ACSM 2011 PROFILES
IN SPORTS MEDICINE AND EXERCISE SCIENCE

A Professional Guide to Programs and Career Opportunities In Sports Medicine and Exercise Science

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ACSM 2011 PROFILES
in SPORTS MEDICINE AND EXERCISE SCIENCE

A professional guide to programs and career opportunities in sports medicine and exercise science across the country!

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Making the Most of Your Graduate Degree

By Barbara Ainsworth, Ph.D., MPH, FACSM, ACSM President-elect

Remember your undergraduate days? You took classes, completed assignments and tests, and over time, you graduated. Now you are in graduate school and you may ask, what is expected of me? Is there a formula for success? Whether you are earning a Master or a Doctoral degree, succeeding in graduate school takes deliberate action. Here are a few tips to help you to get the most out of your degree.

Treat your graduate education like your job.

Come to class on time and pay attention while you are there. Turn off the internet and engage in class discussions. Go the extra mile to turn in assignments on time and without errors. Be thoughtful in your work and strive to be present while in class and in research settings.

Avoid taking the easy path.

While some courses will be required, many will be electives. You will have many opportunities to develop your skills and interests. Ask your professors what courses and/or experiences they think will help you reach your career goals. If you want to be a clinician, seek experiences that will let you know if that career is for you. If you want to be a researcher, learn the skills required for success— gain expertise in a couple of areas, learn how to design research studies on topics that funding agencies will support. If you want to be a teacher, develop the skills and subject matter expertise needed for effective teaching.

> ...develop your skills and interests...

Open your mind to new ideas.

Graduate school is the time to explore new ways of thinking about topics you never knew existed. Don't sell yourself short by limiting your focus to a single interest area or approach. Your job will require you to interact with people from many disciplines, so think broadly about solving problems and thinking outside the box.

Hang out where the action is.

If your research is in the lab, then hang out in the lab. If your research is somewhere else, then hang out where your advisor can easily find you. By being close physically to where research decisions are made, you have the best shot at being part of the discovery process. In graduate school, a lot of the learning happens outside the classroom. You need to be where the problems arise so you can be part of the solutions.

Always ask, what can I do to help?

Scholars are busy people. They need bright, eager, new professionals to help them accomplish their tasks. You can get involved in activities that can take your career to a whole new level by giving freely of your time.

As graduate students, you are the next generation of professionals. By making ACSM your primary professional organization, you are already at the head of the pack. Present your best research at ACSM regional and national meetings. Get involved in the organization and be a leader. By being part of ACSM, I guarantee that you will make friends and have experiences that will broaden and deepen your career for a long time to come.

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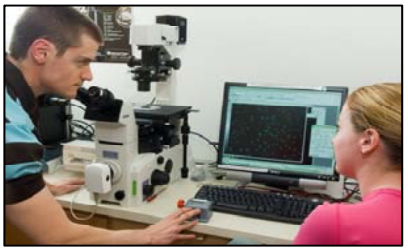

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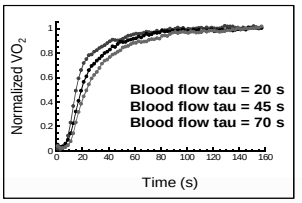

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10 things I wish I would have known about Graduate School....

Written and Submitted By: Stephanie Howe, MS,
Former ACSM Northwest Regional Student Representative

Make sure your interests line up BEFORE applying

Upon graduating, it seems like more and more students are enrolling in graduate school. With a lack of job opportunities and poor economy, becoming a professional student is not such a bad idea. The thing about graduate school is that you don't really know what you are getting yourself into until you are fully immersed. When I think back to before I started grad school, I thought I was prepared. Ha! If I only knew!

Here is a list of 10 things I have come to realize after a few years. Hopefully I can pass on some of what I learned to other students who are planning to continue down the academic path.

1. Discover your passion

First off, you have to decide what you are passionate about. If you are going to continue your education you should have a reason. If you don't know what you are interested in you will have a hard time finding a program you are really excited about. Think about what you want to do in the future: do you want to teach? Work in a research lab? Specialize in a particular discipline? These questions will help you narrow down your choices. Talk to current students to find out more about the program at a particular school. You can only learn so much from the description on the school's website.

Think about what you want to do in the future

2. Picking a school

While picking the school may seem like an obvious part of choosing a graduate program, there are a few crucial elements you should consider.

Location: You shouldn't pick a school on location alone, but it's something you should consider. What things are important to you? Do you like big cities? Lakes? Mountains? Snow? You are going to spend the next 4+ years at this location,....

Size: Do you want to go to a large university? Small school? What about the department size? Number of grad students? Number of undergrads?

Funding: Are graduate assistantships available? How many and what do they cover? Are they renewable? Will you be funded throughout your entire program? What about the summer? Is your department grant funded?

