

How to Succeed in a Ph.D. Program

Brita Munsinger
Department of Computer Science
University of Texas at San Antonio
tzb425@my.utsa.edu

ABSTRACT

This paper is a brief survey of several articles about how to succeed in a Ph.D. program. It also serves as a practice tool for learning L^AT_EX₂_ε and BibT_EX.

1. INTRODUCTION

In our previous homework assignment we were asked to discuss reasons for going into a Ph.D. program in computer science. For this assignment, let's assume you've applied, the application process went well, and you've been admitted to a Ph.D. program. We'll make the most of this exciting opportunity and review strategies others have found to increase your chances of success.

2. SURVEY OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

There are a number of articles that cover the Ph.D. student experience. In this assignment, we will review three.

The article by Drezde and Wallach takes a balanced approach, covering both the mechanics of research and the impact of factors outside of your research. They point out the importance of choosing an advisor with whom you work well and the need to take care of yourself personally. Getting a Ph.D. is a marathon, not a sprint, and outside factors can easily derail you from your work.

DesJardin's article also places an emphasis on the process of research and the steps needed to define your research problem and finish your thesis. She also includes tips for advisors. Something that's easy for students to forget is how the student and their advisor work as a team.

Harchol-Balter provides a comprehensive coverage of the Ph.D. process, with a strong emphasis on the application process. A recurring thread in her article is the importance of deep thinking on the part of the student about the realities of graduate research and if this is the right choice for them.

3. CONCLUSIONS

A recurring theme through the three articles surveyed in this paper is the importance of fit. One of the first questions a potential graduate student must ask themselves is, "Sure, graduate school sounds great, but is it for me?" This question pops up again and again, when the student is faced with a choice of advisors and research topics. One's success in graduate school is greatly influenced by how well you can listen to your own heart and follow it.

4. REFERENCES

- [1] M. desJardins. How to succeed in graduate school: A guide for students and advisors, December 1994.
- [2] M. Drezde and H. M. Wallach. How to be a successful phd student (in computer science (in nlp/ml)), 2012.
- [3] M. Harchol-Balter. Applying to ph.d. programs in computer science.