

An Insider's View on Applying For and Succeeding In Graduate School! - Advice from a Professor

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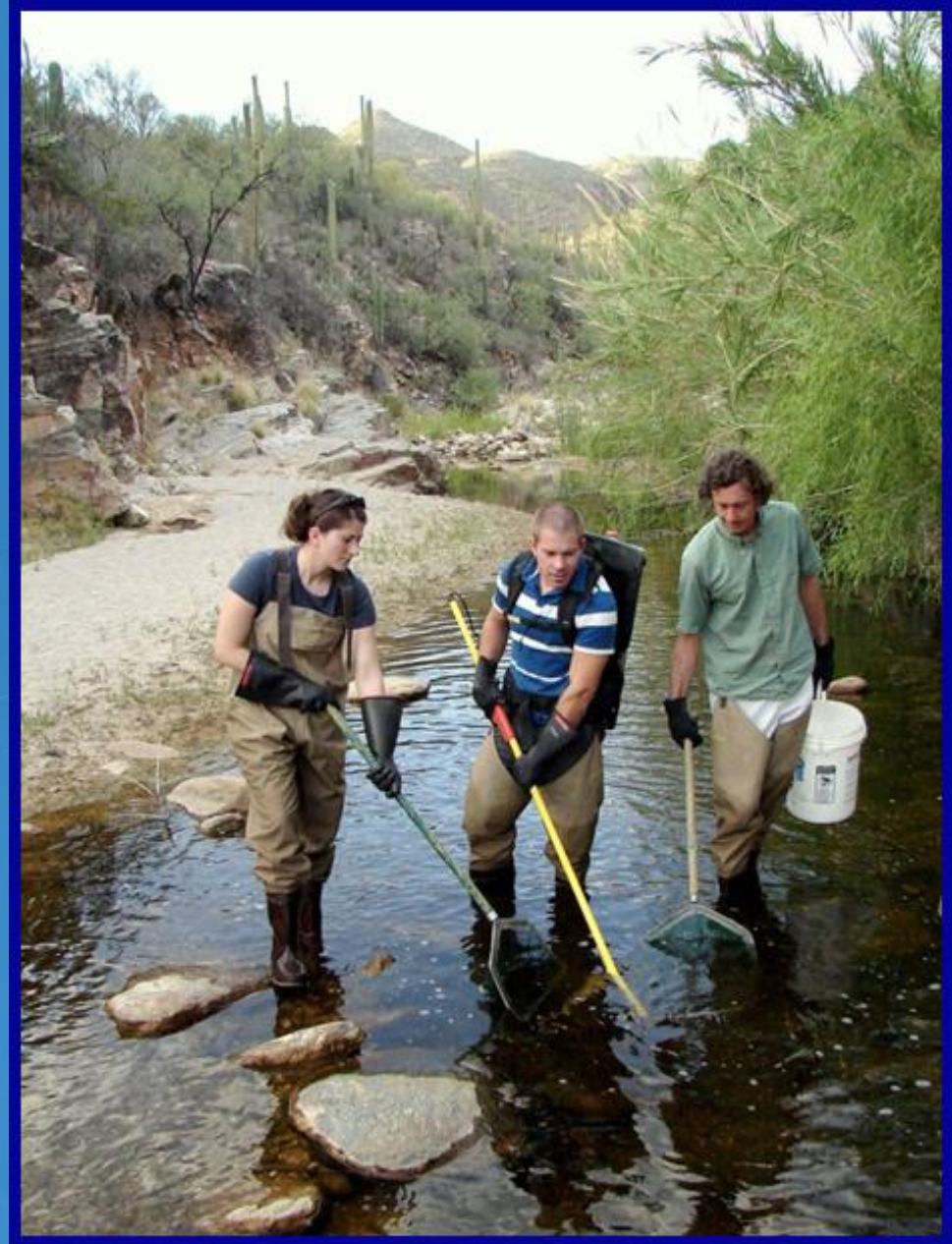
Overview

- Should you get a graduate degree?
- How should you apply?
- What types of applicants are professors looking for?
- How to get the most out of graduate school
- Positioning yourself to find a good job

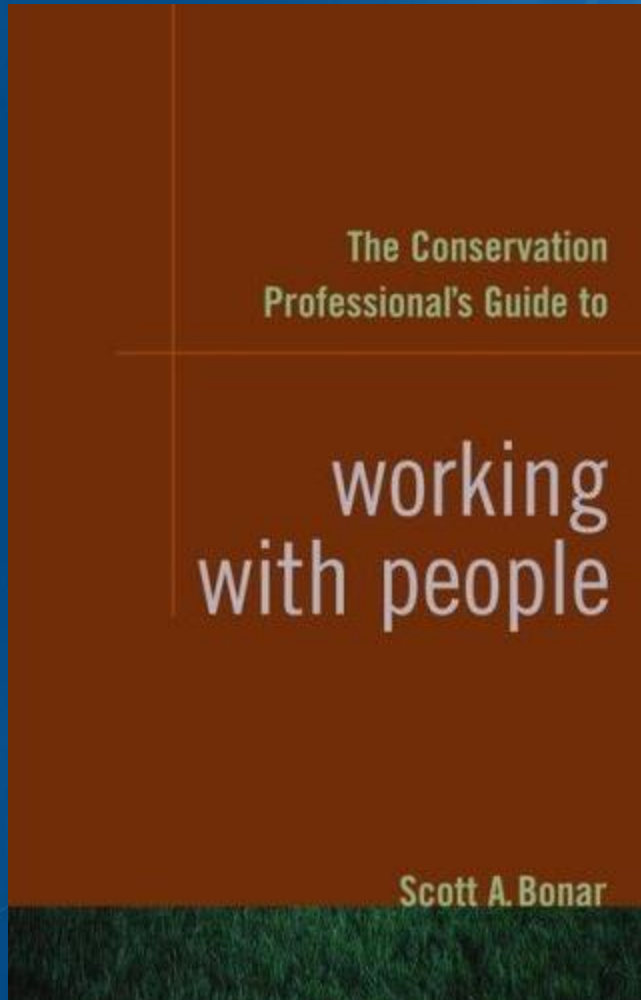


Methods:

