

UNC Graduate Student Association
2020-2021

Helpful Tips & Useful Information for New Graduate Students

**University of Northern Colorado
Graduate Student Association
2020 - 2021**



This guide contains information collected from current and former graduate students at the University of Northern Colorado and is a publication of the UNC Graduate Student Association (GSA). The GSA is a student-run organization that seeks to advance the interests of approximately 3,000 UNC graduate students through the representation of their needs and support of activities central to graduate education.



Table of Contents:

[Academics](#)

[Community Resources](#)

[Employment](#)

[Financial Advice](#)

[Health/Fitness/Medical/Wellness](#)

[Moving/Housing](#)

[Networking](#)

[Recreation & Entertainment](#)

[Relationships, Family, and Social Advice](#)

[Scholarships, Assistantships, & Financial Aid](#)

[School/Campus Resources](#)

[Software, Apps, Websites](#)

[Time Management](#)

[General Advice](#)



Academics:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Be aware if there are any courses in your program that are only offered once every two years. And seriously consider the electives your advising professor encourages you to take.

Rachel Ryan, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, M.S.

Don't take grades too seriously: The last lesson I want to emphasize (there are many I learned but these 3 are my absolute top I believe worth sharing) is to not beat yourself up if you do not get the grade on a paper or exam you want. By now, you may guess that I am a dedicated student who organizes her life. Your guess is correct. I hold this standard of living in everything I do in addition to schoolwork. In my second semester, I had the most difficult biology graduate level course ever and had to adjust my study skills for every test. By now, I have developed an excellent system to study and ace exams, as well as retain the material learned. However, this particular course challenged me in every academic way possible: learning meticulous pathways, recalling details, demonstrating how the small detail relates to the overall big picture, and applying/executing these details/methods learned to real life situations/current research. I scored 80s/70s on exams and an 80/100 on a presentation I thought was excellent (On a presentation? Weak for a Ph.D. student who's presented in conferences, I know...). Going throughout the entire semester knowing I was going to receive my first and hard-earned B in grad school, I literally fell off my seat when I saw I received an A. I am sharing this story because I learned the most from this class in my entire academic career thus far. Aside from the course materials, it brought me back to the reason why one goes to graduate school in the first place: research. Several professors in the graduate program have already expressed this to students who worry about grades; "there's more to life than just school," "the impact of your research and learned skills are worth more than a letter grade," "if you are getting straight A's in your Ph.D., then you're not doing something right." Following their advice and focusing on what matters would have saved me time in trying to study for that class in every free chunk of time I had.

Victoria Flores, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.

Always talk to your advisor or professors in the courses you are taking. Maintaining a healthy and open dialogue with all professors in your area of study will help get you through the toughest times in your degree program.

Anthony Azari, Criminology & Criminal Justice, M.A.

Use Google Scholar. Join Researchgate.net. Call Professors by Dr. Last Name... even in your dissertation review. Yes they will become your friends, but they are Dr. So and So when in a professional or academic setting!!! Introduce them as Dr. So and So not by first name.

Forrest Swick, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, M.A.



Community Resources:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

UNC students can get extra monthly 200-page printing credit from local High Plains libraries. Bring your ID card and open a free account with them, and you can also borrow books and DVDs from these libraries.

Resources:

[High Plains Library](#)

Yuan Li, Music: Performance: Keyboard, D.A.

Once you have been a legal resident of the City of Greeley for at least 10 months in the past year, you can receive a food tax rebate of \$65 per person in your family. To qualify, your income must be below certain thresholds (less than \$23,350 annually for a single person). The City will send this money back to you after filling out a quick form. You can also qualify for a rebate on your energy expenses if your income is low enough.

Resources:

[Food Tax Rebate Program](#)

[Energy Assistance Rebate Program](#)

Anonymous

Apply for a King Soopers loyalty card to receive discounts on gas.

Anonymous



Employment:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Greeley has a lot of areas that hire college students and are willing to work with their schedules. There is retail, coffee shops, assistantships, and all kinds of areas that you can find a job!

Resources:

[UNC Handshake](#)

M'lyn Miller, Communication, M.A.

If possible, I would urge to limit off campus work and to instead invest more time to becoming active with faculty outside of class by assisting with research or professional service.

Shane Murphy, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.



Financial Advice:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Create a budget with your new stipend (if you are a GA, RA, or GTA) income and stick to it. If you live in Greeley, it's definitely affordable. I've been able to pay rent and other bills like insurance and utilities, purchase groceries, have a couple nights out a month, and put money into my savings nearly every month while in the program. It takes discipline, but it is not impossible.

Karina Sanchez, Biological Education, Ph.D.

Apply for funding as often as you can. The grants I have received through UNC have allowed me to complete research and attend national conferences.

Resources:

[GSA Grant Funding](#)

Aspen King, Biological Education, Ph.D.

