

Graduate School Primer Series: Navigating Graduate School: The Good, the Grad, and the Ugly

Hi, welcome everybody coming in. I see a few of you are still connecting. I will get started as you are coming in and I will just say welcome everyone. My name is Sarah. I am a program coordinator here at the graduate school, and I am so excited to have you here today for one of our primer series sessions. This is actually, I think there's one more session after this one. Our last session just in case you guys we would like to come to that one is exploring career options in and outside academia. Make an action plan for your future. And that will be starting at 02:00 P.M. Eastern Time. This afternoon we have the one more session today. All of the sessions, including the session you're in right now, are being recorded. And if you give us a couple weeks to edit and caption those videos, they'll be posted on Orientation Hub Canvas course. Hopefully you guys have checked out all the information in that canvas course. But if you haven't, I will put on the link right now. You can go in there and click and roll in course. And that'll give you lots of information. Some of the information that's also in there is we have some social events coming up at the Big Red Barn. The Graduate and Professional Students center here on campus. They're offering some program in the next week or two that's specifically for incoming students. So definitely check those things out. And the last thing I want to remind you about is this Thursday, we are having our in person graduate school Deans welcome at Bailey Hall here on Cornell campus. We would love to see all of you there and we are so excited to have you there. I'm going to turn back to what we're doing here today. Today, we're here for navigating graduate school, The grad and the ugly. And your presenter for today is Josephine Martel, the Associate Dean for Academics. All right, Hi everybody. I'm going to share my screen, so give me 1 S. Let's get this going. All right Sara, are we good on your end? Cool. All right everybody. Well, good morning. As I'm sure you've all heard many times, welcome to Cornell. Congratulations on your admission here. Now, this is like your turn to make the most of this opportunity. That's what we're going to be talking about today. Sarah said, my name is Josephine Martel. I'm the Associate Dean for Academics. I oversee our academic programs and policies here in the graduate school, as well as academic integrity and student grievance cases. I'm also a social scientist. I study how communication tools and tactics can be used to advocate for vulnerable communities within polarized contexts. I do a lot of work with wildlife and also in collaboration with the Gao community here in Ithaca on indigenous language reclamation and revitalization. I hope that the information that I share with you today and the additional orientation that you'll be getting in your individual departments will really help you embark on what should be a rewarding and very challenging, but hopefully successful path to your graduate degree. Today, I'm just going to give you a short and pretty broad overview of some things. We're going to start with the structure and the mission of the grad school, as well as your department and your field specific support systems. I'm going to share some suggestions for how you can make the most of your time as a graduate student. Then we'll have some time for questions as a group. You can pop your questions in, the chat, raise your hand. We're going to try to check the chat every few slides or so. We can answer some of these questions as we go. But otherwise, we'll certainly have some time after the slides. After that, we're hoping that we'll break you into smaller

