GradNews

Time to Degree
I’m pleased to welcome you back to campus and introduce you to the Spring 2015 edition of GradNews, your source of information regarding Graduate School policies and deadlines, as well as changes in graduate and professional education at the University of Utah. This edition of GradNews focuses on issues related to the timely completion of graduate degrees. We’ve included helpful guidance for graduate students in all stages of degree completion, including information on International TA training, building a diverse graduate community, a Dissertation Boot Camp for students just beginning their dissertation writing, and helpful links for benefits and fellowships, personal development, and graduation requirements. This edition of GradNews also features two new initiatives developed by The Graduate School during Fall 2014: A new online Thesis Manuscript Tracking system, and the new Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition, held during October 2014.

I hope you will find GradNews useful and interesting, and I am always interested in hearing your feedback and suggestions. Please feel free to drop me a note at dean@gradschool.utah.edu and let us know how we are doing!

With best regards,

Dave Kieda
Dean, The Graduate School
Professor of Physics and Astronomy

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The Graduate School is committed to setting up efficient administrative practices to facilitate timely degree completion for graduate students. The Graduate Records Office and Thesis Office have clear requirements, processes, and deadlines posted on The Graduate School website: http://gradschool.utah.edu. In order to graduate on schedule, following these guidelines is key. Although norms for average time to degree at the University vary from program to program, the staff in The Graduate School work in partnership with departments, the Registrar, and the Graduation Office to make the graduation process as smooth as possible.

Among other measures, universities often use two major metrics to mark their success: time to degree and completion rates. In today's climate, with the cost of earning degrees rising and the challenges of the changing job market, these two metrics are cited widely and often as being indicators of a university's reputation and ranking and also as a way to be accountable to its stakeholders.

Even though they are in graduate school, some students don't necessarily know where they are headed or exactly how to get there. It is also true that some graduate students change directions and explore other options when they find the program they have entered is not a good fit for them. This is where advising and mentoring play a critical role and where having clear curricular information and pathways to degree completion is paramount. Once a student is on a right path and degree requirements have been fulfilled, the nuts and bolts information on the processes involved in acquiring the thesis release and on the graduation process itself takes some additional attention and perseverance.

The financial investment made in earning advanced degrees is a topic we see in the news constantly, and universities have to be responsible and proactive in encouraging students to complete degrees in a timely manner. There is nothing more concerning than seeing a student spend six or more years in a degree program, acquiring substantial student loan debt, and then not completing the degree, for whatever reason.

It is the mission of The Graduate School to provide clear and helpful information and to work alongside department coordinators, directors of graduate studies, and supervisory committee chairs to make the graduation process as smooth as possible.

As graduation approaches, students should also consider visiting some of the helpful transition resources the University has made available right here on campus:

**Personal Money Management Center**
http://personal-money-management.utah.edu

**Career Services**
http://careers.utah.edu

**Graduation Information**
http://registrar.utah.edu/graduation/index.php

Donna M. White
Associate Dean
The Graduate School
The thought of graduating is exciting, but as is the case with many milestones you reach at the university, there are steps and procedures to follow, deadlines to meet, and applications and approvals that need to be completed. You have come this far in your degree completion; do not skip one of these critical steps and miss graduating! For graduate students planning to complete and graduate this semester, here are some important reminders and tips from the Graduate Records Coordinator in The Graduate School.

Graduate students, as you prepare for Spring 2015 graduation, please be aware of your online student file, Graduate Student Summary, accessed through the Campus Information System (CIS). To familiarize yourself with how to view your electronic graduate record online file, please go to the tutorial on The Graduate School’s webpage: http://gradschool.utah.edu/current-students/electronic-graduate-record-file-tutorial.

In your online file you will have a Graduate Student Program Plan Audit (GSPPA), where you will see the following summary of what is needed in order for you to graduate:

- **Supervisory committee (SVC) approval.**
- **Graduation application** (http://registrar.utah.edu/handbook/graduationgraduation.php).
- **Residency requirement** (http://gradschool.utah.edu/graduate-catalog/degree-requirements).
- **Program of Study (PoS) approval.** The PoS includes all required coursework for the degree and all necessary approvals from your SVC. The PoS is entered after you enroll for your final semester. Please contact your department Graduate Advisor when you have finished enrolling so he/she can move your transcript over to the PoS for the SVC approval.
- **Total hours.** The Graduate School requires a minimum of 30 credit hours for a master’s; however, each department has its own requirements.
- **Thesis hours** (for thesis students). Minimum of 6 thesis credit hours for a master’s; minimum of 14 dissertation credit hours for a doctorate.
- **Exam approvals.** Spring 2015 exam deadlines are listed on The Graduate School’s website under Current Students and under Master’s Graduation Overview or Doctoral Graduation Overview (http://gradschool.utah.edu/current-students).
- **Language verification** (for MAs and some doctorates, if required; http://gradschool.utah.edu/current-students). Please see the Master’s or Doctoral Graduation Overview for deadlines.
- **Final course grades** (posted on May 19, 2015).
- **Graduate School approval.** This is the final approval required to graduate. An audit is run daily to verify all completed requirements.