Use credit cards with benefits that match your lifestyle/spending. Look at various credit card offers on credit card comparison websites. Some cards have no annual fees, while others may cost a lot just to have. Many cards offer substantial sign-up bonuses. Depending on the benefits each card has, the annual fee may be worthwhile. Using reward-based credit cards for monthly recurring purchases allows benefits to add up quickly (utility bills, tuition, mobile phone, cable/internet, etc.). Do not use credit cards for credit; always pay off your monthly balance in full.

Resources:

[United Explorer Card: free checked bag, TSA Precheck credit, United Club passes](#)

Anonymous

An important thing to note about Graduate School versus your undergrad is that financial opportunities are different. In your undergrad, you can be offered many scholarships or funding options to help you, but in Graduate School it can become a little tricky in finding those ways to help pay for school. A cool aspect of Graduate School is that there are some assistantships offered to students to where they have the possibility of getting help with their tuition as well as a stipend offered. This is also a great way to get some experience to add to your resume! So, make sure you look for those opportunities and talk to financial aid to make sure you are not missing anything else that could help!

M'lyn Miller, Communication, M.A.

If you are in a time of need, UNC has Bear Pantry to help at-risk students with needed nutritional support. Bear Pantry is available to all students at any point while attending UNC.

Resources:

[Bear Pantry](#)

Anthony Azari, Criminology & Criminal Justice, M.A.

Be open to your advisor about any and all financial challenges. Talk to them early on if possible and be transparent. They are there to help you succeed and overcome many of life's challenges.

Anthony Azari, Criminology & Criminal Justice, M.A.



UNC Graduate Student Association
2020-2021

Keep a budget spreadsheet where you can track your spending. Aim to save money, even if you might not be able to save much money or any at all. No one saves a bunch of money during grad school, but you don't want to end up too far in the red.

Kyle Kemats, Chemical Education, Ph.D.

If you are a GA/TA, try registering the Payroll service at Carter Hall. It is very convenient and secure to manage your monthly assistantship compensation and an ideal plan if you prefer to deduct the tuition fee, student fee, rent (if you stay at Arlington Park Apartments) and other expenses in a monthly payment.

Yuan Li, Music: Performance: Keyboard, D.A.

For international students, if you are planning to apply for a credit card, you can go to Chase branches here in Greeley. I don't recommend Wells Fargo, because they only accept applications from US permanent residents or green-card holders. Yet since there is an on-campus Wells Fargo branch at University Center, it's a convenient option if you want to open a checking/savings account.

Yuan Li, Music: Performance: Keyboard, D.A.

For international students, double check if your country of residence has a tax treaty with the United States. It is a smart choice to legally have tax exemption or have a reduced tax rate when you file taxes in spring. You can contact the staff at CIE or go check the website of the IRS.

Yuan Li, Music: Performance: Keyboard, D.A.

Center for International Education will email all foreign students and provide free access to a tax preparation software: Sprintax.

Yuan Li, Music: Performance: Keyboard, D.A.

I encourage you to create a monthly budget based on what your stipend is. Make sure to create a buffer to save some money for "life happens" situations, such as car breaking down, etc.

Zac McCarver, Sport & Exercise Science: Social Psychology of Sport & Physical Activity, Ph.D.

Check out nefe.org - they have great information on Helping Face Financial Challenges Through Every Stage of Life! Perfect for grad students...

Forrest Swick, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, M.A.

Get a King Soopers or Safeway card. Each \$100 spent is 10 cents off gas. Be sure to get their apps as well as they have digital coupons.

Forrest Swick, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, M.A.

Coffee: Get coffee grinder and buy coffee beans! \$6 for a coffee... adds up... you can get a bag of beans that will last weeks!

Forrest Swick, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, M.A.

Bear Biz - show your student ID for the exclusive student discounts!

Resources:

[Bear Biz](#)



Graduate Student Association

UNC Graduate Student Association
2020-2021

Forrest Swick, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, M.A.



Graduate Student Association

Health/Fitness/Medical/Wellness:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

It is so easy to put your health to the side and not make sure you are doing okay. Graduate school can be really draining mentally and physically and it's so important to check in on yourself and be okay with putting yourself first. Many people become so stressed that they feel sick and so make sure to find time for that whatever it may look like for your situation.

M'lyn Miller, Communication, M.A.

Take your Health seriously, it's actually more important than whatever degree you are pursuing. Graduate school is hard enough, and it will be even harder if you are unhealthy. You need to be sharp and full of energy to succeed. Make exercise a habit, make it part of your weekly routine. It doesn't matter what you do, just pick something you like so that you don't dread doing it. It will benefit your mental health as well as your physical health.

Resources:

[UNC Campus Recreation Center](#)

Kyle Kemats, Chemical Education, Ph.D.



