: "I thought it perfectly fit your work, but it required a reanalysis of your data."

We had not written together for several years because we had both been working on dissertations. We knew the call could potentially bridge Karla's interest in commuter wives and Chad's interest of social networks. We also asked Chad's colleague, Erika Kirby, to collaborate to bring in a work-life perspective. We re-analyzed Karla's data and wrote together for the first time in four years.

Reflecting on that experience, we learned to be creative in bridging seemingly discrepant interests. When Chad started at Creighton University, he never imagined that as a relational/family scholar he would work with Erika, an organizational/work-life scholar. Since then, however, the two have found unique ways to bridge interests. All three of us have inspired each other and forged working relationships where we can develop new interests.

As part of reflecting on our working relationship for this essay, we formulated three lessons learned: (a) start small, (b) develop a reciprocal writing/reading relationship, and (c) be creative in how interests are bridged. To these tips, we would also add clarifying expectations and holding each other accountable. Although we are friends, we are also not afraid to critique and push each other in ways that can be uncomfortable. There will be times when frustration with co-authors arises, and only through time and honesty can this role be balanced with that of friend/colleague. For us, this balance has been invaluable personally and professionally. We encourage others to take our lessons learned and forge professional collaborative writing relationships, which can provide a lifetime of professional/scholarly support.

## BEING AN OTHER IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

MARIA DEL GUADALUPE DAVIDSON, PH.D.

*University of Oklahoma*

I am an emerging black radical third-world feminist who embraces a counter-cultural ideal. I recognize that not fitting into a prescribed place can make some people uneasy. My presence in the academy is a continual reminder of a body that is marked by alterity. In this reflection, I offer suggestions for graduate students who also embody the Other.

Since I do not fit the mainstream prescription for either whiteness or womanhood, the most daunting narratives I face are those of whiteness and gender exclusion. If whiteness is as Ruth Frankenberg asserts "the unmarked marker" (1997, p. 15) and *if all the women are white and all the blacks are men*, then—as a brave, dark complexioned black woman with dread-locks; a penchant for ripped jeans and t-shirts that read "Bad Religion"; a Master's degree in a discipline

other than communication; holding intellectual opinions as a result of diverse ideas and life-experiences—I stand out like a beacon.

While graduate school is empowering because one fulfills a dream of earning a doctorate, on the other hand, the experience may be disempowering because of an overwhelming sense of perceived alienation. Graduate students who belong to marginalized groups must recognize that their standpoint is not always understood and/or valued by members of mainstream groups. In her book *Yearnings: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, hooks argues that some radicals *choose* marginalization and see it as a position of strength (1990, p. 19). The important thing for each person, I believe, is to try to make a right call for one's situation. Each person needs to find ways to care for oneself throughout one's graduate career with the help of a support network. Here a few things to keep in mind in walking a road that honors one's life experiences and standpoint.

First, stay connected to the academic department even if every fiber in one's body is advocating disconnection. Departments are in a constant state of fluctuation. New students and faculty are coming in all the time, and this can provide an opportunity to build a support network. In choosing to disconnect, opportunities such as working with dynamic new scholars or meeting like-minded graduate students who enter the program are missed. Find at least one professor in your department whose work is of interest and who might be sympathetic to research topics of personal interest. In choosing a graduate program, consider that there should be at least one person in the department with whom there is an intellectual connection. This person may later act as a dissertation director or be a valuable reference.

Second, especially if one's interests are not mainstream and one's politics differ from members of one's department, find scholars outside of the department who can serve as a mentor. They can provide support and offer courses that can greatly impact one's academic development. Beyond this emotional and intellectual support, scholars in related disciplines can also provide the practical support of writing letters of recommendation, working as outside dissertation readers, and potentially offer publishing opportunities.

Third, on a more personal level, I would encourage students who are identified or self-identify as an Other due to their race, class, gender, sexual orientation, or political standpoint to *trust your gut*. Philosophically, we understand that one of the positions occupied by the marginalized Other is that of madness; it is this false positionality which works to put the experience of the marginalized Other under erasure. When we speak of that "crazy black woman" or see her depicted in film or television, we reduce her to a "type," an "act," and a being *sans* rationality whose voice and presence can be easily dismissed. There is, for many of us who aspire to the halls of academe, a longing to get away from this characterization. What remains unsaid is the reason the marginalized Other is mad—not "crazy mad" but "angry mad." Since legitimate anger is so often confused with psychological instability, many of us choose to remain silent. Even more harmful, we choose to think ourselves "crazy mad" instead of "angry mad." I thought that it was just me—that I was too sensitive, that I was insane for believing that inequality exists in the tower—but I now know this to be incorrect. For students who do not fit the norm, remember that there could always be



several causes for one's madness. And that madness can be a wellspring of intellectual energy.