breakout rooms and small groups so that you can talk with each other and reflect on some of the things you've heard, but also share your own experiences with each other. Very briefly. The graduate school mission, as I hope you've heard, our goal here is to help you thrive intellectually and professionally. Of course, achieve academic success. We're going to help you along your chosen career path, whether that's academic or not. We have a really great team here at the graduate school that can help with professional development, led by Collie McInn. Our overarching goal, of course, is to really foster that academic rigor providing flexibility and freedom and independence for you as scholars to. Your chosen path and of course, encourage lifelong health and wellness. I'm sure that you've hopefully now attended some sessions hosted by Jane May and Sarah that show how much support we put into these areas in the graduate school as well. Our role within your education is to help you interpret the graduate school policy, our code of legislation, as well as university policy. We provide a lot of financial support for you. We have internal conference and travel grants here at the graduate school, and those are competitions that are released throughout the year. We can help you apply for fellowships to fund your studies. We provide top off funding for other external awards and fellowships when the money that you bring in doesn't quite cover the Cornell tuition and stipend. Then we have a process where we can top that off for you. And then we help facilitate with the departments the teaching and research assistant ships which come through them, but we play a role in helping with that as well, of course. Then we help you navigate your financial aid and student loan issues. Our softer goals are also to help you build community. We have a great, you haven't been become familiar yet with the big red barn. We have a lot of activities that are run through that, as well as a lot of other events and programming that go on throughout the year. We have a weekly e mail that goes out, a newsletter. I encourage you to read that, even just skim it for 2 S. Like there's a lot of stuff in there, whether it's funding opportunities or social opportunities, workshops, conferences, things happening on campus. It's definitely worth checking. We have a great comms team here, our website is kept really up to date. Finally, we also one of our main goals is to advocate for you. And that's something that's a big part of my role. If something can't be resolved at the committee level or the department level and gets escalated, then we'll certainly step in and try to work with you and with your faculty to resolve situations. In worst case scenarios, things can be escalated to a grievance, which is a formal process. And we would help you navigate that process as well. I want to talk just a little bit about like your field support that you have. Within each department, there's a faculty member who is a full professor in your field, but also takes on a part time appointment as your director of Graduate studies. Known as the DGS. Your internal faculty advocate, like in your department or field, they're going to be the liaison between the graduate school and your department. They can help you sometimes interpret graduate school policy and certainly just give you advice about steps to take, especially if it's something that maybe your advisor or your committee members doesn't know. Definitely reach out to them. It's good to know who they are and just form a relationship. You also have a GFA, which is a more permanent staff position in your departments. These are fabulous people to know. They know everything about the graduate school. And they'll help you navigate all the administrative aspects of your education. Whether it's forms that you have to file, or procedures and policies and timelines and deadlines, They're awesome. Also get to know your GFA. Bring them coffee, bring them pastries. Like become friends with your GFA. They will be a great advocate for you. You also have a special committee.

This is going to be dependent on the field. Some fields are very prescriptive about like who your special committee members have to be. Other fields allow you to choose who your minor and major members are in terms of like what disciplines they represent. But this is going to be your academic home and support structure as you go through your, this program. If you're pursuing a professional degree, you won't necessarily have a special committee do some don't. Sometimes they're appointed by the field, sometimes they're not. So it's a little bit of a different process. Although I'm not really going into the special committee in this presentation in terms of like how you choose committee members, how you get to know them, that whole process. If that's something you're interested in, we can certainly talk about it during the Q and A because there's certainly like a little bit of an art who you should put on your special committee and how effective you want that to be, that is field specific, but there are some universal things that apply. I do want to finally draw your attention to the Code of Legislation. Actually, let me see if I can pop this in the chat again, just like something to be familiar with. This is our Code of Legislation is the policy that governs your entire graduate degree. Who your committee members can be, how many, like what your deadlines are, what the Q exam is, your qualifying exam, if you have one in your field. Your A and B exams are what they entail when they have to take place by every field has an exam, which is your admission to candidacy so that you've become a Phd candidate and can actually conduct your research. And then your exam, which is your defense when you finish. They also cover things like taking a leave of absence, going in absentia. If you're doing field work, it's good just to be aware of where the Code of Legislation is, like whenever you have a question about like, could I do this? Like that's the first place to go. And then talk to your GFA and your DGS and make sure that you're interpreting it correctly. So now I want to just go through a couple goals of quick things of like tips for success and how do you navigate graduate school. What are some of the overarching things that you should be thinking about? I'd say, first of all, set goals, that you can always adjust them. But it's really important to set achievable goals. Think ahead, plan backwards. Consult with your chair, your committee. Establish clear Phd aims and questions on the basis of your thesis requirements. And within your departmental guidelines, as well as within the required graduate school milestones, goals can change and so can your plan. But it's really useful to have a roadmap and it will help you maintain focus throughout your program. It's also really useful to have a clear goal after graduation. Are you intending to follow an academic path or go into the private sector? Maybe into industry. You'll have different goals and expectations for yourself with each different path. The requirements of success will be different. For each, find out what these are. Early on in your specific field, you're working towards the right goals for where you want to end up. It'll also help you find the people that can give you the right advice and be your mentors according to those areas that you're more interested in. Finally, one thing on this, this is really important and it sounds and it's easy to overstate, but try not to compare yourself with others. Your Phd is a really unique opportunity to conduct original research for yourself. You need to do what works for you and for your project. Your goals are going to be unique to your project too. In turn, these goals will help you set and discuss expectations with your supervisors. Again, these should be mutual expectations. Everyone works differently, everyone has a different style. Be aware of your needs, communicate them to your advisor early on, so you can work productively together. I really can't emphasize this enough, like no one can read each other's mind. Cornell, in partnership with the Graduate School, has actually been developing a