Moving/Housing:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Living close to campus has been really nice. Greeley gets a bad rep. but I think it's a fantastic city! Don't let people convince you that commuting from a "cooler" city like Fort Collins will be worth it. Considering how often you will be making that commute and how much you will likely be getting paid (if you have a GA OR GTA), it's not worth it.

Karina Sanchez, Biological Education, Ph.D.

Facebook marketplace is a great place to look for housing. You can scroll through posts or make a post yourself. Be sure to describe what you're looking for and some info about you (clean, bed early, pets, roommate gender preferences, etc.)

Amanda Bevan, Biological Education, Ph.D.

I would say as far as moving, to make sure you find the place you want to live that fits you best. There are a lot of great options for apartments that are near campus and if you do your research and find the best one for you, it will make the transition way easier.

M'lyn Miller, Communication, M.A.

There are plenty of places to rent that should be in your budget. However, it is more difficult to find a place if you have pets. Try to do an onsite visit if you can.

Kyle Kemats, Chemical Education, Ph.D.

Try to move at least a month before classes start. That way you have enough time to settle in and get to know Greeley a little bit before classes start.

Leslie Walker, Public Health/Community Health Education M.P.H.

The biggest suggestion I have for incoming students is to use the current students in your program to provide you with the most authentic information on housing options and locations. The current students will have a firsthand experience and be able to help provide a rich perspective on the moving process.

Zac McCarver, Sport & Exercise Science: Social Psychology of Sport & Physical Activity, Ph.D.

Craigslist is a helpful place to check for apartments outside of the standard online listing services
Resources:

[Craigslist: Fort Collins](#)

Otto Buchholz, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.

Many of the roads in the City of Greeley operate on a grid-like system, particularly around the University. In general, avenues run north/south and streets run east/west. Often you can know the exact location of a property from the address:

1500 20th Street = 15th Avenue and 20th Street

1200 21st Avenue = 12th Street and 21st Avenue

Anonymous



Move early in the summer if possible so you can apply for in-state tuition the following summer

Anonymous

Many of the houses near UNC are close to 100 years old. Ask the landlord if the electrical system has been updated to modern safety standards. A house can look remodeled on the surface, but old electrical systems can be hazardous.

Anonymous

Check the zoning of any properties you consider moving into. High, medium, and low residential zoning areas have different rules for the number of unrelated people that can live in a single residence. You don't want to be evicted from your rental halfway through the semester because you're living in an improperly zoned residence.

Resources:

[City of Greeley Zoning Map](#)

Anonymous

If considering a basement unit, be on the lookout for "egress" windows that can be used to escape in the event of a fire. Many old houses near the campus were built before modern safety codes were created and lack of egress windows creates a fire trap.

Resources:

[What is an egress window?](#)

Anonymous



Networking:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Travel for conferences if you can! They are one of the best ways to learn about up and coming things in your field and are excellent networking opportunities. If you are traveling to a conference, bring business cards or information about yourself and your research to share with others.

Resources:

[UNC Business Card Printing](#)

Aspen King, Biological Education, Ph.D.

Go to GSA (Graduate Student Association) sponsored events. They are fun and affordable and are a great way to get to know other graduate students.

[GSA Event Calendar](#)

Anthony Azari, Criminology & Criminal Justice, M.A.

Depending on your current living situation don't be afraid to ask your new advisor for the contact information for current or other new doctoral students. Greeley is much more affordable when you live with a group of students rather than alone.

Nathan Robey, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.

Make time to go to events with other graduate students. Graduate school can be very demanding and the relationships you make will help you get through some of the rougher times in school. Make sure to reach out and network as much as possible. Your schooling is important as well as the grades that you stride towards, but meeting experts in your field outside of UNC is critically important.

Drew Olson, Biological Sciences: Thesis, M.S.

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) is a wonderful resource to get involved on campus, but to also ease your worries about the transition process and enhancing the experience once you arrive. Connect with the GSA for opportunities on campus, campus resources, but also job opportunities across campus.

Resources:

[UNC Graduate Student Association](#)

Zac McCarver, Sport & Exercise Science: Social Psychology of Sport & Physical Activity, Ph.D.



Recreation & Entertainment:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

The gym has all kinds of outdoor gear you can rent FOR FREE. You can rent multiple items for friends/family visiting.

Resources:

[UNC Outdoor Pursuits Gear Shop](#)

Amanda Bevan, Biological Education, Ph.D.

The gym pass for classes is incredibly cheap ~40 for all semester and access to all classes!!

Resources:

[UNC Group Fitness](#)

Amanda Bevan, Biological Education, Ph.D.

The campus recreation center is amazing. The outdoor pursuits gear shop has a ton of nice equipment that comes in handy for exploring the Colorado wilderness all year long. They also have excellent lift ticket deals for students!

Resources:

[UNC Campus Recreation](#)

Aspen King, Biological Education, Ph.D.

