

FORENSIC FORUM

FEBRUARY 4, 2008

10 TIPS ON THRIVING IN GRAD SCHOOL BY PROF. MAUREEN O'CONNOR

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When your *Forensic Forum* editor-in-chief asked me to write an article for the newsletter, I readily agreed. The *Forensic Forum* is a testament to the energy, unity, and creative spirit of the absolute best feature of our doctoral program – our students. Then, I learned that the theme for the column was to be “advice to our students,” and I panicked. Words of wisdom on demand – now, that’s a tall order. But, having just had the privilege of co-teaching the entire first year class in Experimental Psychology & Law with Prof. Groscup, I thought I could try to focus my advice to the early career graduate students and hope that all will find it useful. In that spirit, here is a somewhat random (though ordered!), born-of-hard-knocks set of tips for HOW to approach your work (not necessarily tips for ultimate personal and professional success – because those will only come if you take time to build a framework for the work you are here to do – next column?).

So, here are “Ten tips for successful graduate study in Psychology at John Jay.”

Painstakingly Prioritize. As I once remarked to Professor Kassin as we walked out of an unexpected, unbelievable 45-minute audience

with former Attorney General Janet Reno – “Just another day at John Jay!” One of the truly remarkable features of your time at John Jay will be the number of not-to-be-missed, once-in-a-lifetime opportunities that will come your way. Because of the incredible international reputation and energy of your faculty, our NYC location, and John Jay’s place in the grand scheme of the public justice sphere, no shortage of opportunities will arise if you are open to them (see below).

Strive for your best work. While I do not completely disagree with the advice many of us give that your scholarly and professional work is what will ultimately bring you the best post-graduation experiences, all of the work that you do here (coursework included) helps to form your professional identity. If you are in the habit of doing your best work on a consistent basis within reasonable time and resource constraints, your analytical and creative skills will flourish.

You are not alone! My brother-in-law (sociologist, of course) described my first-year law school experience as “ritual

scarification.” Those before me went through it, and, therefore, so must I. Graduate school has the same ethos – BUT, what that means is that we DID all go through it. Reach out to faculty and advanced graduate students who have not only been through it but made it through successfully. Join the AP-LS student section and other professional organizations to realize – students all over the country are feeling the same pressures, facing the same deadlines, worrying about the same internship applications, needing more time from their advisors, wanting clearer guidelines, trying to write the perfect dissertation question, etc. Find the support you need!

Critique and be open to criticism. One of the major differences between doctoral study and earlier academic work is that YOU have now become the ultimate arbiter of the work you are doing and the field you are joining. Enact it critically – whether it is reading the literature, listening to a talk, working in a lab, writing your dissertation proposal. Yes, ultimately, committees will move you along and approve your progress and editors and grant reviewers will

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decide the fate of a particular piece of work, but you are no longer writing FOR them, but for yourself and for the field. So – be your strongest critic. At the same time, seek critique from others. Receiving an “A” or a “Great job” on something is not that useful to you – how could this piece of work be improved?; how could my thinking on this evolve?; what methodological question am I missing?; do I need to master a new data analytic technique? Find growth in critique!

Help each other. Need I say more?

Organize. Create a database for yourself – never have to re-find something you already found. Figure out how much time each week you need to devote to each activity and stick to those limits as much

as possible. WRITE every day – organize your day to achieve that goal. Keep careful track of all of the academic work you are doing – the courses you are teaching, the students you are advising, practice experiences, recommendation letters you have written, labs you work in, etc. Even though it all seems so clear now, these experiences will begin to blend and fade and you do not want to be in a position of re-constructing history that could have been contemporaneously recorded.

Laugh. What I have learned over the course of parenting a toddler to teenager, caretaking parents, and chairing an incredibly dynamic and evolving Department is unless someone’s health or well-being are seriously

threatened, it just simply can’t be as bad as it seems. Am I entitled to a dose of goofy? – be kind to yourself and others; enjoy this time; climb those walls down the street; take care of each other – laugh together!