Several competing narratives at play can contribute to "madness" during a graduate program. For those who occupy the space of the marginalized other, recognize that the only way to work to change the system is from within the system. To do so, one must understand the competing narratives and find ways to express madness without becoming crazy.

## **BECOMING YOUR OWN ADVOCATE**

AMANDA J. PORTER, M.A.

*University of Colorado at Boulder*

Transitioning into the world of graduate study is a time of uncertainty and change. However, facing the challenges of graduate school can be an extremely fulfilling endeavor. As a full-time Master's student, I came to realize that regardless of the support networks available in my academic institution, I needed to learn to become my own greatest advocate. I developed this understanding from continually being asked to accomplish more than I ever thought I was capable of achieving. Though there are a multitude of perspectives from which to perceive success, my experiences have led me to believe that becoming your own greatest advocate is essential to successful growth in an academic career. Advocating for yourself simply means taking charge of the graduate experience and creating opportunities that enable you to reach your goals. In the following paragraphs, I offer a few key points on how students can start becoming an advocate of their graduate experience.

The advocacy process begins with the recognition that graduate students have a unique position within the academy that is tremendously enabling. Put simply, graduate students at all levels should recognize the immense resources that are uniquely available to them. I have found that students have more opportunities and credibility in the academy and community than even some professors and seasoned professionals. Students can use this unique position to begin seeking out interpersonal and intellectual resources. These resources come in many forms, though the most precious are often non-monetary. Once students recognize their unique positioning as members of the academy and community, becoming an advocate is simple.

I advise students to work on developing their social network at multiple levels. Quite often, this involves simply starting a conversation with faculty, peers, and professionals that are involved in interesting projects and research. Making an effort to know faculty members beyond one's advisor and department is one way to begin opening doors. Another great strategy is to develop relationships with graduate students at all levels of progress. Learning from the experiences of my peers and taking note of their choices has aided me tremendously in reflecting upon my own choices as a graduate student. I have found that people are more than willing to give their time for these conversations if asked to do so.

As a Master's student I was also able to advocate for myself by thinking beyond seminars; students' hard work and effort in classes should be geared



toward their long-term goals. In its broadest sense, this means that students need to learn to connect the seminar experience with one's professional interests, whether in the classroom or business community. In my experience, this involved producing papers in seminars that could be submitted for presentation at a professional conference. Conferences are one of the most important arenas for starting conversations with people who have similar interests and receiving feedback on scholarship. Conferences are an important site for self-advocacy because of the immense interpersonal and intellectual resources available in that venue.

Seminar work can also be extended beyond the classroom and into the community. This can range from maintaining a professional connection with research participants to being an active member of the community in which one lives and works. Ethically, researchers have a responsibility to give back to those who help students. Being ethically responsible and giving back can take place in a number of ways. First, doing research in a thoughtful way takes into consideration the impact that the research has in the lives of participants. Giving back can also extend to providing a professional report of research findings to participants. Finally, getting involved in the community through volunteering or participation in professional community organizations is also an excellent way to give back. Each of these is a productive way to extend work beyond the classroom. In this sense, an important part of becoming your own advocate in graduate school involves recognizing not only what resources are available, but also how you can become an important resource for others.

Advocating for yourself as a graduate student can enrich your educational experience. Put aside any doubts and work to become an available and active member of your academic institution and community. Work on developing social networks and think beyond seminars. As students make themselves available to others, the benefits of their unique position as graduate students will become clear. Graduate school is a process of creating meaning in our lives through relationships with others; it is an incredible experience that I encourage others to take on with a sense of pride.

## **RETURNING TO EARN AN ADVANCED DEGREE**

KARIN D. TIDGEWELL, M.A.