Please check your graduate transcript to ensure that all of your coursework has been graded. The Graduate Records Coordinator also recommends alerting your Graduate Advisor(s) once you have enrolled in classes for your final semester so that your transcript can be moved over to PoS for committee approval of your online file. This step is very important on the pathway to a smooth graduation process.

Stay in touch with your department Graduate Advisor in updating or correcting any of the required information that might be missing from your GSPPA.

You can walk during Spring 2015 commencement if you are planning to graduate in Summer 2015 or Fall 2015. However, you will need to apply for graduation for the semester you will actually be completing all degree requirements. If it turns out that you need more time and will not be graduating Spring 2015, please reapply for graduation for the appropriate semester. Here is the link: http://registrar.utah.edu/graduation/index.php
Dissertation Boot Camps

Dissertation Boot Camps at the Marriott Library Support Student Success and Completion

By Alison Regan, Associate Librarian, Marriott Library

Participants are not required to complete grueling early morning runs while carrying backpacks filled with library books, and no one tells participants to “drop, and write 20 pages!” Writing a dissertation is painful enough. Dissertation Boot Camps are meant to help students focus on their work, support research and formatting needs, create a supportive environment where students can find and form community, commiserate with classmates facing similar challenges, and gain strength in numbers.

For the past four academic years, the Marriott Library has partnered with the Graduate School to support end-stage PhD students complete their dissertations. Boot Camps are led by librarians Linda St. Clair, Alison Regan, and Donna Ziegenfuss. In just one year, participation has grown from 28 students representing 13 disciplines in Fall 2013 to 72 students representing 26 disciplines during Fall 2014. Twenty-one students have attended Boot Camp twice, and several have participated three or four times. This past fall, students writing master's theses were also invited to attend. The Graduate School Thesis Office also provided flash drives with copies of the new thesis guidelines to all participants this fall. Not only are participant numbers growing; they are also enhancing the Graduate School/Library collaboration.

From Monday-Friday during fall and spring breaks students come to the library at 8:30 am, where they are greeted by those friendly librarians and a hearty breakfast. After breakfast they are treated to a few words of encouragement and advice, as well as some optional brief workshops on topics from Endnote to Latec to NVivo. Librarian colleagues representing such areas as Government Documents, Patents and Trademarks, and Data Management, and professional staff with technical expertise offer information about their services. After that, students disperse throughout the library to write. Participants are expected to commit to writing from 9 am to 1 pm, and are encouraged to stay later. (The library closes at 6 pm during breaks.)

Students speak positively of their experience at Boot Camp. In a survey conducted after the Fall 2014 Boot Camp, students ranked on a scale of 1-5 the average amount of work they accomplished during the Boot Camp week as 3.73. The average response to a question asking them about how supported they felt as they worked in the library was 4.1. When asked if they would continue to try to schedule time for writing and research after Boot Camp, 83% of the students replied “yes.” Students also were very positive about intentions to recommend Boot Camp to others in their department; 76% of the students selected a “5” on a scale of 1-5 to recommend Boot Camp to peers.

The library also conducted interviews with 18 students during last year’s Boot Camp to explore and uncover the needs of Boot Camp participants. Three themes emerged from that data: anxiety, support and connections. Comments on the survey from this year’s Boot Camp participants echo these themes. Students talked about the anxiety associated with writing a dissertation and appreciated support and knowing that others were in the same situation as they were. One student commented, “I especially felt very supported by the availability of the library staff. Just knowing that they were around to help and cheer us on, was a feeling that we often crave in our regular academic set-up and routines.” Another
student said, “It helped me focus better and feel that I am not alone in this.” Connecting with others is a common theme. An example of what students say about Boot Camp is, “Having the chance to interact with students from other departments specifically reminds me of the impact of my work—which is easy to forget when I remain cloistered inside my own department.” A recent Sociology PhD graduate, Nekehia Quashi, for example, wrote that “apart from the free breakfast and VIP access to the group study rooms in the library for one entire week, the Dissertation Boot Camp held at the Marriott Library offers graduate students one of the most priceless opportunities: that is, to foster relationships outside of our home department. During the Boot Camp, I made friends with students in other departments over breakfast. We soon realized our common trials and triumphs in the whole grad school process despite our different fields of study, and this became our bond. We also realized that we had mutual friends. […] The relationships I have been able to develop with librarians have also been invaluable to my work and other areas of my life as a graduate student. It is restorative to know that there are people in the place that has become my second home, the library, who are invested in my overall well-being.” Quashi is currently a Visiting Researcher/Post Doc at the College of Population Studies at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.

