Survival Tips from Those Who Know
…Former Graduate Students Speak Out

About People…
- Get to know and work with the faculty.
- Talk to as many graduate students in your discipline as possible.
- Choose a committee chair whom you feel will be compatible with your personality. Even though you may like a professor’s area of research, it is important that you get along with him/her.
- Keep the lines of communication open among fellow colleagues and instructors. Network. Get involved in the graduate student organization within your department. The rewards in the network of friends and colleagues make things more enjoyable.
- Find a professor you can connect with who can serve as your advisor and mentor. Having a professor you feel comfortable with and free to ask questions is very helpful, especially on a thesis or everyday schooling.
- Ask questions of the professor and request an answer. Do not be intimidated by any professor.
- Befriend a graduate student who has completed at least two semesters and can provide advice.
- Make friends.
- Develop a good relationship with the graduate secretary.

About Perspective…
- Do not overload yourself. Take a reasonable course load that will enable you to enjoy the course material.
- Do not take on any other responsibilities if at all possible.
- Give the program everything you have if you expect anything to be worthwhile. What you get out of any program is exactly what you put into it.
- Be single-minded about your work.
- Stay focused. It is very easy to give up at times due to excessive demands at home, work, and school.
- Pursue the endeavor that is closest to your heart.
- Stay enthusiastic about your research and classes.
- Focus on the big picture goals so that you will not get disappointed with a bad professor or class.
- Be focused. Do not give up.
- You will go off on tangents. Pick them wisely.

About Research…
- Learn about topic specific journals and conferences available in your field.
- Know other resources for writing papers besides old library books—such as the Internet, Inter-Library Loads, and Nexus-Lexus.
- Do not become discouraged if delays or pitfalls occur in your master’s degree project, but continue to persevere. Be patient, for research has a separate timeline of its own that should not be rushed.
- Complete a modest literature search while doing background research on your topic. Complete a more intense literature search after you have collected all of your data and have identified trends.

- Be aware that the politics of working on research projects with professors can become very intense.

- Obtain thesis guidelines and understand what is required well in advance of the research and writing of your thesis.

- Pick a definite topic for the master’s project so that the research will all go towards that. It would definitely help with the project to have that as a particular focus.

- Access to an online service is invaluable. So much of research in your third year when you have a PC and an online provider conducted in your home. It will be a tremendous saving of your time.

- Know the importance of befriending professors so that it would be easier to select a committee for your thesis.

**Things to Do…**

- Go to the orientation meeting and follow the advice given.
- Make a study plan early and meet with the advisor. Plan out your schedule effectively. Do not count on advisors to do it for you.
- Plan to work in the study every day.
- Make copies.
- Get a job in your area of interest right away. The experience gained will be helpful in group discussions.
- Make sure to see the department advisor every semester.
- If your master’s program has an exam, get the reading list so you can begin assembling notes. This makes studying for the test easier.

**Life in General…**

- Get a laptop. This will be helpful for both group and individual projects.
- Understand that courses are not available each semester and that comprehensive exams are not given each semester.
- Do not overload on classes. The seminars are much more demanding than the undergraduate courses and take more time.
- Ask questions.
- If you have responsibilities such as a family or employment, you should not attempt to take more than two classes a semester. The volume of work is much greater per class at the graduate level.
- Ask questions in class. Do not be shy to ask the professor to clarify areas you do not understand, otherwise you will end up doing five times the work, and it will be wrong.
- Do not procrastinate.
- Get familiar with the vast array of programs and services available to students here; everything from the cultural and recreational programs to the services available through the library and computer center.
- Become more organized.
• Ask questions and inform yourself. Do not depend on the school, your department, or advisors to automatically inform you of degree requirements and deadlines.
• If you are planning to change careers or seeking a new job in the same field, start looking 9 months in advance. The first three months will provide you with who is hiring and what resources to use. The best resource is the internet; Jobtrak is the best site for local positions. Finally, if you are changing career try and get an internship, if possible, as soon as you start the program. Jobtrak is again a great resource for this, and the internship is what you need to successfully move into our new field.

*Graduate students who were candidates for graduation provided these responses via a survey. Results compiled by the Graduate Studies Office.*