

## WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

### **WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW AS I EMBARK ON MY JOURNEY AS A GRADUATE STUDENT?**

You are starting a new graduate program—there are so many things that you need to do that it can sometimes be difficult to know where to begin. Below are some questions that you may want to ask yourself or other students who have been around for a while. Hopefully, they'll help you get started on your journey...

**You know your general area of study—do you have a more specific concentration in mind?** If so, who on campus can help guide you as you make your study plans and aim for success? If not, who can you talk to in order to discover your passion, and what is the best time to do that?

**What kind of working environment works best for you?** Do you like working in groups and teams or on your own? There will be opportunities for both, but sometimes you will need to do things in a new way. How do you prepare yourself for that?

**How often would you want to talk with your graduate advisor or coordinator and eventually with your thesis/dissertation supervisor?** Do you work best independently or with more regular guidance and input? If you have a supervisor in mind, is that supervisor on the same wavelength? What do you know about students' experience with that supervisor?

**Which career path do you plan to follow?** What would you need to accomplish during your time at UT that would best prepare you for such a career? Do you have contingency plans in case your original plan does not pan out?

**Which classes will be most beneficial to you?** How often, and during which semesters are they offered?

**What research facilities are available to you?** Where can you find the resources you'll need to be successful in research? If you plan to work in a lab, what equipment is available in each group and what shared facilities are commonly used? Where can you find the resources that would promote and support effective writing?

**What kind of funding could you expect from potential advisors or programs?** Who can help you with grant applications?

**How long do you expect to be here?** How long does your program or supervisor expect you to take as you pursue your degree? This varies a lot from professor to professor, not just department to department.

### **WHERE CAN YOU SEEK HELP IF THINGS GET VERY STRESSFUL, ACADEMICALLY AND OTHERWISE?**

As current graduate students we realize the challenges and importance of selecting the right research group and supervisor. We have a few ideas that we think will be helpful for you when making this decision:

**Be proactive during your interaction with faculty.** Learn about their most current research, position availabilities, and willingness to take new students.

**Current graduate students are the most valuable resource when it comes to learning about a professor.** Pick our brains as much as you can.

**When choosing a graduate school, you are choosing your home for the next several years.** Similarly, when choosing a research group or supervisor, you are choosing the people and environment with which you'll be spending most of your days. Give it some careful thought!

**If you join a lab, make sure to talk to graduate students about daily life in the lab/office.**

**Ask students how often they meet with their professor, and what his or her expectations are.**

**Find out what former students of a professor are doing.** Did they place well? Was the professor helpful in the placement process?

**Talk to students about what you need to accomplish in order to be successful.** For example, if you're interested in an academic career, find out about students' publications and conference attendance. Does a professor encourage, discourage, or require a certain amount of publications or professional development in general?

**Ask students about their funding sources—GRA, AI, and TA stipends differ, as do fellowships.** The timing of work/fellowship support is also critical. It is ok to ask people about their financial support (and benefits are very important).

**What does your college offer in terms of parental accommodation?** What will happen if you get sick? Ask about students' experience!