As I mentioned before the recreation center offers many different options to stay active. As far as entertainment, there are plays being shown throughout each semester and they are really great! The students in them are extremely talented and it's a great way to break away from studying for a bit. The music department also holds some concerts around campus to where you can listen to various styles of music. As far as the Greeley community, there is the downtown area that has events like Friday fest, blues jam, and other opportunities to listen to music and experience the Greeley downtown.

M'lyn Miller, Communication, M.A.

When able to visit other towns in Colorado and get out of Greeley. The state is gorgeous and there's plenty to do in Denver, Boulder, Ft Collins. See a show at Red Rocks!!

Kevin Imhof, Sport & Exercise Science: Sport Administration, M.S.

I believe that one of the most useful places on campus is the Campus Rec/ Outdoor Pursuits department. They provide so many "healthy" benefits to students. Through campus rec you can get involved with intramural sports as well as working out and meeting new people. It is easy to sometimes get wrapped up in the class part of being a graduate student. Getting out and exercising, either by yourself or joining a group, helps clear your mind as well as well as put things into perspective. The Outdoor Pursuits program has great opportunities for bike rental (costs nothing), hiking, group activities like kayaking, trips to the mountains, a climbing wall, etc. Sometime not doing anything physical and just getting a massage to work out the kinks is enough. The Campus Rec Center is a fabulous resource.

Kristina Burton, Accounting, M.A.C.C.



UNC Graduate Student Association
2020-2021

There are a few \$1.50 per scoop Chinese places around town. You can really load up on food for around \$6 or less. It's not the healthiest, but it's not bad if you just stick to the meat and veggies dishes and stay away from the sweet chicken.

Kyle Kemats, Chemical Education, Ph.D.

Greeley has some dining options. I'm not too sure on deals, happy hour isn't really a "thing" in Greeley. Lunas is pretty good, so is Doug's diner. Also, for a more "fancy" experience Lucky Fin is nice. The movie theater is nice, they added new seats and they're nice and comfy. Take advantage of outdoor pursuits and renting gear to go camping and doing lots of other outdoor activities is a good idea. VASA gym is a good option if you're not really interested in the REC center here (even though its free for students). VASA offers a lot of different fitness classes within the monthly membership so that's really nice.

Leslie Walker, Public Health/Community Health Education M.P.H.

Coffee Shops: Cranford if you want to be removed from campus, Margie's and the Blue Mug if close.
Breweries: Too many to detail, that being said Patrick's Pub is a great spot on Thursday night's for live Irish music.

Resources:

[Cranford's Tea Tavern](#)

[Margie's Java Joint](#)

[The Blue Mug](#)

[Patrick's Irish Pub](#)

Shane Murphy, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.

The Poudre trail is great on the north side of town; the best section is heading west from the Signature Bluffs Natural Area.

Resources:

[Poudre River Trail](#)

[Signature Bluffs Natural Area](#)

Shane Murphy, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.

Hiking in the northern Colorado region is highly accessible. Day trips and weekend trips put a lot of great outdoor opportunities in easy reach.

Otto Buchholz, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.

The UNC Rec Center fees are included in semester fees, so utilize this resource as much as possible.

There are a lot of great parks and running routes through Greeley, too.

Otto Buchholz, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.

The passport at Patrick's Irish pub has some fun rewards and a great variety of local and non-local beers

Resources:

[Patrick's Irish Pub](#)

Otto Buchholz, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.



Graduate Student Association

UNC Graduate Student Association
2020-2021

Eat out very little. Making food at home saves big bucks.

[Roma's](#) - Don't eat there unless you have printed out a coupon!

[8th Ave. Mexican food truck!](#) :-)

Adult Beverages? Learn how to make beer or wine. Tastes great, is simple and fun!

Drink Beer or Wine with your meal? Get food to go... and pick up your adult beverage on the way home.

Adult beverage purchases while eating out are the biggest money maker for the restaurants.

Forrest Swick, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, M.A.



Graduate Student Association

Relationships, family, and social advice:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

If you are women in STEM. Join WIGS (Women in Graduate STEM) it's a campus social club that provides opportunities to meet and hang out with other women.

Resources:

[WIGS \(Women in Graduate STEM\)](#)

Karina Sanchez, Biological Education, Ph.D.

Attend the GSA (Graduate Student Association) events. They are planned well in advance and offer great opportunities to take a break with little financial burden to students.

Resources:

[GSA Event Calendar](#)

Karina Sanchez, Biological Education, Ph.D.

Talk with your partner about your time commitments. It can be difficult to take breaks from school, teaching, and research. If your partner is moving here with you, have a conversation about how busy you may become, especially in your first few months.

Karina Sanchez, Biological Education, Ph.D.

