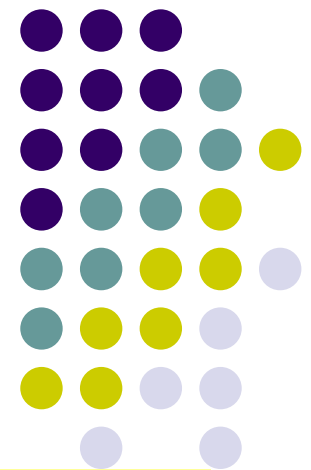


# Positioning yourself for success



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Positioning yourself for success  
A career guide for graduate students  
A must read for every advisor

Disclaimer. Many of you

Sundar A. Christopher

2009 AMS Student Conference  
Phoenix, AZ, (January 10, 2009)

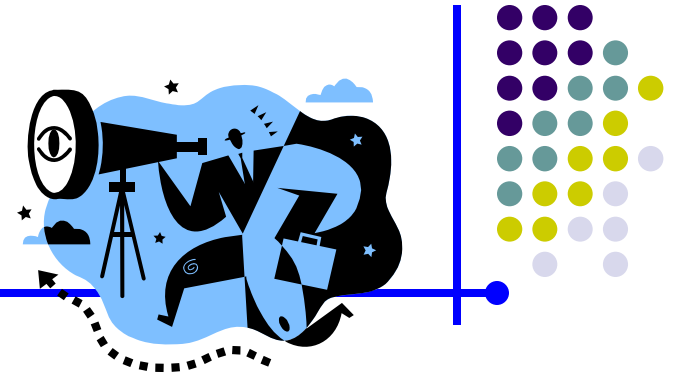
UAHuntsville

# First things first



- You are intrinsically motivated to achieve career goals (intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation)
- You've thought about opportunity costs before coming to graduate school (\$ now versus later)

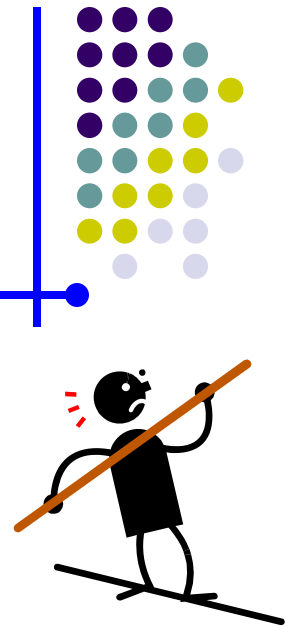
# My outlook



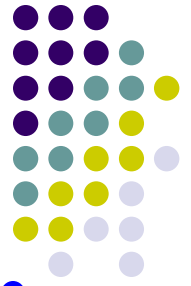
- An optimistic one
- Sowing well now will always produce a great harvest later
- The next generation of brightest minds to carry the torch forward is in this room!
- Graduate school is some of the best years of your life – footloose and free (for the most part!)

# Purpose of my talk

- Goals of graduate school
- Graduate School Challenges (Random myths)
- Career planning – Purpose driven graduate school
- **Careers and interests always change but a plan never hurts!**



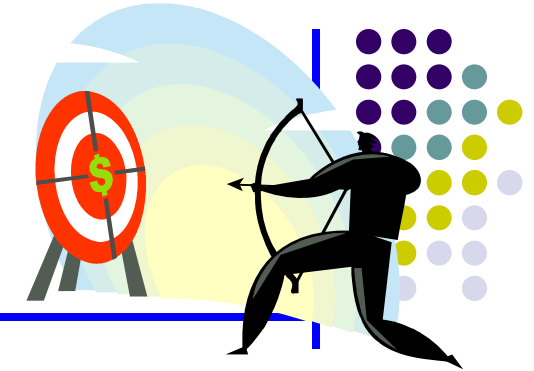
# When does career planning begin?



- At a minimum, begin planning and thinking of some goals when entering graduate school or
- Start now!