*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

By some people's definition, I returned to earn my M.A. as a "non-traditional" student. I worked in politics and lobbying after earning my B.A. degree but always had the desire to return to school someday to earn an advanced degree. However, that day would not arrive for me for several years.

I had been separated from my status as a student for a mere six years when applying for and beginning my M.A. program, but it might as well have been 60 years for all of the concerns that monopolized my thoughts—concerns I never remembered having as an undergraduate student. I questioned my ability to keep up with the workload, whether I remembered *anything* from my undergraduate degree, and even my abilities with writing and test-taking. I envisioned myself as the oldest in my classes and hopelessly out of touch with my campus

community. I also needed to swallow my pride. I had achieved professional success since earning my B.A., and now I was, by choice, effectively returning to the status of the “low-person on the totem pole.” In short, I felt old and out-of-place. Fortunately, I discovered rapidly that my concerns were unfounded, and I would like to reassure and share suggestions with other students who may feel similarly as I did when returning to earn an advanced degree.

Upon arriving on campus for my first M.A. course, I remember looking around the classroom and approximating the age of my new classmates. Imagine my surprise when I learned that I was not the only individual returning to the classroom after a hiatus, I was not the oldest in the class, and I was not as out-of-place as I initially expected to be among those who had just finished their undergraduate degrees. My classmates and I came from all walks of life and were pursuing our degrees for a wide variety of reasons. However, regardless of our individual goals or differences, I quickly learned that every single one of us, including me, brought something special to our cohort.

In fact, my age and time away from academe between degrees did not hinder my education; instead, my life experiences helped me in ways I could not have foreseen previously. Although my study habits needed a bit of revising to serve my new reality, the time-management skills I had honed in the workforce aided that endeavor. Respecting the importance of deadlines (and being completely unwilling to ask to extend or miss them) kept me on track all the way through defending my thesis.

Teaching at the college-level was a whole new adventure for me, but I also benefited in that context from my “life between degrees.” Although I had never taught before, I found striking similarities between my new teaching responsibilities and the professional briefings I had conducted in the past. Relating to my undergraduate students was not as challenging as I initially feared. The memories of my own undergraduate days came flooding back immediately, and I discovered I easily could find examples from my personal and professional experiences over the years to bring course concepts to life.

Simply put, I believe the old adage of turning perceived weaknesses into strengths applies amply to any student who finds himself or herself in a situation similar to mine. Whether a person has been away from the classroom for one year or for 30 years, each of us has lived a full life during that time. Whether one’s break from formal education was forced or by choice, the result of following a particular career path, military service, or care-giving to family members, being away from a formal educational setting does not mean that a person stops learning lessons and acquiring life experiences. Any of these can be transformed into an asset for higher education. The world truly is its own classroom, and we have been enrolled the entire time. Each of us has something to teach classmates and students; we need simply to do so.

Undoubtedly, a person’s life experiences influence the way he or she sees the world, and these life experiences serve to shape that individual’s interests and perspectives on any number of issues. Draw upon these interests when writing papers, completing coursework, and conducting research. Give these interests a voice during class discussions and lectures. One of the many joys of studying communication, regardless of the topic pursued, is that communication is at the

heart of every other discipline and the human experience. There is nothing that does not have communication as a touchstone.

Looking back, I would not have wished that my education unfold according to any other timeline. My M.A. degree represents far more to me than pages read and papers written. In earning my degree, I overcame fears I did not even know I possessed, and it serves as a reminder to me that no person is ever too old, too far-removed, too *anything* to achieve one's goals.

## **FROM BUSINESS TO ACADEME: BALANCING LESSONS FROM BOTH WORLDS**

MARTHA J. FAY, PH.D.

*University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*

After 25 years as a full-time business communication professional, I returned to the campus setting to pursue my Ph.D. at The Ohio State University. I felt confident in my applied capabilities and only a little trepidation related to rusty study skills. A product of the puritan work ethic and rote learning tradition, I began my studies with the single-minded focus and dogged determination that served me well in my career.

I found myself wholly unprepared for the collapse of some of my existing mental models (Senge, 1990), especially those related to efficiency. In the business world, I had become adept at making difficult decisions and delivering them with aplomb—not at discussing the philosophic nature of leadership. This difference in perspective created an uncomfortable uncertainty until I learned to balance the value of both my learned expertise and the new ideas to which I would be exposed. Berger and Calabrese (1975) assisted in this balancing task by introducing me to the generative potential of uncertainty.