Open yourself to opportunity (see P above for the challenge presented here). I once took an opportunity that happened by chance (I was in the elevator with Shari Diamond alone) to complain (politely of course) that there were simply too few opportunities for students to feel a part of AP-LS (conference was daunting, difficult to meet other students, blah blah blah). Two months later, I received a letter congratulating me on being named the first Chair of a Student Section of AP-LS. The challenge is two-fold,

saying YES to those opportunities that will support and enhance the work you are doing and NO to those that will be fascinating and rewarding, but ultimately will NOT lead you toward building your own academic and professional record and graduation.

Graduation is the goal! The best advice I ever received as a graduate student was to “ruthlessly exclude” anything that was not essential to my dissertation once I was in dissertation mode. People are ABD (all but dissertation) because they do NOT treat graduation as another assignment that must be completed!!!

You can do it – Persist!

STUDENT COLUMN: CONFERENCE SURVIVAL TIPS

By Sarah Greathouse & Virginia Barber-Rioja

The 2008 American Psychology-Law Society conference will be held in Jacksonville, Florida this March. AP-LS is an extremely student friendly organization, and attending this conference is an excellent opportunity to learn about the most recent research in the field, meet and speak with top experts, and begin to establish professional relationships with forensic psychologists around the country.

Whether you are presenting a paper/poster or just attending the conference, here are a few tips that may enhance your experience.

Tips for Presenting a Paper or Poster

◆ When preparing your power point slides, avoid overloading the slides with information. Also try to present the results of your research in graph form. Graphs create an overall picture of the data that is easier for people to process in

a short amount of time.

◆ When presenting a paper, remember not to spend too much of the allotted time on the introduction and methodology (1-2 minutes). Individuals attending the session are most likely experts in the area and are familiar with the current body of knowledge in the field. The audience is most interested in the results of your research.

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“One of the truly remarkable features of your time at John Jay will be the number of not-to-be-missed, once-in-a-lifetime opportunities that will come your way.”
-Prof. Maureen O’Connor

◆ Time yourself when you practice the presentation. Be sure that you can complete the presentation in the time you have been allotted.

◆ Students and faculty in our program typically arrange a practice session a week or so before the conference. It is a good idea to practice your presentation here. Students and faculty can provide you with feedback, and you will be able to practice speaking in front of a group of people.

◆ If you are presenting a poster, people at the session will often ask for copies of your poster. You may want to bring paper copies of the poster to hand out. Alternatively, you may want to bring a pad of paper for people to write down their email addresses and you can send them an electronic copy later. Remember to always stand by your poster during the

poster session. Many of the top experts in the field consider poster sessions an opportune time to speak with students about their research.

General conference attendance tips

◆ For your paper or poster presentation, it is important to dress in your best business attire. However, even if you are not presenting or before or after your presentation you should dressed at least business casual (avoid wearing jeans). You will be meeting important people in the field and you want to look professional at all times during the conference.

◆ It is very important to attend all possible presentations. Look at the program ahead of time and check all the different presentations and workshops. Organize your days trying not to miss any full sessions.

◆ It is always a good idea to attend some presentations in areas that are unfamiliar to you. It is not only a good learning experience but it might also open new areas of interest for your career.

◆ If you have questions for a presenter, do not hesitate to ask. I know that sometimes we feel like our questions are silly or unimportant. However, if the presentation is within your area of research or interest, your questions will always be relevant and will make you seem interested and engaged.

AP-LS is a great place for networking, not only during sessions but also during breakfast, lunch, dinner, or any time of the day. Remember that many of the presenters stay in the hotel and you will run into them at all times. Do not hesitate to approach them. They are generally very excited to know that you are interested in their research and will be happy to talk to you. This is also a great time to tell them about your own research and ask for advice.

Sarah (experimental) & Virginia (clinical) are in their fourth year.



PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

◆ A general session will be scheduled some time in early February

◆ The FPDSC will be working with the administration on a recycling (and other environmental) initiative this coming semester. We would like student support by way of announcements made in classrooms, etc.

