Welcome – thank you for joining us today! The meeting slides and recording will be posted online. You can change your name for anonymity. You can type questions/comments in the Q&A and we will do our best to address them. For general discussion, please use the chat (select “All panelists and attendees”).

What I wish I had known about doing a PhD

Julie Lee  (Neuroscience, UCL)
Melanie Silverman (Clinical psychology, Fordham U.)
Jonny Coutinho (Neuroscience, Queen’s U.)
Emily Diaz (Biomedical science, UCSD)
Thank you for the excellent suggestions for discussion!
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While PhD students share many common experiences, every individual’s journey is unique. Gaining insights from a number of different people can help paint a more complete picture of PhD life.
Choosing and applying to PhD programs

• Why pursue a PhD?
• Deciding “which research interest to pursue” and “criteria to use to decide where to apply”
  • Figuring out “the best ways to be a competitive applicant”
• Navigating the application process
  • “How can we stand out from a large pool of applicants?”
• Preparing for interviews and “what the program faculty (and your potential advisor in that program) are looking for during interviews”
• Finding “the right fit for you” and your “best fit advisor”

A couple resources on these topics:
https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/gradhacker/art-selecting-graduate-program
https://www.princetonreview.com/grad-school-advice/choosing-a-school
A day in the life of a PhD student

• Finding your footing in your program/lab
  • “How to come up with a thesis project” and staying on track to graduate

• Gaining the skills you need to complete your PhD
  • Practical skills (e.g. stats, Python, R, presenting), academic writing – “Is lacking these skills in advance a major hindrance or will students be able to get the hang of if?”

• Building a support system
  • “Did you feel other PhD students in your same program/lab were supportive or competitive?”

• Networking and making connections

A couple resources on these topics:
https://biotech.ucdavis.edu/news/day-life-phd-student-biomedical-sciences
Life beyond the lab

• Maintaining work/life balance
  • “marriage/family/having babies”

• Realizing broader impacts of your work and balancing “academic pursuits with tangible change”

• “The Financial Aspects of a PhD”
  • Are you making enough money to get by? Do you/could you work another job part-time?

• Planning for the future
  • “Other than academia/teaching, what other career routes can researchers take/which ones are common?”

A couple resources on these topics:
https://www.nature.com/articles/nj7654-375a
https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2017/05/yes-you-can-have-life-outside-lab
Biggest challenges as a PhD student

- Dealing with failure and impostor syndrome
  - “How do you overcome failures especially when the experiments that you put a lot of effort into fail?”

- Overcoming interpersonal issues, tensions, biases

- Experiencing “burnout” and staying motivated
  - “How do you keep yourself motivated in terms of having instability in many aspects of a PhD pursuit”

- Where to go for help?

A couple resources on these topics:
https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03459-7
Tips to succeed in a PhD program

• Preparing your future self for success
• Establishing “good study habits or habits in general to help achieve academic success”
• “Tips for separating your self worth from your grades and academic achievements”
  • Taking care of your mental and physical health

A couple resources on these topics:

https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/caveman-politics/201509/6-insider-tips-new-phd-students
https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-07332-x
A couple more resources

“All About PhD Applications” by Lucy Lai
https://lucyblogs.wordpress.com/2018/08/02/all-about-phd-applications/

“Things I wish I’d known from Day 1 of my PhD” compiled by Ya’el Courtney
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Tndw5xkcMLBQYrxy62DDusQbSScKqx0qK/view

Application materials from NYU Psychology students
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1eZ1CMG-bZQIPtB6OkduFy0Qq2-uS-mjH