curriculum and various tools around mutual expectations for mentoring called Fame, The Faculty Advancing Inclusive Mentoring Framework. I really encourage you to check this out and use them. I'll put the link in the chat here too, so you can take a look at some of these things. There's a great little like rubric and sheet where you can list out your goals with your advisor and a document template that you can share with each other. Another important thing to remember, again that also sounds trite, but really can't be overstated, is trying to maintain a healthy work life balance. Remembering what you're embarking upon, especially if you're earning a Phd, but even just embarking on any level of a graduate degree is and it's a hard process. It can be difficult and challenging under the best of circumstances. By the end of your degree, you will be the preeminent expert in your field, in your specific topic, potentially worldwide. Remember, it's a long and hard path to get there. It takes hard work, resilience, perseverance, in the face of adversity and barriers. And often long hours in the lab or the field, in the library in order to make academic progress on your degree beyond your classes and beyond your TA or RA responsibilities. Because of that, it's really important that you also take care of yourself so that you can be your best self. Eat well, get enough sleep, try to get some exercise, all the normal things, but also carve out time, like whatever you can on a regular basis to spend some time with friends and people that nourish and support you. You stay organized and focused. You should always be able to find a little bit of time for a walk or a copy with somebody to that point. Organizing early, organizing your work, your workspace, will save you time later on and hopefully give you that space. For that balance, try to use a clear labeling system for your files more than anything. Use a system that you can actually remember and replicate. I know that I've certainly been guilty of creating systems that then I never follow. Again, doesn't matter if it's pretty, just do something that works for you, try to write everything down. That's another one that will really be useful later on in your program. Keep notebooks, just keep a stack of them somewhere. Up. You can always go back to them. Your process will often be part of your methods later on. As we all know, it's really easy to forget things. Write down meeting notes and method details. Trial runs, code annotation like whatever it is. Another great tip is to use your weekly or daily calendar as a tool to reflect your priorities and goals and help keep you on track. You can use it to like schedule your time and meet your goals. Often when I have something due in six weeks, I'll blockout time on my calendar backwards, especially when I'm writing because that's a really great way to ensure that you're going to have the time to meet that required goal. I also want to talk a little bit about conducting literature reviews and the value of doing that. It's definitely an area that's worth investing in. Thoughtful reviews in the areas that you're interested in will become the foundation for a lot of your work later on in your career, especially like after your exam. As you start like writing up your chapters and then turning those into publications. Take advantage of class assignments on topics you or your exam questions. Those are usually questions that you'll co develop with your advisor and your committee members. So you can use that as an opportunity to flesh out areas that you're interested in much more deeply so that you have a really thorough understanding of those areas. These reviews, both before and after data collection, like I said, they'll help you develop your research aims and conclusions, but they'll form the basis of your dissertation chapters. They'll be the intro sections for almost like all those papers, as well as for those future publications later on. Think strategically about those early on so you can use them later on. Finally, I just want to take a few minutes to talk about publishing. It's really important to publish