# Graduate School Goal

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- If getting a job is an end goal then make the resume a non-factor! – What??
- Whatever job you aspire to...
  - The employer comes looking for you
  - Multiple job offers

# A savvy SWOT analyst



Document and update your

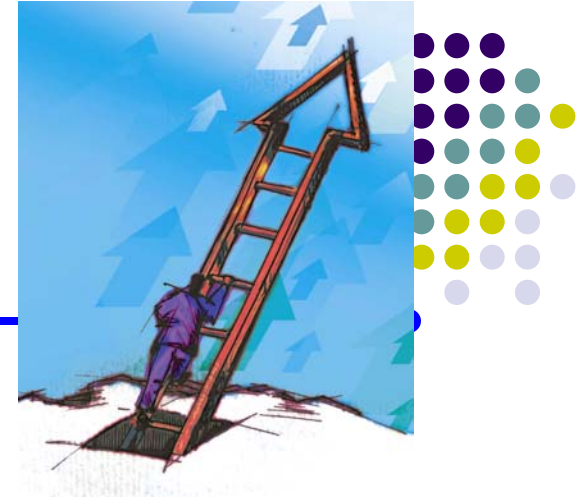
- Strengths (Maximize)
- Weakness (Minimize)
- Opportunities (Awareness)
- Threats (perceived and real to achieve goals) are important in graduate school

Not a one time event

(**Maintaining a journal helps this process**)

# Graduate School Prereq's

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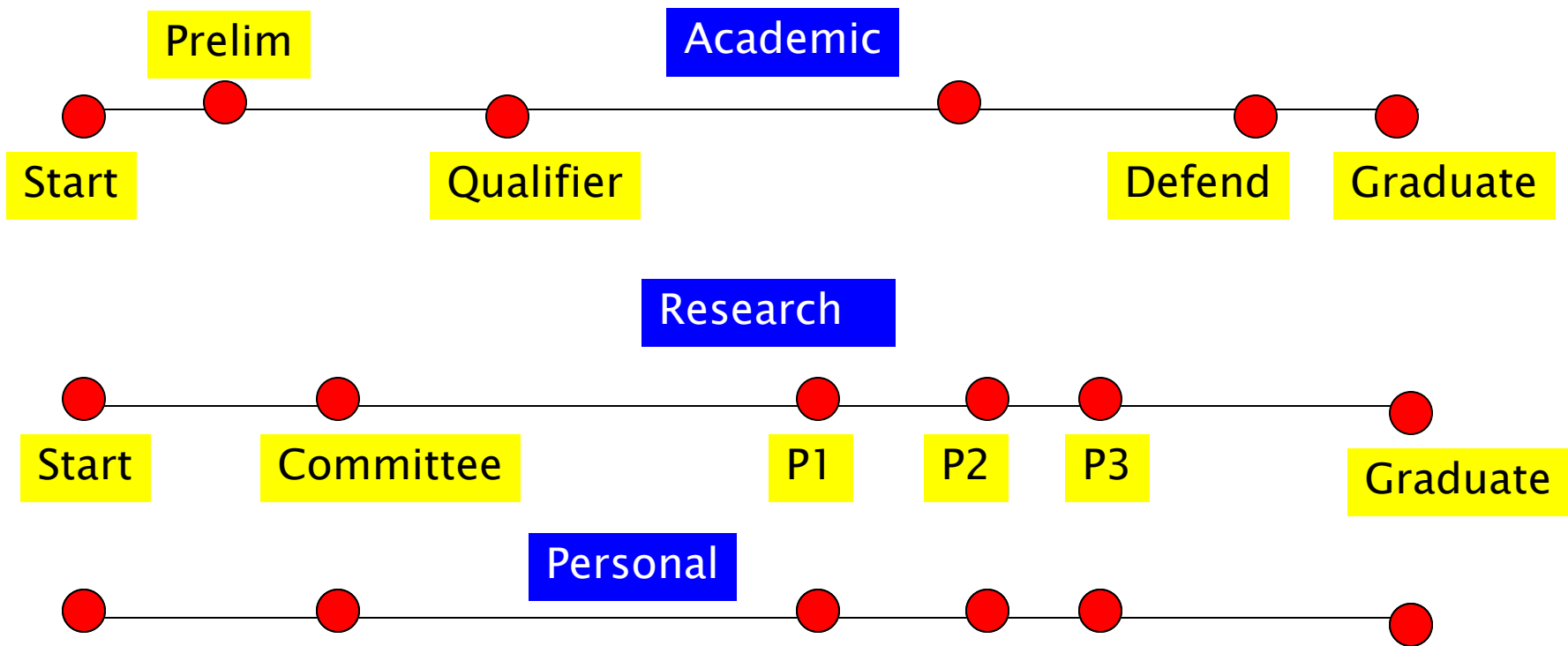


- A proactive mindset
- You map out a plan/program for course work, necessary exams (e.g. Qualifiers), research papers but remain flexible
- A focused method minimizes wandering

# Mile markers – Count the cost



Important to determine academic, research and personal mile markers – the juggler!



