How to Be a Successful Graduate Student

1. Librarianship itself is a dynamic, evolving and adaptive field based upon the premises of a service profession. Having the appropriate attitudes; respectfulness, conscientiousness, openness to diversity and different ideas, will go a long way toward the process of learning the knowledge base and preparing you for your selected field. Respect for others’ views and ideas as you communicate with colleagues, faculty and staff of SLIS will enable you to have the most productive experiences and preparation for a successful career. Keep in mind that you have responsibilities as a student, and as a future professional, you should always be conscious of the role you play in obtaining an education.

2. Thomas Benton (pseudonym) [http://chronicle.com/article/The-5-Virtues-of-Successful/5060/](http://chronicle.com/article/The-5-Virtues-of-Successful/5060/) listed the five virtues of successful graduate students, and although his comments were directed toward doctoral students, many hold true for Master’s level work:

**Networking Ability** - social networking is necessary, even for the most individualistic activities.

**Discipline** – work on your studies every day if possible. Be aware of assignment due dates and be ready to submit the assignment on time or request an extension if you are unable to meet the due date.

**Mental Health** - Benton writes “Graduate school can be characterized by intellectual confusion, a lack of social support, and intense feelings of powerlessness and even worthlessness. It can be more like a shark tank than a symposium. You will probably find for the first time in your life that you are not the smartest person in the room. The best method of relieving stress is to keep a sense of perspective; try to have a meaningful life outside of the profession. Guard your health: Eat a balanced diet; get enough sleep and exercise, and make friends with people who are not academics.”

**Flexibility** – as you ponder your job prospects, be open to change in terms of library type or location, or if you like one type of venue as your ‘stage’, develop a sense of where you might practice. Similarly, be willing to change topics and go back to the drawing-board if a project or career path becomes too cumbersome.

**Patience** – demonstrate patience in all of the above four virtues.

Attend each class session and be prepared with questions or comments (you are expected to contribute to each session) and remember to enjoy the experience, as it is not often that we choose what we would like to learn and benefit from the interaction of peers, particularly in such online learning environments. Never underestimate the power of demonstrating a willingness to learn or your responsibility in this process.
3. Pay close attention to feedback on assignments, which is given to help students improve their work. At the graduate level, it is expected that students will learn from the feedback given on assignments so mistakes are not repeated and there is improvement and refinement of writing.

4. Use Cook Library resources to prepare your assignments. Use the online catalog and databases, your textbooks, additional scholarly articles and lecture notes. Learn to browse as you read. Search the online databases, but review how to search each database before embarking, so you create an internal map or storyboard of how to search. The Southern Miss library has a Web page with links to services specifically for distance education/online students. [http://www.lib.usm.edu/services/distance_education.html](http://www.lib.usm.edu/services/distance_education.html)

5. If you are fortunate enough to live near Cook Library (or any library!), enter and walk the shelves. Take down a book from the shelves and page through it. Think of finding information “serendipitously” - it will enrich you intellectually as well as help you to further develop critical thinking skills.

6. Ask questions if you do not understand a procedure or assignment. You can do this in virtual classroom sessions or email.

7. Collaboration is a key component of modern work, you will be required to participate in group projects, and will be held responsible for your contribution to these groups. Take such projects for what they are, a taste of reality. The complexity of our work and society demands that we work together to accomplish tasks. If you expect others to help you be successful, then you must help them be successful.

8. Last, but not least, (and this is self-evident) we read, we write and we work with readers and writers, so being well-read is part of the ethos of librarianship. Read everything you can in the course of your day (and listen to audio books). Information literacy cannot exist without readers, viewers, listeners and creators.

9. Remember your ultimate goal, to obtain an education to be a productive member of society. Try not to value grades for their own sake. Maintain intellectual curiosity and your sense of humor.

10. Remember, everyone at SLIS wants you to succeed in your academic program. Your contributions make this possible.