and find your peer networks. As a Phd student, you really can't be thinking about this too early. Like publishing can take a long time, sometimes up to two years. You want to be thinking about those projects early because there's a lot that goes into, obviously, like planning out a project, collecting the data, analyzing the data, writing it up, then submitting it for publication. And that peer review process can often take over a year alone. On its own, publishing is field specific. Talk to your advisor, your committee members, Talk about what the publication expectations are in your field. They'll be different for every field. Find out where you should publish. What are the journals that are well respected in your field? Find out if you need to have a sole author paper in your field. Find out if your first or last is what's desirable in your field. All those questions, like aim for the best journals you can get into, but know that not all your papers may be successful or even get published. Drafting articles and submitting them is a really good way to learn new skills. It'll improve your writing. It's great to have on your CV, but it certainly can be hard and demoralizing at times. Rejection is universal in academia. Almost every paper now is a revision. I almost never hear of a paper being accepted without a minor or major revision. That's pretty much the norm. Um, so use that as a learning experience and just find out these expectations for your specific field early on. This is also what will help you get a job. Especially if you're going into academia and you're following an academic path. You will need publications in order to get those faculty positions after graduation. I want to share there are some basic questions that everybody should be asking of your advisors and committee members. Again, ask these things early so you can plan accordingly. But everyone should really be asking when you should begin submitting to conferences. Like, what's the expectation in my field? Is it by the end of the first year? Is it by the end of the second year? Same with publishing, like when should I start submitting papers? Find out about your exam. When are you required to take the qualifying exam? This is not a required exam in every field, so that'll be dependent on your particular field. Everybody has to take their exam. Again, find out what the expectations are for taking your exam, both from your specific advisor, but also what your field expectations are. Sometimes those will be different. It might be a conversation to navigate. Again, find out if you should be doing a summer internship or whether you're going to do field work. Again, these are all things you should be talking about early on so that you're planning out your time accordingly. Then it's always helpful to ask people what the best advice they ever got was you always learn surprising things, of course, for being happy. Finally, I just want to say the key to thriving academically in graduate school is to really take responsibility for yourself and be proactive. Maybe one of the most important things you could take away from this morning is about That take responsibility for your own education. Be informed, learn about the people and other resources that are available to you. Read our newsletter. Ask for guidance If you don't know something as learn from your peers, learn from the other faculty. Everyone is here to help and support you. Asking people questions and asking them for guidance will help you succeed. Also, try to remember to make connections beyond your graduate program. Get out in the community, find things to do. Go across departments, really just advocate for yourself. Let your faculty know what interests you accomplishing. Graduate school is not a time for quiet humility, like this is a time for you to get out there and soak up as much as you can. And it's important that you let the people know who are supporting you, like what you're achieving and what you're doing, because they're the ones that are going to be advocating for you as you start to take different steps in your education and on your path. I'm about to wrap up in this section, please. If you have any

questions, come to Caldwell Hall. We're here on the quad. This link here is our staff directory that you can see everybody that represents every area. We're all pretty accessible and friendly. Please stop by, drop an e mail, just come by in person. Any of you, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions and stop by the office. That's what I have for this section. We're going to take some time now just in case people have questions that they want to ask, then we're going to break into some small breakout rooms. I don't know. Do you think it makes more sense to share that slide after that Or I can have people take a screenshot and then go into rooms. Either way, do we want to start with some questions now and then move into break out rooms and we can move forward? Yeah, I think that makes sense. I'm going to stop sharing. We can come back as a group. What kind of questions do people have so far? What are the things that have been coming up for you as you've been thinking about grad school? What are you nervous about? What are you still unsure about? If people don't have questions, we can go ahead and here you go. Internal sources of funding. Cornell for research and travel? Yes, the Graduate School has a conference grant and a travel grant. I'm not actually sure what time of year those come out. They come out through our fellowships office. But that's something that will be announced during the news letter. Do you happen to know where that web page is that we could yeah. I'll grab it and put it in the chat right now, and then you can see where those deadlines are. I know the travel grants are rolling. I think I'm going to put it in the chat, the link to grad school funding. Thank you. Something else? The graduate school offers these opportunities. They have to be tied to a conference generally or to a specific research project. Your department may also have funds. Again, like ask your DGS if there's funding available, then your individual advisors will also have funding. Again, ask your advisor as your DG whenever you have any financial need. That should be your first stops because Cornell give travel grants are ways to get connected network on line. Do you know what digital communities we have to to your question about the MPS program, my initial thought would be that that would be probably program specific for you and that the program will be creating some platforms like for your particular cohort to connect with each other. But please feel free to drop me an email. You can tell me a little bit more about your specific program and I can find out what supports there may be for that. I'm going to put my e mail back on the chat. Travel grants for new international students coming in. Sarah, do you know the answer to that? Do we give you the travel grant question? Vina, I apologize if I'm mispronouncing your name. Are you looking for a travel grant as you're coming in or once you're at Cornell in year one? Sarah, do you know if there's any restrictions on those grants being available to international students? So I think what I would say here is I understand that the research travel grants and the conference travel grants are available to all graduate students. I think the only restriction that I'm aware of is that there's a max per year, like you can only get one year if you got one in September, you wouldn't be eligible again until the following September. That's the only restriction I'm aware of. Assuming that that's the question for the person that was looking for ways to connect network on line. I think Josephine's answer about talking to your program is a good one. I also put in the chat, there's a Cornell campus website that links to, anybody can access this. If you're looking for a student group, you can filter by graduate student groups in there. There's a lot of undergrad groups in there too because it's a collective Cornell University campus groups. But you can find some interesting groups there for those that are on campus. I would again recommend that Big Red Bar and Graduate and Professional Center because they have a lot of activities and great

