

The background is a gradient from deep red at the top to dark blue at the bottom, speckled with white dots resembling stars. Overlaid on this are several faint, white circular patterns. Some are solid lines, while others are dashed. Some circles have arrows indicating a clockwise direction. One large circle on the left has a scale with numbers from 140 to 260 in increments of 10.

SO...YOU THINK YOU WANT TO DO YOUR PHD? LESSONS LEARNED

CHARLOTTE ROSS
DOUGLAS COLLEGE
APRIL 25, 2022

WHAT IS YOUR PASSION?

- You will be doing this for many years to come
- Practically no one else will think your topic of study is as interesting as you do

INVESTIGATE, REFLECT

- Take your time
- Save articles of interest, things that capture your attention
- Take a graduate course that interests you
- Network

INVESTIGATE, REFLECT

- Investigate programs:
 - Type/discipline
 - Online, talk to others
 - Does it fit with your educational/career goals?
 - Does it fit with who you are as a person?
 - Does it fit with your life?

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

- Understand the requirements and structure of the program
 - Coursework
 - Comprehensive Exam (Comps)
 - Traditional or 3-paper
- Before you even start – is there something integral to your work that you will need in place to carry out your research successfully?
i.e. my recruiting and BCNU, access to a database

LOOK FOR A PRIMARY SUPERVISOR

- Pick well! This individual will guide, support and anchor you throughout the process. They are your lifeline
- From networking, courses you've taken, reputation
- Look at their research profile – their area of expertise must fit closely with your goals

STRENGTHENING YOUR APPLICATION

- Publications
- Grades
- References - choose well!
- Grants and funding
- Presentations and other dissemination
- Committees, collaboration

LOOK FOR A PRIMARY SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

- Meet with potential supervisor
 - You need to 'click'
 - They are not your best bud: You want and need strong boundaries
 - What are their expectations of grad students?
 - What are your expectations of them? Remember, you are in the driver's seat here
 - What time and resources do they have to offer grad students?
 - Pick a primary supervisor with experience in guiding students through this process

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Consider other faculty who you have encountered
- Take suggestions from your primary supervisor and meet with them
- They need to work well with you and each other
- Have a variety of scholarship expertise for you to draw from; research method, topic, discipline
- Keep it small
- Ask other students

GENERAL TIPS FOR WORKING WELL WITH YOUR COMMITTEE

- Be organized; set agendas for meetings, provide them with docs prior to discussion
- Don't send out the bat signal unless you need it
- Recognize the expertise and importance of the Administrative staff
- Get on the grad student blog

REFERENCES / LIT REVIEW

- Start your literature review now
- Sign up on Research Gate or similar site
- Meet with graduate student reference librarian
 - Learn how to perform a high-quality doctoral-level literature search
 - Learn how to create alerts for new works
 - Learn a reference management system (i.e., Zotero)
 - Library will have various workshops for graduate students – take them!
 - Learn data analysis software

OTHER RANDOM TIPS

- You don't have to have your research question formulated at the outset, it will develop and refine as you progress through your program
- Develop your knowledge about your topic and research methodology
- Develop and become part of a community of scholars
 - Seek out opportunities to meet other scholars
 - Don't be afraid to reach out to scholars whose work you admire

MORE RANDOM TIPS

- Hire professionals, i.e., transcriptionist, editor
- Develop thick skin for required revisions
- Take notes, consider Comps all along the way
 - Find out right away what the Comps structure/expectations are
 - Write mini-essays as you study
- Write your thesis Conclusion *as you write your thesis*

EVEN MORE RANDOM TIPS

- Pay attention to the questions your committee asks you during your meetings – they will appear at your defense!
- Attend others' MA and PhD defenses and learn strategies
- Review and use the library resources for grad students – they are SO valuable
- Make your health a priority!

ONE DAY YOU TOO WILL DO A TETLEY TEA DANCE!



THANK YOU!