# Without vision there is chaos



- Knowing career goals will enable you to prepare well while in graduate school
- What KSA's will you need later?  
(Knowledge, Skills, Abilities)

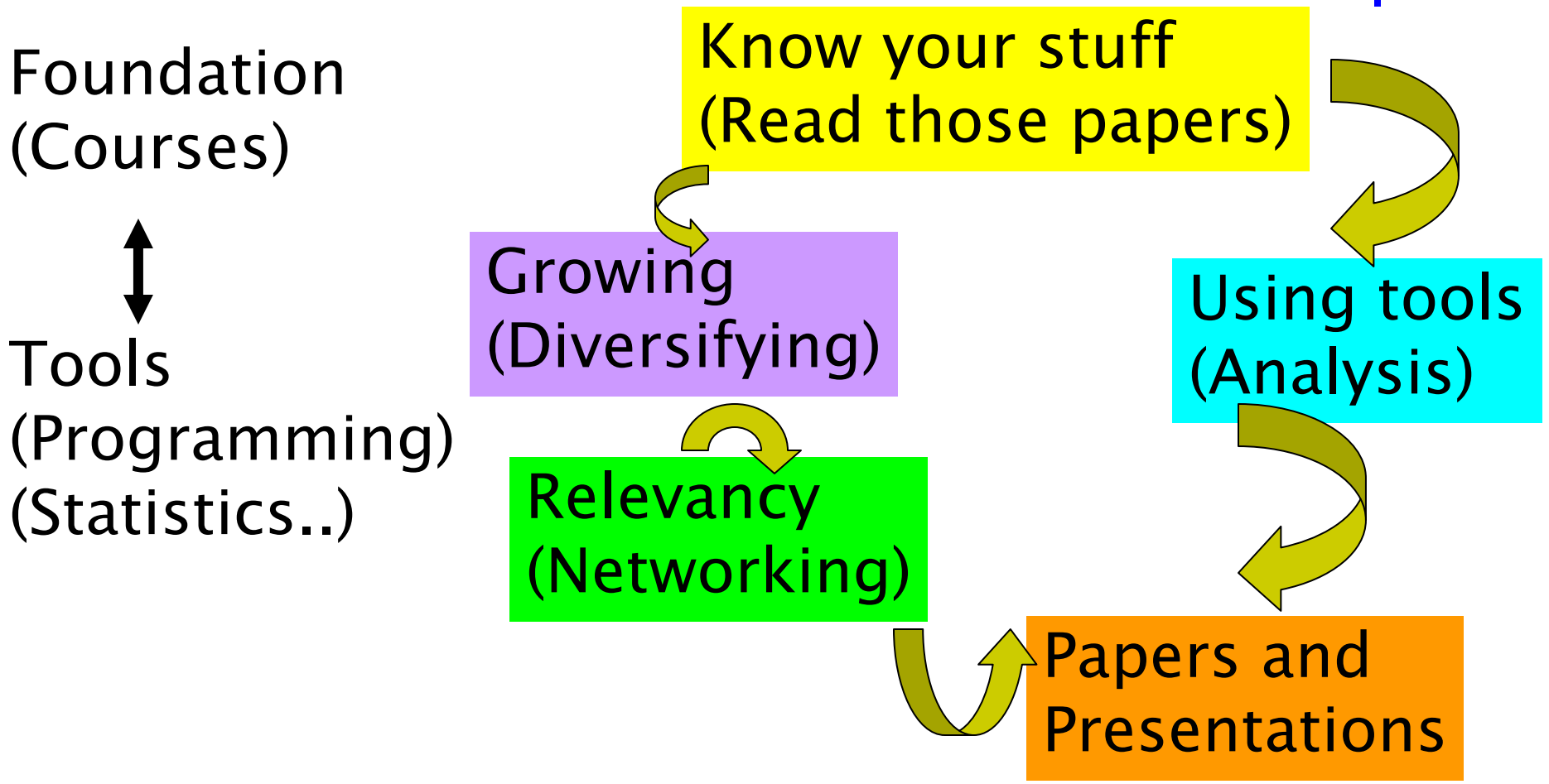
# Graduate School Challenges



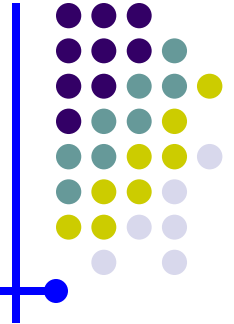
- Project/Time Management
- Knowing what's important
- Managing your advisor
- Communication (written and oral)
- Grad. school blues – The slump!
- Stress Management (tied to time and project management)!



# Taking care of details

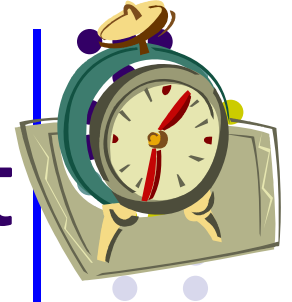


# Random myth



- I really don't need to manage my time on a regular basis

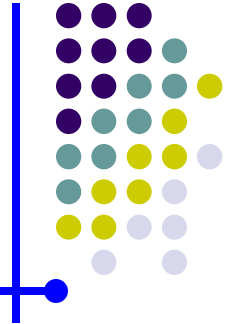
# Project and Time Management



- A method is necessary but the tool will change with time.
- List and eliminate time drains!
- Develop a solid project plan.
- Deliberately focus on managing projects and time.
