Being an Effective UTCS Graduate Student

John Thywissen • 22 Aug 2016
Begin at the End:
Begin at the End:
Goal: *Published Research*
Idealized research process

Brilliant Insight

Work to Prove it

Research Publication
Idealized picture is dangerously misleading

Not novel

Infeasible

Unpublishable
Research is a stochastic process
Listen: The World is Streaming Research Ideas at You

- Go to department **talks**.
- Join a **reading group**. Can’t find a good one? **Start one**.
  - GRACS reading group list: [http://wiki.cs.utexas.edu/gracs/ReadingGroups](http://wiki.cs.utexas.edu/gracs/ReadingGroups)
- Participate in **workshops**.
- Skim though **proceedings** and **magazines** from ACM/IEEE/SIAM...
Foundations for Effectiveness: Six parts

1. Self-discipline
2. Skill and proficiency in processes and tools:
   - Task and time management
   - Academic writing and speaking
   - Development tools (for your area)
3. Self-awareness
4. Knowledge in area
5. Collaboration with fellow students and faculty
6. Effective use of group, UTCS and University resources
### Time Management

#### Control your time

Eliminate distractions:

This requires both self-discipline and self-awareness: Decide: It’s time to work, or it’s time to play. Both are legitimate, but *decide consciously.*

#### Don’t waste others’ time

Be slightly early:

> "If you’re on time, you’re late."

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Track your time

*PL Lunch*

*C S 105 Lecture & Office hours*

*Research Group Meeting*
Task Management

Get (or build) a process to track tasks.
Notes on scraps of paper will *not* work.
Leaving messages in your inbox will *not* work.
“Just remembering” will *not* work.

Your task management process:
- Must be **reliable** enough that you can **trust** it, and
- Must be **simple** enough that you use it **everyday**, and
- Must be **scalable** enough to handle **multiple** simultaneous **projects**.

Suggestion: the GTD system by David Allen: [http://gettingthingsdone.com](http://gettingthingsdone.com)
Academic Writing and Speaking

There are many books and talks on academic writing and speaking.

Get a few, read them, and then **practice**. This is a skill, so you must **do it** in order to learn it.

Take opportunities to write and speak. Ask for feedback from the readers/audience.

**Tip**: Track everything you’ve read in a citation manager (examples: Zotero or BibDesk).

Suggestions for books on writing:

- *The Craft of Research*

- *Turabian*

- *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*
  ISBN 0-321-89868-0 $16
Collaboration with fellow students and faculty

– Again, join (or start) a reading group in your interest area.

– Go to research group meetings.
  □ Use as speaking practice venue.

– Faculty meetings: conference course/advisor meeting:
  Roughly 1 hour/week.
  □ Agree on goals for the semester.
  □ Use as a writing practice venue.
Being an Effective UTCS Graduate Student

**Begin at the End**

- Goal: *Research publications*
- Participate in research projects.
- Now. Not “real soon”.
- Do not wait for the perfect research topic.
- Research is a stochastic process, so multiple “trials” of potential projects are essential.
- View classes as input for your research projects.
- Talk and listen: advisor, fellow students, workshops, other researchers, etc.

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