

'From the students' mouths...'

What advice would you like to pass on to incoming students?

Summary: Work hard, study in groups, choose a mentor carefully.

On Choosing a Mentor:

Start a conversation with prospective mentors that includes talking about research opportunities as well as whether the mentor is seeking to take students into their lab and can afford to support one.

- While your project is important and helps you stay motivated, it is also important to make your lab choice based on qualities of your mentor because their support will ultimately help expedite your graduation and be a large contribution of your individual education.
- Pick a lab not only based on what kind of work they do, but also on the mentor as well. You will live your life in the lab for a number of years and a good relationship with a mentor who understands how to help you best is important. Also, try not to stress out too much.
- Don't hesitate to contact all faculty you want to rotate with at the beginning of fall semester, and secure a spot then. Be honest with them if you don't know very much about what they are doing, because it is natural that your initial decisions are superficial and intuitive.
- First year is really for concentrating on classes and getting to know faculty and fellow classmates. Rotations are supposed to be to get to know the feel for a lab- not necessarily to get a lot done. Choosing a mentor you can talk with openly is the best thing you can do for your graduate student career.
- The most important choice you make is your mentor. Be sure to pick one that has enough time to be there for you. At OHSU, where labs are relatively small and there are not too many post-docs/lab, mentor-student relationships are critical. I have a very involved mentor and have had a fantastic PhD thesis experience.
- Some mentors are in the lab everyday and looking over your shoulder, some are down the hall, some won't be around except once a week or so-make sure you pick the type of oversight that fits your work style.
- Don't be shy/ don't be afraid-ask your rotation PI up front about whether there's funding and space for you in the lab to complete your thesis.
- Ask potential mentors how long has it typically takes their graduate students to finish. Also, if you have a good genetics or molecular bio textbook, I wouldn't bother buying the textbook suggested for genetics class.
- Ask faculty about is their philosophy of mentoring. You can find out a lot from their on-the-spot answers. Also, talk to other students about mentors and make sure to ask more than one student to get a balanced view.
- Talk to as many people (other students) as possible before choosing a rotation. Choose a lab that matches your personality.
- A good relationship with your mentor is critical. A mentor who is personable and approachable is critical to a successful and happy graduate career.
- Rotation wise: Compile a list of questions/concerns when talking with potential

mentors/those in their labs. Some ideas...How hands on/hands off are they? How long have other students in their labs taken to graduate? Is there a specific expectation for hours in lab (some expect you'll work 12 hour days, others are more concerned about output than time at the bench), make sure the lab you join has expectations that fit with your priorities/family. There are no 'correct' answers to these questions - it all depends what you are looking for in a mentor/thesis/grad school.

On Student Life:

- When students say the first year is the roughest...believe them. I thought it was graduate students trying to scare us; but it has been rough. Coming early to do a summer rotation is a great idea!! You get to know the city and meet people BEFORE classes start. It has really helped me keep my sanity this past year knowing people and knowing my way around the city fairly well.
- The course is tough, and you might struggle, but many people do. Don't suffer in silence but ask for help from faculty and fellow students. People are supportive as long as you ask for help.
- If you can do it, think about buying a condominium or a house as soon as possible. Owning a house for 5-7 years should result in some capital gains that will make a big difference to your financial health when you graduate.
- You have to come with a prepared mind- it's not an easy program and it takes hard work and dedication. Parking sucks and first years HAVE to carpool if they want to park here.
- Apply for fellowships (NSF etc), BEFORE you start class.
- The classes can get intense during your 1st year...study early & study often. It's too hard & ineffective to cram at this level.
- Use a rotation to try something new if you can (I'm glad I did a virology rotation at the west campus) even though I'm a physiology/pharmacology kind of guy.
- Your classmates are the key to your studying success--everyone comes in with different strengths, weaknesses, and experience & education levels. If you can teach a 'mate' about cancer signaling, they may return the favor if you're struggling with kinetics & ion channels.
- Make study guides for all of your classes - these will make your life easier when studying for the comprehensive exam.
- The first year classes can be difficult because there are so many instructors it's difficult to get a sense for their teaching style and what kinds of questions they like to put on exams. So, wherever possible, get notes and exams from second and third year students. A lot of the material is recycled from year to year and it will give you an idea of what each instructor's favorite topics are and how they frame exam questions.
- IF INTERESTED IN WEST CAMPUS DO ROTATION IN SUMMER. PROBABLY NEED CAR FOR IT THOUGH.
- Choose your rotation labs carefully, before you rotate, find out if faculty have enough funding and if they are planning to move during the next 4-5 years. Some people have had problems with lack of funding and labs moving mid-way through grad school. Also, talk to older students about PIs and their rapport with their students.
- talk to PIs prior to rotation to make expectations clear. Many won't expect you to try

and work 40+ hours in the lab while also trying to get through classes, etc.

-Class wise: It is to your advantage to study/review in groups – after having studied thoroughly on your own. Also, use any available old exams to practice test taking - not just to study off. I found those two things were the best way to make sure you are on target with your studying.