- Have you ever wondered how some can manage multiple projects so well? – What can you learn?

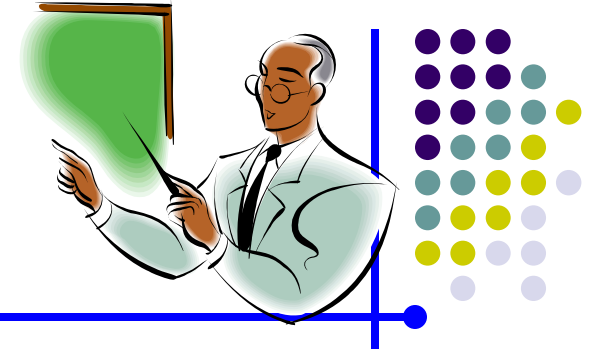
# Random myth

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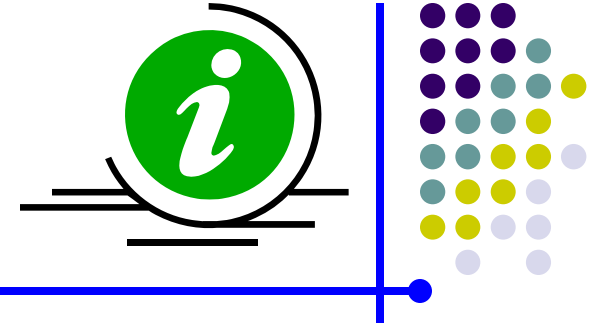
- My advisor will work closely with all aspects of my research, guide and mentor me to success.

# Managing your advisor



- The perfect advisor versus the perfect student – We wouldn't be here then!
- Learn to understand the time and project cycles of your advisor
- Be proactive and initiate meetings
- Do a SWOT on your advisor and hide it!
- Vocalize your career goals
- Don't expect your advisor to be a mentor!

# Research Management



- Become a resource center – Blog/web page – advertise your work
- Organize, organize, organize
- Learn to compartmentalize
- Try new things – Broad versus narrow!
- Avoid short cuts
- Think outside the box!