Ask for help or guidance: A second lesson I learned within 2 months of being here at UNCO and juggling one teaching assistantship, one internship, three core classes, and two projects, was to ask the senior doctoral students for guidance. There is a level of expectation from you when you enter the program, but honestly, if you are like me and other dedicated students, you want to supersede expectations and prove that the program did not make a mistake in bringing you on! Of course you will not know everything (definitely me) and will need help. There is nothing wrong with asking for step-by-step directions in completing a task. Be humble and learn what you can from other well-seasoned students. Their skills and lessons learned are worth so much of your time in trying to do the same things and possibility making the same mistakes. Also, do not limit your asking for help to senior doctoral students. Email professors and authors of research papers you are reading! They will most likely respond in hopes of collaboration. Networking in this manner has helped me strengthen my research skills. In fact, I would say research skills fundamentally represent how resourceful you can be.

Victoria Flores, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.

Having a support system is really important. I am usually in class every other day and then at dance the days I am not in class and so that makes seeing my family pretty difficult. My family is super understanding of it though and they just make sure that when I do have the availability to check in and to spend time with me. Friendships are a hard one because unless they are in the same situation as you it can be hard to understand why you are always busy and can't hang out. I have definitely had relationships with friends that I thought were super strong but when they were unable to understand that I am not always free to hang out, it would create a rift. I think being open and honest about where you are at in life and how busy you are creates the understanding you need and the people in your life will not be upset about it. Checking in even if its short is always good.

M'lyn Miller, Communication, M.A.



Make as many friends and connections as you can. Friends can help you through the good and bad. Many of the friends that make at school can understand what you are going through because they are going through the same thing. Aside from the friends that you make at school you also want to make as many connections at different universities, at conferences, etc. as possible. You never know who may be able to help you in the future and who you may be able to work with. Connections are extremely important because as they say in a lot of cases it's not what you know, but who you know.

Peter Smoak, Sport and Exercise Science: Exercise Physiology, Ph.D.

If you have a significant other, make sure to create time for them. Graduate school can be tough, and it can be time-consuming, but it is important to realize that just like school is important your significant other is important. If you can make all this time for school, there is no reason not to set aside a little time for the person in your life. A simple way to do this is to pick a day and time every week that is dedicated to just the 2 of you.

Peter Smoak, Sport and Exercise Science: Exercise Physiology, Ph.D.

If this is the first time away from your family, it may be hard, but it will subside. If this is the first time that you are living far away from your family and perhaps old friends, it can be very difficult. It will get easier as time goes on, especially if you have friends here that can help you feel a sense of connection and belonging. I typically can only go home once or twice a year, so celebrating holidays with friends helps to make the holiday times easier and more fun.

Peter Smoak, Sport and Exercise Science: Exercise Physiology, Ph.D.

Graduate school is just as much about contending with the other people you'll work with as it is contending with the content in your field. Focus on building good relationships. Try not to cause trouble and ruffle feathers. Say hi to people you know when you see them. When you're choosing an advisor, make sure it is someone who you mesh well with personality-wise. Some people need someone who will push them hard, and others need someone who is more hands off. Figure out your style and choose accordingly.

Kyle Kemats, Chemical Education, Ph.D.

Stay organized so you can take time for family activities. They are your biggest support!

Kathy Casey, Nursing: Education, Ph.D.

Lean on your support system as much as possible. Moving to a new place is hard in itself and then starting grad school adds another level of stress. If you can talk regularly to someone that can make you laugh and help you through those days when you feel home sick, that's so important.

Leslie Walker, Public Health/Community Health Education M.P.H.

Graduate school is a privilege and you have worked very hard to provide yourself with this opportunity, but it is a very unique position to be in that makes it difficult to communicate to family, friends, and at times significant others. I encourage you to be intricately honest and communicate effectively with your family, friends, and partners. Glorifying the happiness and joy of the experience undermines the authentic experience of graduate school and it will pay off to clearly communicate your experiences and what you need from family, friends, and partners throughout your duration here at UNC.

Zac McCarver, Sport & Exercise Science: Social Psychology of Sport & Physical Activity, Ph.D.



It's going to be hard to explain how graduate school demands are different than earlier academic experiences, so have patience and just explain that you basically have to study as a full-time job. There is time to balance school and social lives, but the time needed for academics is paramount. Relationships with people outside of academia may not understand as easily as well. I found having friends in my program to vent to helped with not unloading as many academic pressures and frustrations on people who will not fully understand where I'm coming from.

Otto Buchholz, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.

The UNC Rec Center fees are included in semester fees, so utilize this resource as much as possible. There are a lot of great parks and running routes through Greeley, too.

Resources:

[UNC Campus Recreation](#)

[Best Places to Run / Walk in Greeley](#)

Otto Buchholz, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.