Boot Camps, Write-Ins, and Writing Retreats are increasing in numbers across the nation at universities such as Cornell, East Tennessee State, Loyola Chicago, MIT, University of Chicago, and University of Pennsylvania. Though each institution offers different formats, evidence shows that supporting students’ writing helps with degree completion.

Register for the Spring 2015 Dissertation Boot Camp

When: Spring Break - Monday, March 16-Friday, March 20.

Where: Meet at 8:30 am in Room 1170 of the Marriott Library for food, pep talks and community. Writers will then move to various spaces in the Marriott Library to work. Some workshops (attendance optional) will be offered in the afternoons; others (Conducting a Literature Review, Word for Scholars) will be offered before and after the Boot Camp.

Why Attend? The Dissertation Boot Camps aim to help students learn to write more productively by providing students with the following four critical ingredients: 1) space with minimal distractions, 2) writing regimen/ routine, 3) peer motivation and support, 4) subject matter expert help.

Registration: To register, send an email to mlib-education@lists.utah.edu

The email should include answers to the following:
1. What is your discipline and topic?
2. Where are you in the data collection and writing process?
3. What do you hope to accomplish during the Boot Camp?
4. What might the library do to facilitate your success?
November saw The Graduate School’s inaugural 3MT (Three Minute Thesis) competition. As a research presentation competition, 3MT aims to equip graduate students with the skills necessary to communicate the value and impact of their research to a nonspecialist audience. The ability to quickly and effectively articulate the how and why of research to those outside of their field is a critical ability that will aid students in the search for employment and research funding.

3MT participants are able to sign up for a month of workshops in order to learn both the verbal and nonverbal skills needed to make an engaging, jargon-free presentation that is comprehensible to a lay audience. 3MT represents The Graduate School’s commitment to students’ success post-graduation by ensuring that graduates possess the communication skills needed to secure employment and research funds outside the university campus.

To learn more about 3MT, see profiles of this year’s winner and the other competitors, and to watch videos of the competition, please visit: http://gradschool.utah.edu/3MT

**Interview with 3MT Winner**

**Simon Currie**

*What is the most important lesson you learned in 3MT, the one skill or tool that in 5 years you’ll reflect on and say, “Yeah, I learned that in 3MT?”*

I learned a lot about keeping a proper scope on my research depending on the context of the presentation. Laboring over which aspects of my research would be accessible to a general audience helped me realize that a lot of what I had been treating as “general knowledge” probably is not even accessible to fellow scientists who work on slightly different subjects. Therefore, I envision that this training will aid me in speaking in more professional settings as well.

*What made you decide to participate in 3MT and how did it feel to win the competition?*

Within my department (Oncological Sciences) there is an intentional focus on ensuring that students have opportunities to present their research every year as a part of the training process. I have received lots of positive feedback
from these experiences and was encouraged by my mentor, Barbara Graves, as well as other professors to participate in 3MT.

I felt very fortunate to win the 3MT competition, and I say that because I was able to watch my fellow 3MT participants throughout the entire 5-week training process. I was really impressed by the vast improvement that everyone had made over that time at effectively conveying his or her research to a general audience.

*Let’s talk about your research a little. What is the most important thing that people should know about your research?*

I would want people to know that cancer cells are very difficult to selectively kill because they utilize essentially the same cellular processes that are important for the well being of our normal, healthy cells. The challenge of identifying the crucial, yet subtle, changes that transform normal healthy cells into cancer cells is like trying to find the metaphorical needle in a haystack. Yet the information gained from identifying those important changes can be (and have been in certain types of cancers) leveraged into new therapeutic strategies for helping cancer patients.

*How did you wind up in Utah doing cancer research?*

Serendipity? To be honest, before I had made my visits to potential graduate schools Utah was not my top choice, but that changed quickly. I was absolutely impressed by the quality of the scientific research being done here at Utah, but what really distinguished Utah from other schools for me was the quality of the people here. It seemed to me that the professors here were very down-to-earth, relatable, and really cared about you as a person and not just as a means to an end. That early perception has proved to be an accurate foreshadowing of my time here; I have been incredibly blessed with edifying relationships with many mentors, colleagues, and friends.