Students returning to formal education after a long hiatus can reduce uncertainty by developing a greater understanding of the academic environment. First, find out what new technology or software you will need to use and learn it before you begin classes. Then, learn the university and department infrastructure so that you can concentrate on your work, rather than how you are managing the process. Experiencing uncertainty has important educational implications; managing equivocality opens up new possibilities while continually challenging one's balance.

Balance in general was not easy for me in graduate school. I had been successful in the business sector because I gave myself over completely to each new challenge. Continuing this behavioral pattern came at a cost which continued to mount throughout graduate school. For example, anxious and caffeinated, I worked day and night on the first school-related paper I would prepare using a computer versus a typewriter. In my zeal to prove myself a capable student, I would ask my stepdaughter not to talk to me while I worked, only later realizing the irony: the topic was stepfamily communication. My own state of mind would have fared better had I chosen a few key ideas that were important to grasp because I would use them, not because I had to prove something to other students and faculty members.

Returning as an older student included a bit of teen-like angst without the acne. A Chinese student I had befriended was openly puzzled by my desire to pursue my degree. He told me “Older people in our country stay home at rest, and enjoy the reverence their experiences and age have earned them; my family does not understand why someone your age would do this. Here, tea. From them. For you.” Others may seek to alleviate anxiety over your decision to return to school with “helpful” comments like: “Do you *ever* stop to think before you jump into something new?”

Reflecting on the overall experience of graduate school suggests some complex human struggles that may be easier if they are expected. First, be prepared for the reductive aspect of higher education. The process is much smoother when we accept that what we think we know has already changed. Keep in mind that confronting one’s perceptual biases is both difficult and humbling, and that it can be done without annihilating one’s confidence and self-worth. Remain unwavering in your belief in yourself: discern the difference between constructive and destructive criticism, and improve through the former.

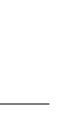
Second, the sensation of having the bottom drop out when you question what you know may be more palatable when this perception is framed as a structural hole. Burt (1992) recognized that structural holes appear in the juxtaposition of social worlds, a concept finely represented in each cohort (including faculty and staff). As Lave and Wenger (1991) argued, learning happens as individual identities are altered through participation in communities of practice. This perspective suggests that we have valuable ideas from individual social worlds that we share, which are modified and created anew by each others’ ideas. Like rebuilding Rome after its painful burning, the knowledge is gained in joint activity, not in acquisition. The differences among ages and cultures and genders in our cohort were virtually erased in the light of mutual discovery and endurance.

The idea that learning takes place most often in the gaps, the uncertainties, and the questions, rather than in the absolutes, the facts, and the answers, has enriched my work. Retrospective sensemaking (Weick, 1995) will continuously change what I think I have learned, and there is so much more to understand as I daily balance uncertainty. As Robbins (1994) reminds us, we are a long way from fully evolved, being rather “half asleep in frog pajamas.”

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- Weick, K. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.



# **APPENDIX**

## **Annotated Bibliography: Graduate Education in Communication**

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The discipline of communication has grown and changed significantly since it was first recognized as a field of study in 1966 by the Department of Education (Neuendorf, Skalski, Atkin, Kogler-Hill, & Perloff, 2007). It has stretched to include areas such as advertising, journalism, public relations, rhetoric, speech, telecommunications, and most recently, communication technologies. Chapter 1 in this handbook provides an excellent description of how the discipline has changed over the years and how it presently is described by the Department of Education in its *Classification of Instructional Programs, 2000*.

The National Communication Association (NCA) sponsored this graduate handbook because the number of resources to help graduate students succeed in communication programs is somewhat limited. Much of the research has centered on graduate programs generally and is directed to university administrators and graduate program faculty to improve the student experience.

Some resources on surviving graduate school are at a student's fingertips, while others are within arm's reach: At the department or college level, it is safe to say that all graduate programs have a handbook or set of guidelines that document the policies and procedures of the program. These guidelines communicate the requirements to achieve the degree. These handbooks often are found on the program's website or are handed to students at their orientation before the start of classes. At the university level, graduate schools have faculty or staff advisors, resources, and references to help students overcome hurdles. Students have only to ask for assistance, and graduate school staff members are happy to accommodate. Off-campus help includes the resources of networks of graduate schools such as the national Council of Graduate Schools, and other



organizations represented in the list below. These groups house research, articles, advice and suggestions on subjects that often are less tangible, such as questions to ask when choosing an advisor and suggestions for coping with stress. Furthermore, communication organizations such as the National Communication Association (NCA), the International Communication Association (ICA), and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) have hubs for conversations on graduate education.