It is important for your family and friends to know and understand what you will be doing in the next few years so they can support you. Spouses and children should know that you need additional support in order to complete your work. For example, ask your spouse if he or she is willing to make dinner AND do the dishes so you can have extra time for your studies. Loved ones should know that you won't have the time to do the things you have done in the past. For example, those weekend getaways you love so much might need to turn into a two-hour brunch with your loved one so you can return home and get back to your school work. Sometimes, our family and friends don't really understand what being a grad student entails, so they are surprised when your life and schedule changes dramatically and they have to adjust, also.

Amanda Jacobs, Educational Psychology, Ph.D.



Scholarships, Assistantships, & Financial Aid:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

There are numerous scholarships offered by UNC, and some require application and recommendation letters. But I would recommend that student at least fill in the general application which asks about some personal particulars. In this way you make yourself eligible for financial help without having to put in a lot of effort in application.

Resources:

[UNC Scholarships](#)

Annabel Li, School Psychology, Ph.D.



School/campus resources:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

The counseling center is free to students. Take advantage of this! We all experience immense stress in grad school. Sometimes you just need to talk it out.

Resources:

[UNC Counseling Center](#)

Karina Sanchez, Biological Education, Ph.D.

You can eat at the UNC dining hall for \$5.89 a meal. Ask for a form when you get there for GTA's (part-time staff)

Resources:

[Dining Services Payroll Deduction Application](#)

[Dining Hall Locations & Menus](#)

Amanda Bevan, Biological Education, Ph.D.

Don't miss out the GSA (Graduate Student Association) workshops and grants. Workshops offered by the GSA encompasses a wide range of topics essential for the survival of graduate students, including writing and submitting IRB proposals, grants application for conferences and research, polishing your CV or resume, and thesis and dissertation formatting. I attended several workshops during my first year as a grad student and I found them to be tremendously informative and helpful. It was also how I heard about the GSA grants, and I would encourage grad students to apply for them. I have won four GSA grants so far for the two years of studies I have completed.

Resources:

[UNC Graduate Student Association](#)

Annabel Li, School Psychology, Ph.D.

Use the resources provided by the graduate school and the Graduate Student Association! The professional development workshops and networking events they organize have been very useful for me, and the business cards the GSA provided for me have come in handy at every professional conference I have ever attended!

Resources:

[UNC Business Card Printing](#)

Aspen King, Biological Education, Ph.D.

As a GA/TA, you can have meals at the dining halls deducted from your pay. This is an easy way to grab food on campus during the day.

Resources:

[Dining Services Payroll Deduction Application](#)

[Dining Hall Locations & Menus](#)

Aspen King, Biological Education, Ph.D.

UNC has many different resources available to students. There are areas like the rec center where students can stay active and also rent out equipment if they are needing it. Outdoor pursuits is another



Graduate Student Association

UNC Graduate Student Association
2020-2021

fun resource that lets you rent equipment and they also plan trips that students can sign up for which is a useful way to meet new people as well as see Colorado or the area that the trip is. Graduate Student Association works all semester on offering events that allow the opportunity to meet other graduate students which can make your college experience way more meaningful and stress free. Meeting people that are in the same spot and feeling as you allows you to not feel alone and that you are supported.

Resources:

[UNC Campus Recreation](#)

[UNC Outdoor Pursuits](#)

M'lyn Miller, Communication, M.A.

There are various locations on campus where students can get food. The dining halls are located right on campus and makes it easy for the students who are already on campus get access to food fast and easy. You can purchase a dining plan to where you can get food whenever or just stop in and pay for a meal that day. The UC and the Campus Commons have food options as well for students that are in a hurry with options like Subway, Einstein's Bagels, The Munchy Mart, and a pie shop with many options to help fuel you for your day! There are also locations on campus at the library and Kepner Hall where they offer coffee, bagels, and various food items that are quick and easy to get when you are running to class. One of the best places to get food, coffee, and have a place to study is the Blue Mug by Kepner and Frasier Hall. They are reasonably priced and perfect to get some homework done!

Resources:

[University Center](#)

[Dining Hall Locations & Menus](#)

[Campus Commons](#)

M'lyn Miller, Communication, M.A.

Utilize the GSA (Graduate Student Association) opportunities and resources, definitely helpful!

Resources:

[UNC Graduate Student Association](#)

Otto Buchholz, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.

Use the rec center to burn off the stress!

[UNC Campus Recreation](#)

Forrest Swick, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, M.A.

Utilize the librarian for your dissertation project. They are very helpful in finding relevant literature on your topic.

Resources:

[Subject & Liaison Librarians](#)

Kathy Casey, Nursing: Education, Ph.D.

Learn how to request books / manuals from other campus! It may save you from purchase books at the book store!

Forrest Swick, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, M.A.



Graduate Student Association

Software, Apps, Websites:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

You have a terabyte of cloud space through the schools OneDrive! Use it!

