Welcome! You’ve come to a beautiful state and campus, are in the company of terrific fellow graduate students, and talented faculty who are here to help you!

Thank you ahead of time for all your hard work, dedication, and the excellent job you will be doing as a graduate student, and as a contributing member to the OSU community.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

All of you have come to graduate school to pursue a passion---whether it is research, teaching, changing careers, or simply pursuing a personal goal or aspiration. Some of you will have additional responsibilities as a Graduate Teaching Assistant or Graduate Research Assistant. Some of you may be carrying full or part time jobs in addition to pursuing graduate study. Many of you have recently moved and are just figuring out your way around the area.

Regardless of your circumstances, and regardless of whether or not you have a GTA or GRA appointment or other job, you will all face the same challenges of completing a rigorous course of graduate study and keeping everything in balance.

What I would like to do is share some simple advice about working with your faculty mentors—these ideas drawn from my thoughts on how I try to mentor my own graduate students so that they keep their eyes on the prize---getting that graduate degree---while maintaining some balance in their lives. Maybe some of this will be helpful to you as you juggle range of different responsibilities.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

- **Develop a personal relationship early on with your major professor** (primary mentor). Spend time sharing your personal goals and aspirations. You may think that faculty members are just too busy for you, but please remember that graduate mentoring is often the most favorite part of our job as a professor! It’s a privilege to mentor bright, inquisitive and motivated individuals! Embarking on a graduate program is a huge investment for you, often with great personal sacrifices. As mentors, we are deeply invested in your future and success, and we are here to help you achieve your lifelong goals.

- **Let your mentor know about your personal life**—as much as you are comfortable sharing. I tend to be very empathetic (and I think this is true for most faculty mentors) about the personal lives of my graduate students because I know that you need the support of your families and friends as you proceed through graduate school. Right now one of my PhD students who lives in Portland, has two small children, so we always do our phone conversations when they are away at school! Many of us faculty members weathered difficult personal situations during graduate school, so we understand and will help you through the rough spots.

- **Talk with your mentor about your strengths** so you can build on these while you are in your program. I take a very individualized approach to mentoring—each student will have different strengths and also weaknesses, but you will certainly wish to capitalize and build on your strengths. You all have a remarkable list of strengths—otherwise you would not be here!
Also ask your mentor to help you overcome weaknesses. One of my former students was terrified of giving presentations, so I encouraged her to join Toastmaster’s club. And I encouraged (persuaded) her to submit abstracts to as many state and local meetings as possible, just so she could work on stage fright. After a year or so, the presentation jitters had considerably diminished, and it was no longer a roadblock when she was interviewing for jobs after she finished.

Be bold about searching out other faculty in your department, in your college, or on campus, who may have research projects that are of interest to you. I love it when students come to me and indicate they would like to gain research experience by volunteering to help on one of my projects. I put them to work and give them the opportunity to participate in writing publications or they may gain valuable experience in just being part of an ongoing project’s activities.

Work with your mentor to create a manageable research process by taking a step-by-step approach. Don’t try to accomplish everything at once. My experience with students who are conducting research/writing thesis or dissertation, is that they want guidance on timelines, so they can see the light at the end of the tunnel and are not overwhelmed with how to get there—very practical suggestion. Be bold and ask your mentor to help you set timelines, and be realistic about what you can do based on everything else that is going on in your life.

Set high standards for yourself so that you are proud of the work when you finish. Especially towards the end of a thesis/dissertation writing process, you may want to cut corners just to get through. Be patient with your mentor as she/he sends you back for one or two or three more drafts of your thesis or papers. Please understand that as mentors we will push you out of a comfort zone—but in the long run, this will pay off for you.

Celebrate achievements along the way—this is very important. Don’t save parties and celebrations for the very end. Celebrate often--with your mentor, with your colleagues, with friends and with family members, but do take time to celebrate even the smallest of accomplishments!

Get to know your colleagues in graduate school—they will become your lifelong friends. And tap into the expertise of students already here—they are the BEST source of information about classes, recreational opportunities, good places to hang out.

When you are through with your own graduate program, I hope you will be a mentor to other young professionals in the field. My greatest joy is in seeing the graduate students whom I have mentored become mentors on their own—when the process goes full circle.

Enjoy your new life at OSU and good luck to each of you!