-It is important to learn how to archive your e-mails because ITG will delete them when they are a few months old without notifying you.

-Small study groups are very useful for studying for classes and the comprehensive exam.

What is the best/worst area to live in Portland as a graduate student?
Here are the pros and cons of different neighborhoods. The overwhelming consensus is that you must make your commute EASY whether you choose to travel by foot, bicycle, tram or express bus.

To live on the Hill...

- I like living up on **the hill** personally.
- Best, **on the campus**; worst, too far away from campus. Living on the campus will not disconnect you from activities in downtown, especially in the post-tram era. Grace apartments on 11th have studios which are spacious and affordable.
- I really enjoyed living **on the hill** for the first couple of years with other students. It was a great way to meet people in other programs.
- ON THE HILL. CLOSE TO CAMPUS (IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO WEST CAMPUS). EASY TO GET DOWN TOWN BUS/TRAM/WALK.**
- Best - **On the hill** for the first year and may be north-west/close-in south-east later on.
- I lived on the hill my first year, and could walk to campus in 5 minutes. Living off the hill creates about a 1 hr commute each way, on average, for students...so I 'saved' 10 hours a week = sleep! Plus it is green and mellow on the hill, which I liked. The downside is distance from downtown/social stuff - but that's just a bus ride away.
- If you don't want to spend time commuting then living **on the hill** is a great option.
- Basically anywhere close in, but not **on the hill**--it's the most boring neighborhood in town!

Or not on the hill...

- Milwaukie and SW Portland** are good, especially if you have a family.
- I really enjoyed living in **NW 23rd** area. Now, I live in a house in **Tualatin**, a suburb south of Portland by 20 miles or so. I really love having a yard and a house...however, I picked this suburb because they still have an express bus into downtown. This makes it just as convenient as taking the bus from 23rd up to the hill. **Beaverton and Tigard** also have express buses that come directly to the hill.
- I really liked **Sellwood**. I wouldn't like to live in **Beaverton or Hillsboro** - the commute is a bugger and the nightlife a bit dull.
- NW** is too expensive for students. I love **SE**- easily commutable by bike, but a "real" neighborhood, with grocery stores, shops, and restaurants. Close to downtown. Totally depends on your preference- some live in **Beaverton**, some live on **hill**.
- I personally like **Hillsdale and the SW** area of town. There's not much traffic to the hill, if you drive, or you have to take a couple of buses at the very least - but the lifestyle there is very laidback and uneventful.
- Best: **SW in Hillsdale or near Multnomah Village**. Close to school, near several major bus lines both up the hill, and downtown, everything you need (grocery, video store, pizza, coffee, bakery, restaurants, etc.) within walking distance. Very safe neighborhood and not too expensive. Worst:?? Far away from downtown and

campus. Also, Beaverton stinks. Traffic is awful. Atrocious even.

-Best: **John's Landing** Worst: Gresham

-Well, most students live on the west side near campus, but I live in southeast because quality of living space is important to me, and it's not that much further away.

-**Beaverton** is nice because it is cheaper and apartments are bigger but then there is the commute - an hour each way by mass transit. I like Beaverton because I am closer to Costco, Nike campus, and my favorite dog park.

-My wife & I have enjoyed living in **Beaverton**. It's a little cheaper and still very accessible to downtown via car or mass transit. Now that the tram is up the people I know who live in **Johns landing** have the easiest commute ever. It's nice to be on **the hill** or nearby for your first year, especially if you don't know Portland, but there isn't much to do up here so you will probably move off eventually. If you don't want to pay for parking (which is expensive), I don't recommend living far out. If you have to take two buses and the Max to get into OHSU, it will start to wear on you pretty quickly. I live in

Burlingame now, which is a neighborhood that mostly has houses and a few town homes. It would be a nice place for a family with kids (or if you have a dog). It's close to Tryon Creek Park, with easy access to downtown and an express bus that takes you directly to OHSU, but still has a quiet feel.

-I have liked living both in **Beaverton and in NE Portland** but commuting is definitely something to think about. I wouldn't want to live on the hill I like getting away at the end of the day.

-I live in the "**Pearl**" and really like it. There is low-income housing available (Sitka and Lovejoy station). We live within walking distance of most everything you need and right off the streetcar line. There are lots of restaurants down here that do a late night happy hour (9pm to close) with really cheap food - great for my schedule. To get to school you can ride the streetcar to the tram (takes about 45min, yes slow, it is only 5 miles), ride your bike all the way (25 min), or ride to the tram on the riverfront bike path (no cars - maybe 30 minutes with tram ride). It is also nice to be close to Forrest Park and the riverfront for running.

-I've only ever lived in **North Portland/St. John's** area. It's a long commute to the hill by bus (~1 hour) but a pleasant place to live. I work on the west campus so St. John's is very convenient for the commute to Beaverton. I would think the worst place to live would be on the hill itself because then your advisor can make you harvest time points in the middle of the night without feeling guilty! Probably best would be **Downtown or near-in South East**.