*What are your professional and personal goals for the next few years?*

In the next few years I am hoping to graduate, publish the research projects that I have been working on, and find a new lab with exciting science for my postdoctoral fellowship. On a personal level, I try to approach each day with curiosity, creativity, and delight. If I can do that and remain faithful to myself and to my journey over these next couple of years I think that I’ll be doing well!

*Tell us about Simon the person outside of the lab. If you had the luxury of an entire week of free time how would you spend it?*

I try to take advantage of the world-class opportunities for outdoor recreation that we have here in Utah as much as I can, which for me means that I am skiing and snowshoeing in the winter and hiking and camping in the summer. Along those lines I am planning on visiting Glacier National Park next summer for about a week to camp and backpack, so I think that will be my next extended free time adventure!
CELEBRATE DIVERSITY MINI-GRANT

The Celebrate Diversity Mini-grant helps support activities that value the various contributions of traditionally underrepresented students in higher education through a limited number of grant awards up to $1,000. **The Spring Semester deadline is January 31, 2015.** For more information, please visit: [https://gradschool.utah.edu/diversity/celebrate-diversity-mini-grant/](https://gradschool.utah.edu/diversity/celebrate-diversity-mini-grant/)

We would like to feature the SACNAS student chapter, which was awarded a Celebrate Diversity Mini-grant for the Fall Semester for their speaker series called “SACNAS Talks.” SACNAS is a graduate student chapter that promotes professional development, scientific understanding and higher education within underrepresented minorities in the sciences at the undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral levels. Chapter President Peter Ramirez said, “SACNAS Talks were developed to inspire underrepresented students in their career journeys in STEM, empower students with practical tools and advice that help them achieve their career goals, and to stimulate dialogue about important issues in our community.”

Since its inception of SACNAS Talks in Spring 2013 the following scientists have facilitated the talks: Dr. Claudio Villanueva, Dr. Mario Capecchi, Dr. Carrie Byington, Dr. Cynthia Furse, Dr. Adrian Viliami Bell, and Dr. Lino Gonzalez. Dr. Gonzalez, a recent speaker for SACNAS Talks, discussed “Getting a Foot in the Door: Developing Your CV/Resume and Excelling at Interviews for Jobs in Industry.”

UNDERREPRESENTED GRADUATE STUDENT SOCIAL

The Diversity Office and the Marriott Library co-sponsored the 2nd annual Underrepresented Graduate Student Social that was held at the Crimson View restaurant on September 25, 2014. Approximately 30 graduate students and staff enjoyed the opportunity to network with other graduate students from other academic disciplines. This year we invited multiple offices to share helpful retention services, including The Graduate School Office of Fellowships & Benefits, Graduate School Thesis Office, Graduate Writing Center, School of Medicine Office of Inclusion and Outreach, and the Career Center. Additionally, we shared information about our graduate student clubs and fellowship opportunities. We hope to see you at next year’s fall social and other events throughout the year.
## Additional Information on Time to Degree

### TUITION BENEFIT

If you rely on tuition benefit and are approaching the end of your tenure as a graduate student, it's important to make sure that you have enough tuition benefit eligibility remaining to finish your degree. Check with your department coordinator if you are unsure how many semesters you have left. Semester limits for participation in the Tuition Benefit Program are as follows:

1. Students in a master's program are limited to two years (four semesters) of tuition benefit support.
2. Students in a doctoral program who entered with a bachelor's degree are limited to five years (10 semesters) of tuition benefit support.
3. Students in a doctoral program who also received a master's degree at the University of Utah are limited to five years of tuition benefit support (two years for a master’s + three additional years for a doctorate).
4. Students entering a doctoral program with a master's degree from another university are eligible for four years (eight semesters) of tuition benefit support.

Additional information can be found at:

http://gradschool.utah.edu/tbp/tuition-benefit-program-guidelines

### Helpful Tips from Our Graduate Assistants

Two graduate assistants who work in The Graduate School have generated a list of tips regarding time to degree to help other graduate students. Jennyffer Morales is a fourth-year doctoral student in Education, Culture & Society and is a Diversity Office graduate assistant. Shahrzad Jalili is a third-year doctoral student in the Public Health program. Below are some of their recommendations to help graduate students take proactive steps towards sensible time to degree and completion:

- Meet regularly with your appointed advisor to discuss your progress.
- Find a mentor who supports your work professionally and academically.
- Keep track of your progress using a “Degree Program Map,” which is often provided by graduate departments.
- Attend research seminars offered within your department.
- Attend research-related workshops offered by the Marriott Library.
- Keep in mind self-care, because burnout can occur.
- Start your own study groups and dissertation writing groups.
- Find out when required courses are offered and plan your schedule in advance (http://www.utah.edu/students/catalog.php).
- Apply for on- and off-campus scholarships and fellowships (http://gradschool.utah.edu/tbp/graduate-fellowship-opportunities).
- Join a graduate student group/club to build a sense of community (https://gradschool.utah.edu/diversity/graduate-student-groups).

