How to be a Successful Graduate Student

Tin-Yau Tam
Professor and Chair

Graduate Student Seminar
Department of Mathematics and Statistics
Auburn University, USA

September 24, 2014
"We often miss opportunity because it's dressed in overalls and looks like work" -- Thomas A. Edison

"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty" -- Winston Churchill
Must have goal and plan

- Your target: MS, PhD, a good job, ...
- Learn the research areas of the faculty members by looking up the department website
- Graduation plan including timeline. See FAQs of the AU Graduate School for the FAQs of the AU Graduate School. A graduation guide by our PhD graduate Dr. Scott Varagona has good advices.
You need to start NOW to build up your CV.

- Good GPA
- MS project, MS thesis, PhD dissertation
- Publications
- Better GTA stipend, GTA Fellowships & Scholarship, awards - performance based
- Jobs
- Your personal website. The website of our GTA James Hammer is a great example.
I will focus on PhD aspects in the forthcoming discussion. Similar ideas apply for MS.

- Take classes, pass prelim exams
- Have an advisor ASAP, plan of study
- Reading papers, writing papers and dissertation
- Hardworking, determination, persistence ...
I think this is the most important decision - alike marriage.

- Is the faculty member research active? Check MathSciNet
- Does his/her research interest match yours?
- His/her teaching style, research style, standard, personality
- Does he/she have time for you?
How to interact with your advisor

- Listen to your advisor
- Meetings with your advisor regularly, for example, biweekly or weekly
- Make an agenda for each meeting with your advisor
- Bring results and make your progress known to your advisor
Success requires hard work and good time management.

- Set priority
- Take ownership of your daily life
- Be productive
- Don't spend negative energy on regretting because of procrastination
"Opportunities are only for those who are prepared."

- Prepare yourself to be a better teacher - teaching training seminar, graduate student seminar
- Prepare yourself for future interview - attend seminar, colloquium
- Conference, meeting, workshop, networking
- Scientific typesetting. The standard is LaTeX. The AU graduate school has LaTeX templates
The last but not the least:

Pay attention to the emails of

- your advisor
- Dr. Ulrich Albrecht (GPO)
- Dr. Tin-Yau Tam
Thank You!