# Random myth

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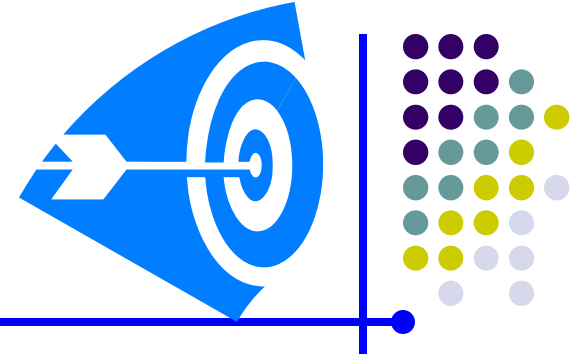
- You have to finish your dissertation before writing your first journal paper

# Writing Papers



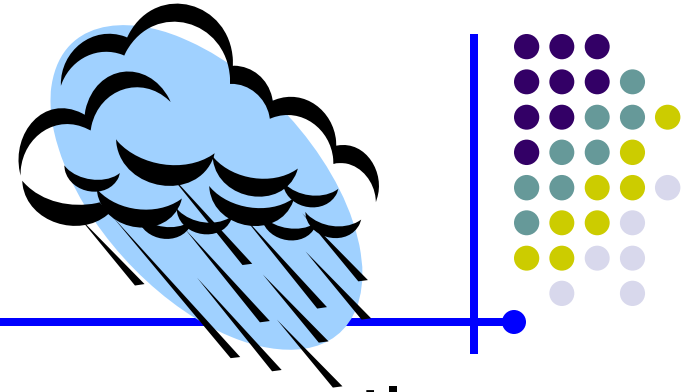
- Learn how to write papers early in your graduate school career
- Talk to peers and emulate role models
- Quality and quantity of papers
- Write your first draft – your advisor will love it!

# Ditch the Dissertation



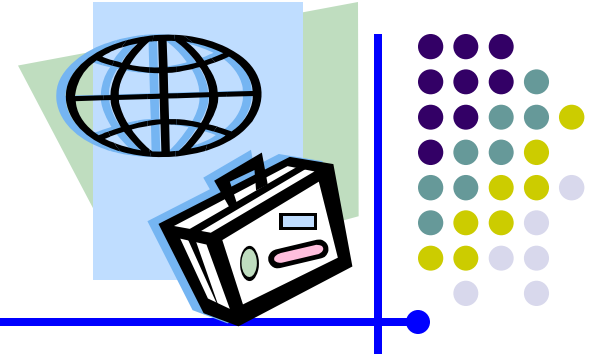
- Write 2 to 3 peer reviewed papers for your dissertation
- Seam peer reviewed papers together for a dissertation
- Rarely does one read a dissertation but your papers have a world wide readership!

# Grad School Blues



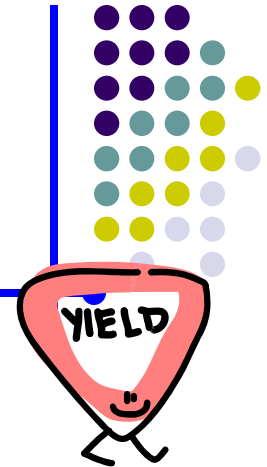
- When the blues strike know your mile markers that you set for yourself
- Surround yourself with positive people
- A mentor helps
- Step back and evaluate
- Then plow through!

# Networking



- Make your research meaningful to a larger audience
- Get involved as preparation for career (AMS, Policy, Governance tailored to career goals)
- Don't become a conference moth

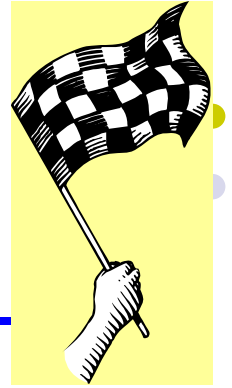
# Diversifying!



- Sharpen team player skills – ask for feedback from peers and mentors
- How about a course in organizational management, business or leadership?
- Research is increasingly collaborative
- Learn how to make research meaningful to a larger audience

# Other grad school – must do's

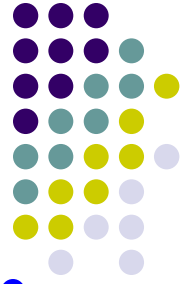
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- Writing a proposal
- Applying for fellowship
- Attending a summer school – Peers today are leaders tomorrow!
- Attending a conference
- Did I say write your papers ? You'll feel good about it!

# Avoid like the plague

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- Waiting for your advisor to motivate
- Short cuts
- Lack of excitement in research area
- Time drains
- Settling for the mediocre

# Final thoughts



- These are some of the best years of your life – Footloose and free!
- Focused planning during graduate school will pay great dividends
- Sow well now – Reap later!
- Look forward to hearing from you ([sundar@nsstc.uah.edu](mailto:sundar@nsstc.uah.edu))

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