Karina Sanchez, Biological Education, Ph.D.

Get yourself a UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply) for your desktop computer. Extended blackouts are relatively rare, but the occasional power surge, brownout, or tripped circuit breaker could briefly interrupt your PC's power supply, causing network disconnection and/or loss of information. A UPS is like a surge protector with a battery. In case of a momentary loss of power, the backup battery in the UPS allows you to save your work and/or power down your equipment safely.

Resources:

[UPS Battery Backup Surge Protector](#)

Anonymous

If you download the canvas app, it makes it easy to login if you are concerned about a due date or just want to check an announcement that was made really quick. I don't have too many apps that help me with school, but I know a lot of people that do use them! Research the best apps to make you organized that will alert you when an assignment is due and that way you never forget.

Resources:

[Canvas](#)

M'lyn Miller, Communication, M.A.

Use a VPN (Virtual Private Network) when possible. You're going to be using a lot of public / semi-public WiFi networks on campus or while traveling, so a VPN helps to encrypt your data and keep your information private. Anyone could be monitoring your web traffic on public networks when you're not using a VPN.

Resources:

[30 free days of Express VPN](#)

Anonymous

Get your emails on your phone so you can stay current on information from your professors.

Kathy Casey, Nursing: Education, Ph.D.

For classes and teaching, the Canvas Student and Canvas Teacher apps are really helpful

Resources:

[Canvas](#)

Otto Buchholz, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.

Many graduate students get an official UNC BearMail email address and a first.last@unco.edu email address. Be sure to add BOTH accounts to your devices so that you receive your assistantship-related communications through your first.last email and your official academic-related communications through your BearMail account.

Anonymous



UNC Graduate Student Association
2020-2021

Office 365 licenses are tied to your @bears.unco.edu account. - Use them!
Find and use Writing Apps and Tools to help hone your skills - I use ProWriting aid.
Forrest Swick, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, M.A.

Amazon Prime: Renew your amazon prime with UNC email... for a student discount.
Amazon Smile: Find a charity and give back on your purchases! via Smile.Amazon.com
Forrest Swick, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, M.A.



Graduate Student Association

Time management:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Find ways to separate your school work, research, and free time. You are just as important as school and research. That means that your body deserves good nutrients, exercise, and sleep! You don't have to live the crazy grad school life that it is often depicted to be. Work hard but try not to always bring your work home. Setting boundaries between school and home has been key to my success in the program so far.

Karina Sanchez, Biological Education, Ph.D.

When you only have a few minutes between classes or in your schedule, work on your BIG projects not the small ones. You can rattle off small items on your to do list last minute much more easily than your big items. You will rarely have large chunks of time to dedicate to big projects, chipping away is key!

Amanda Bevan, Biological Education, Ph.D.

Remember- school is not everything. You matter just as much as your school work. Easier said than done but give yourself a WHOLE DAY that you won't do any work. You'll be amazed at how happy you are that you can be school-work free for a day and not have to dread the work you're putting off until the evening. Don't believe me- that advice comes from successful bio faculty at UNC.

Amanda Bevan, Biological Education, Ph.D.

Time management: This is THE MOST important lesson I learned in my first year. It is easy to say yes to many projects, events, and assistantships, but how can you ensure high quality work if you are not getting enough sleep, exercise, or "you" time? In serving the school community with your best work possible, you must stay on top of time managing everything. I found that keeping a master calendar through google helped me stay on top of my commitments and identify where I could commit my time further for on/off campus events. For instance, attending non-school related social events with other Ph.D. students. Obviously focusing on schoolwork and research comes first but building meaningful relationships with others you can talk (or commiserate) with enhance your overall well-being here at UNCO. Sure, you can talk to significant others, but this relationship is limited because they most often do not understand the stress and demand of a Ph.D. lifestyle. I can recall many times I was invited to social outings but declined due to naps and gym sessions I wanted to squeeze into the day. Looking back, I would say if I had time managed better, I would have definitely social activities and built stronger relationships! Luckily, I am still able to do that now going into my second year.

Victoria Flores, Sport & Exercise Science: Exercise Physiology, Ph.D.

While it's easy to schedule times to go to class or work on assignments, it can be difficult to schedule time to do fun things for yourself. Make sure to include things like time to exercise, time to sleep, and time to relax with friends in your daily schedule - it not only keeps you sane but makes you more likely to actually do these things instead of skipping them to do more work!

Aspen King, Biological Education, Ph.D.