The following bibliography of studies and relevant websites is the result of an extensive search for resources focusing on graduate student success in communication programs. The references were limited to mostly the 21st century, as the needs of society and the nature of programs have changed substantially. Indexes of individual communication journals, and databases that include communication journals were scoured using keywords such as “communication,” “doctoral,” “Ph.D.,” “Master’s,” “graduate,” “education,” “program,” “success,” “achieve” and “survival” in creative combinations. The search also included dissertations, electronic library searches, and physically perusing library shelves for relevant books. In addition, resources on the Internet generally and in online bookstores specifically were examined for useful references. Many are from communication research and others center on considerations common to all graduate students and programs. Graduate students in communication programs can superimpose their situations onto the scenarios within these general studies. Given the diversity of topics covered in this bibliography, we did not attempt to overlay an artificial categorization system on the annotations. Rather, they are now presented in alphabetical order.

### **ANNOTATIONS OF STUDIES AND RELEVANT WEBSITES**

Aguinis, H., Nesler, N., Quigley, B., Lee, S.J., & Tedeschi, J. (1996). Power bases of faculty supervisors and educational outcomes for graduate students. *Journal of Higher Education*, 67(3), 267–297.

Authors studied the dyadic power relationship between the graduate student and supervising faculty. Graduate students regard their relationship with faculty as the benchmark of the quality of their graduate education, affecting their learning and motivation. The type of power relationship is a critical determinant of graduate student success. Authors identify and describe five situational power relationships as predictors of student success.

Barnes, B. (2003). Accountability . . . but first preparation. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 58(3), 233–238.

This essay argues that teaching experience with basic skills courses will prepare communication’s graduate students for successful careers. The author notes the valuable preparation that independent teaching experiences have, in addition to the teaching assistantship, in the development of future professors. Considerations are given to Syracuse University’s communication’s model, “Future Professoriate Program,” that creates a culture for teaching excellence by involving professors and graduate students.

Christ, W. (2003). We cannot not teach. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 58(3), 222–227.

The researcher discusses the significance of assessments for graduate communication student learning and the central role that accountability holds in the scholarship of learning. This essay concludes that graduate students can be better prepared for successful careers as teachers, when accountability concepts are integrated into teaching and learning philosophy statements, pedagogical colloquiums, and course and teaching portfolios.

Council of Graduate Schools. (n.d.) Council of graduate schools: Advocacy, research, and innovation. Retrieved from Council of Graduate Schools website: <http://www.cgsnet.org/>

CGS is an organization of institutions of higher education engaged in graduate education, research scholarship, and the preparation of students for advanced degrees. CGS is the only national association dedicated to the interests of graduate education and whose mission it is to improve and advance graduate education. The website includes publications and policy statements for administrators, but also resources for students. The Preparing Future Faculty program is now housed at CGS with information available on the CGS website.

Denecke, D., & Slimowitz, J. (2004). *Ph.D. completion and attrition: Policy, numbers, leadership, and next steps*. Washington, D.C.: Council of Graduate Schools.

This study surveys the literature across disciplines for attrition and completion rates in doctoral programs (33% to 76% completion rates). The researchers address possible reasons for attrition and how to develop a normative consensus for completion through the selection process, mentoring, financial support, program environment, research mode, curriculum process and procedures.

*Diversity & the PhD: A review of efforts to broaden race & ethnicity in U.S. doctoral education*. (2005). Princeton, NJ: The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.

Recent court challenges have diminished institutional supportive resources that once were specifically for students of diverse ethnicity. As a result, universities and programs must be creative in presenting and offering such resources to diverse students. Many continue their fellowships for minority students, but couch their language to be more inclusive. As such programs are labeled euphemistically, fewer minority students are aware of opportunities directed to them. Thirteen university programs and directors were examined and authors offer recommendations to all institutions offering graduate programs. Students of diverse ethnicity might use this report to find the university and program resources and fellowships that could benefit them.