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New

**Online Thesis Manuscript Tracking**

During Fall Semester 2014, The Graduate School developed a Thesis Manuscript Tracking system. This online tracking system allows graduate students to check the status of their manuscript and to receive comments and edited manuscripts from the thesis editors. Each time a student sends in a revision, the Thesis Manuscript Tracking system logs the time of submission. When the manuscript is ready, the system also logs the ready time/date, and provides Thesis Office comments and manuscript status to the student online. The online website also provides details regarding how many manuscripts are in the queue, thereby allowing the student to predict more accurately when the revised manuscript will be available.

The online Thesis Manuscript Tracking system is now available for use by every graduate student submitting a manuscript to our office. This new service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week, including holidays. A short tutorial and links to the online Thesis Manuscript Tracking system can be found on The Graduate School website at [http://gradschool.utah.edu/thesis/thesis-manuscript-tracking](http://gradschool.utah.edu/thesis/thesis-manuscript-tracking).

**International Teaching Assistant Program Update**

The number of international TAs (ITAs) on our campus is growing. In August and September of 2014, 133 students completed the ITA Workshop. Another 20 or so had the training waived due to undergraduate degrees or prior experience as TAs at the U or other colleges in North America. In January, 2015 40 more students will participate, bringing the total for this academic year to nearly 200!

Our ITAs bring a diversity of cultures, languages, and scholarship to the U, contributing in a very practical way to the globalization of our campus.

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**Ellen Christina Steffensen Cannon Scholarship 25th Anniversary**

The Ellen Christina Steffensen Cannon Scholarship supports several graduate and undergraduate students in the Colleges of Education and Humanities each year. Established in 1990, the award has supported 203 undergraduate students and 309 graduate students, for a total of 512 students. One of this year’s 12 graduate recipients, Sarah Davies, plans to use her award to explore “how and when student-produced video explanations of physics concepts are beneficial to students themselves and to their peers.” While the award supports students in humanities and education, its influence tends to extend beyond those fields. We are grateful to the Cannon family for their continued support and involvement in this effort.

This Spring will mark the **25th Anniversary** of the Ellen Christina Steffensen Cannon Scholarship. The University of Utah Graduate School will be holding a special celebration in honor of the scholarship and its 200+ awardees!

If you are a Steffensen Cannon Scholar, please visit [http://tinyurl.com/ocpjyrq](http://tinyurl.com/ocpjyrq) to reconnect with us!
Important Dates

Tuition Benefit

Friday, January 23, 2015
For Tuition Benefit Eligible Graduate Students: Deadline for completing the Graduate Tuition Benefit Approval form is today. Students who complete the form after this date may incur a late fee. Late fees due to late signatures will not be refunded.

Monday, January 26, 2015
Tuition due. Students must pay their portion of tuition by today at 5:00 pm.

Insurance

Monday, February 2, 2015
For Graduate Students Eligible for the Subsidized Insurance Program: Last day to change insurance enrollment is today. Please contact your department coordinator if you need to change your insurance enrollment. No changes can be made to the subsidized insurance enrollment after today.

Thesis Office

Thesis Office deadlines for Spring Semester: Following are the last dates that submissions will be accepted for the editing process. However, in order to make sure you achieve degree completion in a timely manner and graduate in a given semester, we highly recommend submitting your manuscript to the Thesis Office for a Preliminary Review as soon as you have written a chapter or two.

Friday, March 13, 2015
Last day department-approved submissions over 200 pages will be accepted.

Friday, March 20, 2015
Last day submissions will be accepted to begin the format approval process.

Monday, April 27, 2015
Last day approved manuscripts will be accepted to begin the thesis release process.

Fellowships

Monday, March 16, 2015
Emerging Diversity Scholars Fellowship Application Deadline

Graduate Records

Sunday, February 1, 2015
Summer 2015 application for graduation deadline

Sunday, March 1, 2015
All changes to be reflected in Commencement program

Wednesday, April 29, 2015
Last day to apply/reapply for graduation

Wednesday, April 29, 2015
Last day to request a Statement of Degree Completion

Thursday, May 7, 2015
Last day to submit a grade change form.

Friday, May 22, 2015
Department deadline to have student files complete in Graduate Tracking System