Graduate School is challenging. It will take over your life and occupy a lot of its time. Which is fine but doesn't give you a lot of time for extra things that you love to do. For me, I love to dance and one of the most important things to me is that I make time to do that. I work on campus and so that definitely helps me with school because I am always surrounded by it and reminded to do well. My classes are always at night and are three hours long. For me, I always try to stay ahead of my assignments. The beginning of every semester I will read my syllabus and then write down in my calendar what I will be doing during the semester. For a week, I pretty much go back to the syllabus and get it locked in my head, so I know what is expected and I can prepare myself for it. I think it's really important to spend a lot of time understanding your reading and doing homework, but I think it's also important and needed to take time to step away from it and do something you love. If it's watching Netflix, do that. If it's hanging out with people, schedule some time where you know you will be able to take a break. If you stay ahead of the game with your schooling, you will have the free time to do extra things.

M'lyn Miller, Communication, M.A.

My ability to sustain a healthy school/work/life balance during my Ph.D. program is made possible by sticking to a strict schedule. I know how important the support of my family is, which means I must base my schedule around them. I work as a student advisor during the day, spend time with my kids while they are awake, and finish my day fulfilling my academic responsibilities. Keeping with a schedule allows me to be a full-time advisor, parent, and scholar.

Nicholas Dix, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, Ph.D.

Make time for yourself and for friends. It is easy to get overwhelmed and consumed in school, but it is important to make time for yourself. This is a great way to keep your sanity in the chaos of grad school. Making time for friends is very important as well; if you just stay at home, sit on the couch and watch TV you won't get the social interaction that you may not even realize that you need.

Peter Smoak, Sport and Exercise Science: Exercise Physiology, Ph.D.

Time management is key. Graduate school can be very time consuming and at some points you may feel like you have a million things to do at once, but time management can help you feel less overwhelmed. My key to time management is to understand how long it takes to get things done, and what the most important and pressing things are and do those first. I like to say that I am an expert procrastinator; I know exactly how long I can wait to do something before I have to do it. Just beware that in most cases you cannot procrastinate very much as you have a lot of things to do.

Peter Smoak, Sport and Exercise Science: Exercise Physiology, Ph.D.

Block out your week in advance on Sundays. Know everything due and build in time to make sure to get it done. Also, block in free time and time to take care of yourself as well and know what you can and cannot do realistically.

Anthony Azari, Criminology & Criminal Justice, M.A.

Write things down. Make weekly goals. Make progress on something every day, even if it's small. Give yourself breaks. The workload of graduate school can seem daunting at times, but if you break it up in to small bits, it's totally manageable.

Kyle Kemats, Chemical Education, Ph.D.



UNC Graduate Student Association
2020-2021

Use Google Calendar to keep your classes and commitments on track.

Yuan Li, Music: Performance: Keyboard, D.A.

Do everything far earlier than you think it needs to be done, especially for large degree milestones.

Otto Buchholz, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.

The Pomodoro Technique – You're welcome

Forrest Swick, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, M.A.



Graduate Student Association

General Advice:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Everyone is going to advise you your first semester to "remember self-care," which on the surface seems well-intentioned, but you'll hear it so often, you'll wonder when are you ever supposed to have time for "self-care" when you have to read "War and Peace" every night for three different classes, on top of your own research, plus, you know, life. Remember to first - breathe. Know that the faculty and staff mean well and that you are going to have to figure out what self-care means for you. Some weeks, that may mean remembering to shower, but it will get better once you know what to expect. The first week will feel like you've been dropped on another planet. The first month, actually. Though, remember you're smart, you're in grad school for a reason, and you're a quick study. Don't be afraid to talk with your professors early and often. They'll work with you. Just knuckle down and find the time you need to turn in assignments worth reading. Grad school is an amazing opportunity. Give it time and don't give up. Things will all shake out if you keep showing up and remember to stay present. Good luck! You got this!

Anonymous, Sociology: Thesis, MA

Advocate for yourself. As an international student, I pay double the tuition and fees than students who pay in-state tuition. Originally, I would not be able to receive any financial aid from my department for my third year, but I talked to my faculty about my situation. They decided to give me a half-time graduate assistantship for my third year! I would definitely encourage students with different needs to advocate for themselves!

Annabel Li, School Psychology, Ph.D.

Make sure to take care of yourself. You will likely give up some sleep, but do not give up physical and mental maintenance. Graduate school is meant to test you academically, but you will soon realize there is a physical and mental component as well. Make self-care part of your plan going in.

Nicholas Dix, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, Ph.D.

Be sure to take time for yourself! Self-care is important, and a lot of students forget about this. If you want to perform at your best, then you have to make yourself a priority. Don't be afraid to say no to things involving school or work.

Nathan Robey, Sport & Exercise Science: Biomechanics, Ph.D.

Grad School is not a competition. Yes, we strive for top grades... but figure out how to get them without being cutthroat.

Forrest Swick, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, M.A.

UNC Technical Support Center <https://help.unco.edu>

UNC CyberSecurity Site - read about the resources - <https://www.unco.edu/cybersecurity>

The library - find your schools content scholar and get to know them!

Forrest Swick, Higher Education & Student Affairs Leadership, M.A.