Recent graduates: What careers have recent grads of the program pursued? What kind of reputation does the university have?

3. Your Advisor

This is the person who will be your mentor throughout your graduate career. It is extremely important to have a good relationship with your advisor. Make sure your interests line up BEFORE applying to a program. Keep in mind that your advisor has your best interests in mind. Even though it may seem like he or she is out to get you, your advisor really wants you to succeed.

4. Research

Make sure you read recent publications from your potential advisor. Find out what type of research he/she has done in the past. Lining up research interests is extremely important- you want to pick an advisor who has worked in an area that is of interest to you as well!

8. Money

Welcome to the poor life. Graduate students live close to poverty levels. Someday you will make money and then you will be able to pay back all of your student loans. Don't stress too much about money, just be conscious of how much you spend and try to budget. One way to cut down on costs is to pack a lunch every day. Instead of spending $10 a day, a bag lunch probably costs you about $2. Do the math—it adds up.

5. Studying

Graduate classes are much different than undergraduate classes. You will have much more responsibility; and for some reason everything ALWAYS takes longer than you plan. Prioritizing tasks and budgeting your time are essential for success. It also is important to stay organized—I would invest in a daily planner.

When it comes to getting all of your work done, you have to be productive. Surfing the internet, watching tv, and naps are a thing of the past. To find out how you work best, ask yourself some questions:

- What time of day am I most focused?
- What type of environment do I work well in?
- Do I work best in groups or on my own?
- How do I learn best?
- What types of things distract me?

Break up your work into sections and take breaks in between. I like to make lists so I can cross items off as I finish. I usually end up listing things like "eat lunch" and "take a shower" so I feel like I am accomplishing something. A list also helps with time management and prioritizing tasks.

6. Get involved

Becoming involved in your school, community, or field of study is great for a number of reasons. First off, you get to meet a lot of people! Second, it's great for networking and establishing contacts. Third, you can learn a lot and get to meet some influential people within your field. Lastly, becoming a member, attending, and presenting at conferences makes you much more educated. It's good to stay current with recent trends within your field. Take advantage of the opportunities offered to you as a student.

Coffee is a necessity.

9. Coffee

Coffee is a necessity. End of story.

10. When the going gets tough

Remember that you got into school for a reason. Don't sell yourself short; everyone has ups and downs. Try not to take criticism personally and be confident in your abilities. It's good to have friends or other students you can talk to. Sometimes just having someone listen to your frustrations can make you feel better. Remember, if grad school were easy everyone would do it!

7. Lifestyle

Take care of your body. It's hard to stay on top of all of your course work, your research, teaching classes, etc if you aren't taking care of yourself. Make sure you eat well. Good nutrition really can make a positive difference in how you feel. Buy yourself a cookbook and learn how to cook.

Try to get enough sleep. Most people need around 8 hours to feel rested. Although you may not be able to sleep 8 hours every night, a few times a week is a good goal. Take time for yourself each day. It's easy to slip into the routine of geeking out at school all day.

Set aside time to do an activity that you enjoy.

One of my friends at Oregon made a new year's resolution to do one fun social event outside of school every week. It helps the week go by when you have something fun to look forward to. Lab meetings don't count as social events.

ACSM Fellows Offer Advice to Students

Succeeding in Graduate School—

Intellectual curiosity is critical to your success. You will need to read the literature and discuss research studies with fellow graduate students and with your mentor. Find out about research projects going on in the laboratory. Most graduate programs include journal clubs and most labs have a weekly meeting to assist you with this process. Initially you will likely find that you are interested in everything! This is where your mentor can help you focus your ideas. You will soon begin to realize how much you do not know. Do not let this scare you—just enjoy learning and keep focusing on what you do know.

Priscilla Clarkson, PhD, FACSM

Remember to work as a team with other graduate students academically as well as professionally. Assist professors and other graduate students with data collections, volunteer as a research subject, attend research seminars, and attend and present your work at professional meetings. If this sounds familiar, it should. You are not only gaining the foundational skills to become a good researcher, teacher and scholar, you are preparing from the beginning of the master's program for admission to a Ph.D. program and/or a professional career. If you choose to pursue a Ph.D., your research mentor and other graduate faculty will be the best sources for advice on matching you with a mentor and seeking admission and financial support. William Butler Yeates said, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." Your educational experience should feed your curiosity and excitement in addition to supplying you with the necessary tools to succeed in a career. It takes hard work and dedication. Fuel your fire!