- I love living in the vicinity of **Laurelhurst Park** and the Laurelhurst neighborhood which is on the east side of Burnside and about thirty blocks from the river. A beautiful neighborhood with great energy, and filled with young vibrant people.

-Worst - Far south-east/north-east (beyond 45th or so).

-**Just make sure it's on a main bus line or max line!!**

-I've only lived in the **SW** and I enjoy the area. It's more suburban and hard to get around without a car or bike. I enjoyed living in **Hillsdale** because I could walk to shops, food, and it was only one express bus stop away from the hill.

-Anyplace along a decent bus line. I'm partial to inner **Southeast**, it's actually closer to OHSU than most people think, and it has the best bars and restaurants.

How students found housing.

This seems to take a bit of legwork..really walking around a neighborhood.

- I walked around Marquam Hill and called every number I could see.
- Rented through a family friend.
- I found my apartment in northwest by driving around looking for "for rent" signs.
- Notice boards on campus by Mac Hall and at the library. I replied to an ad posted by 5 students looking for a 6th to share a big house. It was great to have so many roommates as it meant the rent was really cheap and I got to know a lot of people right away - which can be difficult when you move to a new city.
- I found the neighborhood I liked and drove around looking at listings. I found one (unlisted) because it had a "for rent" sign in the front. Have lived there happily for 3 years.
- Craigslist (x7)
- Craig's list. I posted an ad saying I needed a roommate and she contacted me. **www.portlandmaps.com** is really helpful if you're worried about crime levels in certain areas, though by large Portland is safe. The Northeast and Southeast parts tend to have higher crime rates, but also tend to be the cooler, more "hip" parts of town with neat shops and boutiques, coffee shops, etc
- The apartment that I had on the hill we found by looking in the OHSU housing list that Jeanne sent out. Craig's list is also good especially if you don't want to live in a big complex.
- Newspaper
- Drive around a look. (I wanted to be close to the max so just looked around the transit centers.)
- Portland rental guide
- We started a yahoo group for our batch of incoming students, and I mailed the group to see if anyone wanted to share an apartment for the first year, and found a cool classmate who wanted the same. So, he looked up apartments on the hill and chose a 2br where I live even to this day (3rd year).
- I walked around and looked for "For rent" signs in the area I wanted to live. My first apartment I found on Craig's List.
- I found my first apartment by driving by it.

Student recommended Restaurants:

Kappaya on Division for sushi. and **Montage** in SE on Morrison

Pix on Division is a GREAT dessert restaurant

Black Cat in Sellwood is a great bar.

Kun-Pik's Baan Thai - SE Belmont . Vegetable sandwiches at **Mac Hall cafeteria**.

Pitiful- I know.

Thai Noon, India House, Capitol Coffee (restaurant has really good food, but can be pricy), **E San Thai, Nicolas'**. I think the pubs are the best part of the city, though--

Rogue, Alameda, Concordia Ale House, Bridgeport, Laurelwood, Mash Tun. I haven't found any good Chinese or Mexican unfortunately.

Baan Thai**, 1924 SW Broadway (**seven votes for this one!). THE BEST anywhere - beware their "mild spice" is everyone else's hot, so order conservatively. I like medium :) I recommend their khao pad, pan fried noodle, tom kha, cashew nut chicken..Oh hell everything. Lunch is like \$6.50, dinner is more but the portions are big.

Thanh Long Bakery and Restaurant, 635 SW College ST (right next door to Bann Thai) makes a killer curry chicken noodle soup, it has lots of lemongrass and is nice in spicy -- perfect for that rainy Oregon day.

Yoko's (sushi)

E-San (Thai)

Ken's Artisan Pizza (pizza)

There are dozens of great happy hours in this city. Try them all!
(<http://www.urbandrinks.com/> rocks, seriously)

Cha Cha Cha (burritos) on 6th(?) by PSU...cheap, good, fast..burritos and such

Green Onion (Persian) are really accessible from the hill and are reasonably priced.

Both are on the other side of the 405 if you go down Sam Jackson. They are close enough to go for lunch on a slow day in the lab...not that I ever have a slow day :)

Mississippi pizza or **El Sombrero** up near the airport.

Henry's 12th Street Tavern (for late night Happy Hour)

Karam - Downtown on Stark Street between 4th and 5th. Super wonderful Lebanese cuisine. Best pita bread in town and all the good stuff to dip it in.

Portland City Grill for their view (a bit expensive though) and **Bann-Thai** for their incredible spice.

Le Bouchon-French café in NW area on 14th

PAPA HAYDENS ON NW23RD

Typhoon (also Thai) on Broadway for slightly more nifty dining.

E-san (**3 votes-Thai in downtown Portland)

Sushi & Maki (Hillsboro and Clackamas)

Justa Pasta

Beau Thai

Vivace

Jopa

Casa Colima

Mio Sushi

Lompocs

Acme

Lauro

Bombay Cricket Club

Italian Joint

Jake's