Dunwoody, S. (2003). Teaching as research. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 58(3), 218–222.

A conceptual divide exists between researching and teaching that unnecessarily affects graduate student and faculty choices. The author suggests that common characteristics can be found through the mass communications discipline. Teaching and research questions often investigate how people

understand, remember, and integrate information in their lives. Four strategies for “teaching as research” are drawn from an education outreach project. Gaffney, N. (Ed.). (1994). *Selected legal issues relating to due process and liability in higher education*. Washington, D.C.: Council of Graduate Schools.

This booklet outlines the legal implications involved in the resolution of conflicts affecting students, faculty, academic programs, and research. Of particular interest are due process and liability concerns related to academic performance (i.e., cheating, plagiarism), student misconduct, termination or discipline of employees, research and revocation of degrees, sexual harassment, and privacy of student records. Also included is a checklist to minimize academic legal problems.

Golde, C., & Dore, T. (2001). *At cross purposes: What the experiences of doctoral students reveal about doctoral education*. Philadelphia, PA: The Pew Charitable Trusts. Retrieved from <http://www.phd-survey.org>

Doctoral students share their opinions about their education. More than 4,100 students responded to the survey, which found, among other things, that: (1) students need more training for the jobs they want and to be better prepared for the jobs they take, and (2) many students do not understand what graduate study entails, how the process works, nor how to steer their way through it. The authors offer recommendations to help students achieve success in their program.

Graduate Resources. (n.d.). Graduate resources: Serving the needs of graduate and professional students. Retrieved from Graduate Resources website: <http://www.gradresources.org/>

The objective of this non-profit website is to help graduate students, individually and as a group, cope with the pressures of graduate school. A crisis hotline, discussion groups, and online seminars also are available. Of special interest would be the following areas: (1) articles addressing grad student issues such as time management, emotional fatigue, and building peer support (<http://www.gradresources.org/menus/articles.shtml>); (2) helpful tip of the month, (<http://www.gradresources.org/menus/site.shtml>); and (3) helpful site of the month (<http://www.gradresources.org/menus/site.shtml>).

The Graduate School. (2004). *Graduate handbook template*. Retrieved from Michigan State University website: <http://grad.msu.edu/staff/handbook.pdf>

All entering communication students should be given a handbook to serve as a guide throughout their program, helping them to unambiguously understand the university's, the department's, the program's, and their own responsibilities. This template of a graduate program handbook denotes the processes and procedures students should expect during the course of their program, in the absence of a handbook.

Hollihan, T. A. (2004). NCA doctoral reputational study, 2004. Retrieved from National Communication Association website: <http://www.natcom.org/nca/template2.asp?bid=415>

The NCA Doctoral Reputational Study invited the participation of all programs that offer the Ph.D. in communication. The study evaluated programs and organized them by rankings in the following specialty areas: communication and technology, critical-cultural communication, health

communication, intercultural-international communication, interpersonal-small group communication, mass communication, organizational communication, political communication, and rhetorical communication.

Inside Higher Ed. (2008). Inside higher ed: Higher education's source for news, and views and jobs. Retrieved from Inside Higher Ed website: <http://insidehighered.com/>

This is an online source for news, opinion, career advice and services for higher education. It contains breaking news and feature stories, daily commentary, areas for comment on articles, and practical career columns. Students can glean information about issues in higher education.

King, M. (2003). *On the right track: A manual for research mentors*. Washington, D.C.: Council of Graduate Schools.

Graduate students can use this reference to understand what to look for in a mentor. Mentoring is an important component of a graduate program and makes a significant difference to the graduate student's experience and success. This short text examines mentoring at each stage of graduate study, from recruiting and admissions to career advising, and discusses the issues and problems involved in the ethics of graduate research supervision. Mentoring is broadly defined at times to mean the graduate program policies and procedures for students and faculty.

National Communication Association. (n.d.) The NCA career center. Retrieved from National Communication Association website [http://www.jobtarget.com/home/index.cfm?site\\_id=560](http://www.jobtarget.com/home/index.cfm?site_id=560)

As stated in its website, "NCA is a scholarly society and as such works to enhance the research, teaching, and service produced by its members on topics of both intellectual and social significance. Staffers at the NCA National Office follow trends in national research, teaching, and service priorities."