ways to get to know people. But I think for the MPS program that's remote, your best bet is figuring out what groups are available within that particular program. And then the conference and travel grants. I think there's a on that website that we linked in the chat earlier. I think there might be an e mail that you can e mail in there to ask questions. And they might be the best ones. If you have like real nitty gritty detailed questions, the only things that we can say is that yes, they're available to all graduate students. There's a limitation to how much money you can get per year. And you would want to read through all of the requirements because there is a request process and you want to make sure you follow all the steps in the request process when you're submitting those. Here's a question about selecting courses. This really depends on a number of factors. And again, it's going to be most effective to talk with your advisor about who knows, like your unique situation. It depends on whether you're TAing, whether you have an RA, whether you're GRA, it depends what your external responsibilities are to Cornell. I know when I came to Cornell, I had, I came with three small children, including two babies that were still nursing. And I was TAing in the fall semester, I was told to take one class that very first semester, and that's what I did, that was really helpful. But normally then I would have taken three. I think it really just depends on the person And maybe you want to take four, but I think that's something that you have to talk about. It depends on your program and whether you're at the Master's level or a Phd level. Some programs have a lot of core requirements and you have to meet, like you have expectations that you have to meet by a certain amount of time in the program, usually by year two or three. If you have a ton of course requirements you have to get through, then that's going to be pretty much prescribed for you if you're in a field where you get where you don't have core requirements and instead your committee is going to help guide like the correct program of study for you based on what you are interested in pursuing. Then again, that's going to be something that you have to set with your committee. But either way, you should be bringing your courses to your advisor and making sure that they are in support of the courses that you're choosing. The other thing I want to tag in is Josephine's made a couple of references to field specific requirements. I just want to comment that each field has a graduate field handbook that should include a lot of those pieces of information. And just do you have a link that I don't each individual field has those. They generally are available on their website somewhere, But you might check with your GFA to find out where that information is. But every field should have one of those that should help with some of these questions about like, what courses are required, things like that. Thank you for bringing that up, Sarah. That's a really important point that sometimes the handbooks go by a different name. Sometimes it's called a field manual or a guidebook or something else. But again, like the GFA should be able to point you to where that is. Is there a limit to the number of credits covered by the graduate tuition? I don't believe so. But there may be a limit to like your time. Again, your advisor will have probably strong feelings about how many classes you should be taking and which ones to make sure that it's, again, supporting and achieving your program of study, career development. I would direct you to Colleen Mclean, who is our Associate Dean for Professional Development here in the Graduate School. We can put a link into her, find a link for her page for industry. Thank you. Sometimes that will be a little bit, again like field specific, like you might get better. It's help as you start to find your way and you start to find your people. Like if you meet a faculty member who's working, has a hybrid appointment or does a lot of work with industry, they might end up they'll probably end up being a really good resource also, like reach out to the

people that you meet. But otherwise, like Colleen is a really great place to start. Also, I'm putting in the chat that direct link. But under the Career and Professional Development Group here at the Graduate school, we have a program called Careers Beyond Academia. That actually works with students specifically for jobs in industry and outside of academia. We have a couple of programs here at the grad school that would be available to you to check out to help do some of those information searching.