

Andrea's notes from the Program Milestone Chats

A quick brain dump of our conversation on June 19, 2014

Read the Handbook. Take notes.

- Make sure you are reading the program handbook.
 - I annotated the program handbook my first year
 - Your advisor is only vaguely aware of the logistics of forms
 - Most forms are student-initiated and it is expected you will find them
 - It is your responsibility to read first, then ask questions
- The handbook has great suggestions for what you should discuss with your advisor

Asking people to be on your Committee: aka The Festival of Awkward

- It feels really awkward to track down faculty and ask them to be on your guidance committee. It's like that for every grad student. The faculty are used to it.
- Steps to finding faculty to populate your committee:
 - Talk to your advisor for suggestions
 - Look through faculty websites and CVs, get to know the individual's body of work
 - Email the prospect:
 - I am very interested in your research on X. I am interested in Y. I was hoping to set up a time to discuss these interests. Please let me know when a good time is for a phone call or a videoconferencing service of your choice.
 - Let your advisor know who you are speaking with, etc. Some advisors will really be directive in who you should choose, others want you to be more self-directed. Building a network of brilliant researchers is never time wasted though, even if they don't end up on your committee.
 - In your meeting, ask the person about his/her research, be prepared to discuss your research interests.
 - If it's okay with your advisor, AND you think the faculty is a good match, THEN MAKE SURE YOU ACTUALLY ASK THEM TO BE ON YOUR COMMITTEE.
 - Matt noted sometimes students never actually articulate the question. Talk about awkward!
 - If they say no: Thank them for their time, and ask if they suggest someone else who might be good for you.