Richard Gay Israel, EdD, FACSM

Do not leave graduate school without getting the valuable experience and knowledge you need for the next step of your career. Get grant and manuscript writing experience, present your research at national meetings, and get involved in other research projects besides your own. If teaching is one of your goals, make sure you get a variety of teaching experiences, even if you have to volunteer. Get a strong background in statistics and research design, learn to use statistical computer programs, and clearly understand the statistics used in your own research. Start a journal club if your school does not have one where you can discuss research articles in depth. Once you leave graduate school, find a mentor to help you continue learning and improving your research and teaching skills. Remember, graduate school is just the beginning of the learning process that will last a lifetime.

Melinda Manore, PhD, RD, FACSM

It is most important, especially in your doctoral studies, to choose a mentor who is well respected and has done considerable work in your area of interest. The work you do in your doctoral program will likely be your springboard for your career. If you have no idea of your area of interest, then you may not truly be ready for a doctoral program. It is a good idea to peruse the program and the faculty websites to gain background information on the program. I also strongly recommend that you personally contact the faculty member of interest to discuss your interests and qualifications for the program. This should be followed up by an interview. In this way, you have an opportunity to meet in person. Over the course of four years, you will be developing a very personal relationship with your mentor. It is important that you are able to connect on a personal, as well as professional, level. An interview also gives you the opportunity to visit the lab environment and meet with other graduate students who can provide additional information from the viewpoint of the student.

> Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire

Irene Davis, PT, PhD, FACSM

I cannot overstate the importance of networking for establishing a presence in the field. One of the best vehicles through which to interact with successful people is to become active in the ACSM regional chapters. Volunteer to serve on a committee. Go to the regional and national ACSM Annual Meetings. Attend the social events offered at these meetings. Go out to dinner with your major advisor and his or her friends. Participate in the group morning run. Get involved with the ACSM interest groups. There is an extensive amount of business that gets conducted at these social events that can lead to your career advancement.

Linda Pescatello, PhD, FACSM

What will you consider a "successful" experience? New knowledge and skills? A job? Lifelong colleagues? What are your goals? How do they fit in with the goals of your advisor and the experiences you will receive in a given program? Realize that your goals may, and probably should, change as you gain knowledge, experience, and exposure to new ideas and topics. The motivation for taking on the challenge of graduate work has to come from within yourself; those who go on to graduate school in an attempt to live up to the expectations of others have a much more difficult time, and risk getting through it only to learn that it is really not what they wanted in the first place. There are so many wonderful opportunities that can come from the graduate school experience, particularly in the exercise and sports sciences. With options, however, comes the stress of decision making. Knowing what success means to you will help you make decisions along the way.

> What are your goals?

Jane Kent-Braun, PhD, FACSM

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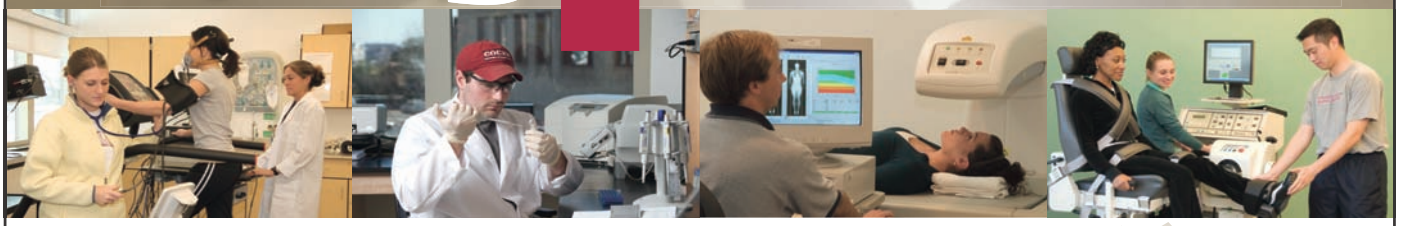

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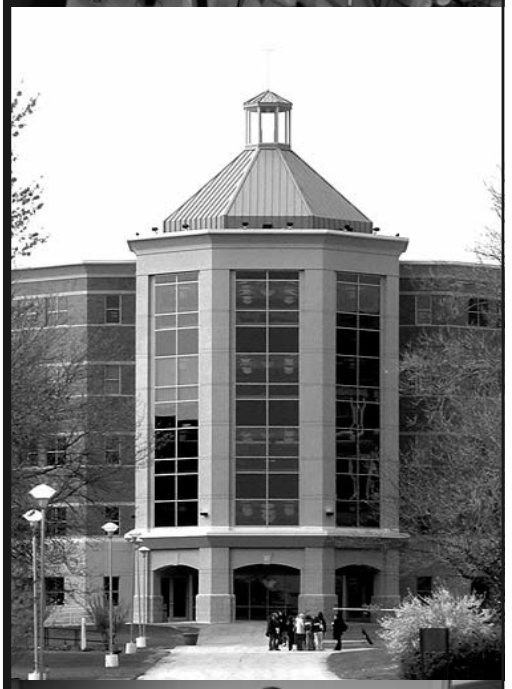

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