◆ The curriculum committee is currently drafting procedures for dissertation requirements

◆ Several issues were raised by

students at an informal meeting with Dr. Patricia Zapf at the end of the Fall semester. The faculty has openly received feedback from this meeting and is diligently working to address these issues. We encourage students to continue to raise issues directly with members of the FPDSC or at General Sessions

◆ Interview day is scheduled for Friday, Feb. 15. Student involvement will be requested; more details to follow from Steve and Michele

◆ A new student directory will be disseminated on January 29th (during 1st week of classes!)

◆ The FPDSC is planning a brown-bag lunch with Dr. Lou Schlesinger to discuss the business of forensic psychology (i.e., setting up a practice, getting clients, billing, etc.); date is TBA

◆ Comprehensives scheduled for January 25th! Good luck to those writing it!

Comprehensive
Exam offering:
January 25 2008

Interview Day:
February 15
2008



BIRTHDAY WATCH

FEBRUARY

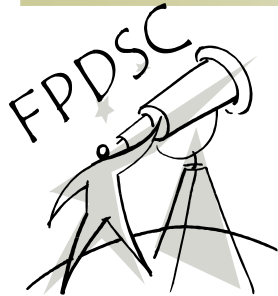
13 - Jason M.
15 - Kathryn B.
22 - Jaqueline A.

MARCH

2 - Min K.
8 - Tina Z.
11 - Liz A.
17 - Sam M.
29 - Jay T.

APRIL

3 - Kean M.
5 - Sarah K.
20 - Yvonne N.
24 - Virginia B.



**' WORKING WITH EACH OTHER ,
FOR EACH OTHER '**

Forensic Forum is a publication of the Forensic Psychology Doctoral Council (FPDSC) intended to provide the student body of the Forensic Psychology Doctoral Program with information relevant to the program and the field. The FPDSC was developed in 2004 and *Forensic Forum* followed in 2007.

Forensic Forum's mission is to provide the student body with the most updated and accurate information available to the FPDSC, while fostering a feeling of community and commitment to its members.

We are committed to the success of the Forensic Psychology Doctoral Program and its students.

CONFERENCE & GRANT PLANNER

Conference Calendar

Society for Personality & Social Psychology (SPSP)

February 7-9, 2008 Albuquerque, NM
www.spspsmeeting.org

American Psychology—Law Society (AP-LS)
March 5-9, 2008 Jacksonville, FL
www.ap-ls.org

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS)
March 11-15, 2008 Cincinnati, OH
Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza & Hyatt Regency Cincinnati
www.acjs.org

Society for Personality Assessment (SPA)
March 26-30, 2008 New Orleans, LA
Marriott New Orleans at the Convention Ctr
www.personality.org

APA-ABA National Conference: Reconceptualizing Child Custody
April 30-May 3, 2008 Chicago, IL
Chicago Marriott
APAABACHildCustodyConf@apa.org

Association for Psychological Science (APS)
May 22-25, 2008 Chicago, IL
Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Towers
Deadline: Opens October, 2007
www.psychologicalscience.org/convention/

Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI)
June 27-29, 2008 Chicago, IL
www.spssi.org

American Psychological Association (APA)
August 14 - 17, 2008 Boston, MA
www.apa.org

American Society of Trial Consultants (ASTC)
Oct 22-25, 2008 Atlanta, GA
Hyatt Regency Atlanta
www.astcweb.org

American Society of Criminology (ASC)
November 12-15, 2008 St. Louis, MI
St. Louis Adam's Mark
www.asc41.com

Grant Calendar

AP-LS/Division 41 Stipends for Graduate Research
www.ap-ls.org
Deadline: Sept 30 & Jan 31 (yearly)

Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) Grants-In-Aid
Max awards: Grad student: \$1000
Ph.D. Members: \$2000
Deadline: May 1 & Oct 1 (yearly)
www.spssi.org

NSF Law and Social Sciences Dissertation Grants
Deadline: August 15th, 2008
www.nsf.gov

The Graduate Center, CUNY
Various in-house awards available through The Graduate Center
http://web.gc.cuny.edu/orup/funding.html#For_Students

APA Student Awards
Various awards compiled by APAGS
www.apa.org/apags/members/schawrds.html

APA Dissertation Awards
Deadline: Sept 14, 2008
www.apa.org/science/dissinfo.html

