

What I wish I Knew when I was in Graduate School

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Based on an excellent book by Tina Seelig:

What I wish I knew when I was 20

Life in Graduate School

- Not like undergrad.
  - You can't succeed just by doing what you are told.
  - Your road to success not predefined.
    - Yes! You have your own road!
- You are responsible for your own success
  - What about your "advisor"?
    - Think of her/him as a mentor.

Be Proactive

- Figure out what you need to do
  - And, do it!
- You need to proactively …
  - Do research: find problems, solve problems, build systems, experiment, …
  - Communicate: write papers, give talks, network, …
  - Manage your relationships: colleagues, advisor, …
- Stretch the boundaries of your current skills
  - Take risks every now and then.

Keep Yourself Motivated

- That's right! You need to do the work of keeping yourself motivated.
  - Spend time reading books that inspire you.
  - Talk to people who inspire you.
  - …
- Look for motivation inside.
  - Don't wait to be pushed by others.
  - Don't wait for someone else's permission to do what you want.

Plan

- If you don't, other people and circumstances will define your future.
- Envision your graduation day
  - What is next? Are you feeling excited?
  - Make sure you are!
- Identify what you want and why.
  - Gives you motivation.
  - Clarifies values.
    - Remember essentialism?
  - Gives you direction.

Be Prepared for Problems

- I see … problems in your future!
  - Research ups and downs
  - Conflicts (with your friends, advisor, …)
  - Procrastination
  - …
- Embrace problems; don't avoid them
  - Opportunities lie within problems
- "The bigger the problem, the bigger the opportunity. Nobody will pay you to solve a non-problem" — Vinod Khosla, Co-founder of Sun Microsystems