Nettles, M. T., & Millett, C.M. (2006). *Three magic letters: Getting to Ph.D.* Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

The researchers offer a portrait of the graduate school experience and identify key issues affecting the success and failure of graduate students. They surveyed more than 9,000 students from the top 21 doctorate-granting institutions in the United States. Their findings shed light on multiple factors critical to student progress in the graduate degree, particularly adequate institutional funding and engaged and accessible faculty mentors.

Neuendorf, K. A., Skalski, P. D., Atkin, D J., Kogler-Hill, S. E., & Perloff, R. M. (2007). The view from the ivory tower: Evaluating doctoral programs in communication. *Communication Reports*, 20(1), 24–41.

Communication is among the fastest growing disciplines and graduates the eighth largest number of bachelor degrees in the United States. The authors' focus was to rank communication doctoral programs, isolate factors that contribute to a "quality" program, and look at the adequacy of communications sub-areas. Results from online surveys to communication faculty nationwide show that quality features included perceptions of university libraries, computer facilities, student attendance at conferences, the national reputation of the faculty, and the mentoring of students to pursue different viewpoints of communication research.

*Re-envisioning the Ph.D.* (2003). Retrieved from Center for Instructional Development and Research, University of Washington website: <http://www.grad.washington.edu/envision/index.html>

This multi-year project responds to the question, "How can we re-envision the Ph.D. to meet the needs of the society of the 21st century?" Results appeared in many publications and are compiled in a website. The website holds commentary, testimonials, articles, and references for administration, faculty, and graduate students. The following URLs would be of particular interest to graduate students: (1) [http://www.grad.washington.edu/envision/project\\_resources/biblio\\_alpha.html](http://www.grad.washington.edu/envision/project_resources/biblio_alpha.html) (this is a treasure trove of more than 700 citations of recent studies and projects on graduate education; many are linked online to their complete text); and (2) [http://www.grad.washington.edu/envision/phd/obtaining\\_phd/advisor.html](http://www.grad.washington.edu/envision/phd/obtaining_phd/advisor.html) (a subdivision of the website, these resources offer general help on obtaining a Ph.D. and focus in on the importance of choosing the right advisor and mentor).

*Research student and supervisor: An approach to good supervisory practice.* (1990). Washington, D.C.: Council of Graduate Schools.

This report can be regarded as a handbook for steering a dissertation to successful completion. It is a good resource for departments to give to new faculty and is helpful for students in the dissertation phase to understand expectations. The report outlines challenges and offers a checklist of good supervisory practices. Also included are questions directed to students in the dissertation stage.

*Report of the task force on the status and future of doctoral education in journalism and mass communication.* (2006). Columbia, SC: Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Retrieved from AEJMC website: <http://www.aejmc.org/pubs/phd/finalreport.pdf>

Students might be interested in this task force report that describes and summarizes the nation's 35 university doctoral programs in mass communication. Sections include the schools and their approaches to graduate education, faculty and student demographics, admissions requirements, program procedures and expectations. Trends in programs, student interests, and job markets are also portrayed.

Vangelisti, A., Daly, J., & Friedrich, G. (Eds.). (1999). *Teaching communication: Theory, research, and methods.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Editors prepare graduate teaching assistants and new professors for successful careers with 38 comprehensive chapters on pedagogy by leaders of diverse disciplines. An overview explains the communication profession's educational goals and culture, followed by rigorous essays with strategies for 12 specific courses, evaluations, lectures, unique assignments, and large and small classes. A section on classroom management considers the social dynamics of teaching and learning.

Zhao, C.M., Gold, C., & McCormick, A. (2005). *More than a signature: How advisor choice and advisor behavior affect doctoral student satisfaction.* Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Montreal, Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.phd-survey.org/aera05.pdf>

How students choose their advisors affects their satisfaction with the advising they receive. These authors explore the link between graduate students'

advisor selection strategies and satisfaction with advising behaviors from a survey of students from 11 disciplines in 27 universities. Graduate students responded about their relationship with advisors and their general satisfaction with the advising they received. Whereas some students were happy, others felt they were exploited for their advisor's research purposes, and females expressed less satisfaction than males with their advisors. The general literature points to what students want and need in advisors to achieve success in their program.