- 33 years of time series data (Bonar) being a graduate student, sponsoring graduate students, mentoring graduate students
- Survey of 42 fish and wildlife professors asking them what they look for in a student, and what traits students have who succeed.
- Informal interviews with other professors



Research conducted when working on my book



- “A must-read for the conservation professional” – *Ecology*
- “A guidepost...should be a part of college curricula in every natural resources program” – *Mamie Parker, Assistant Director, USFWS*
- “Reassuring, wise and entertaining guidance” – *Paul R. Ehrlich, Stanford University Author of “The Population Bomb”*
- “Required reading for all my graduate and undergraduate students...I am just sorry (this book) was not available earlier” – *Quarterly Review of Biology*
-etc.

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Why (or why not) graduate school?

● Pro's

- Either MS or PhD needed for many professional positions – increases your options.
- Learn project management, advanced technical writing and analysis skills
- Work with talented scientists in a research setting to learn latest advanced techniques
- Develop valuable future contacts

● Con's

- Time investment
- \$\$\$ investment

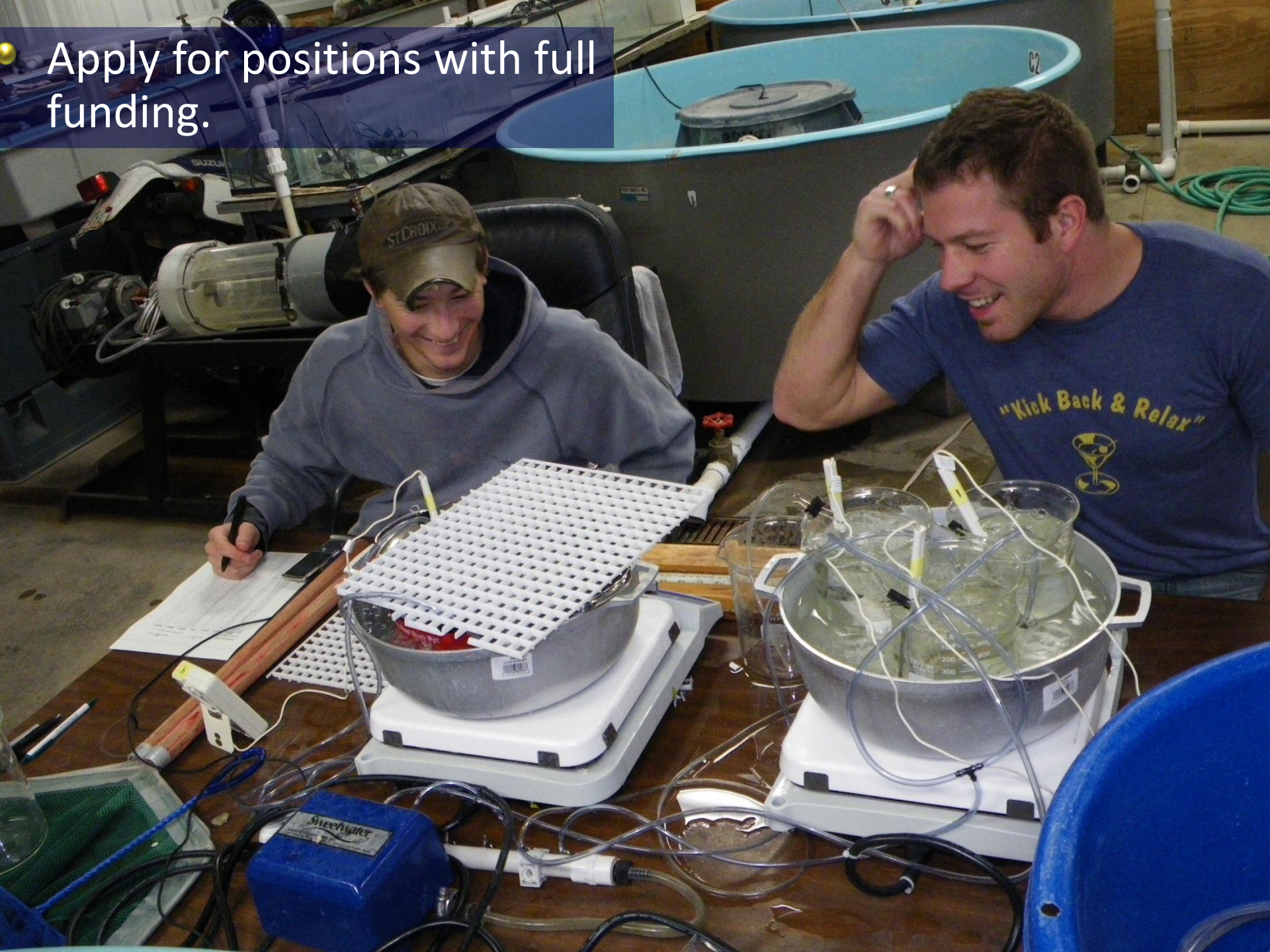
How to Pick Your Program



- Research scientific literature/ask undergraduate professors to find out which professor is doing good work in your preferred subjects.

Look for openings in AFS job boards, Texas A&M Site

Apply for positions with full funding.



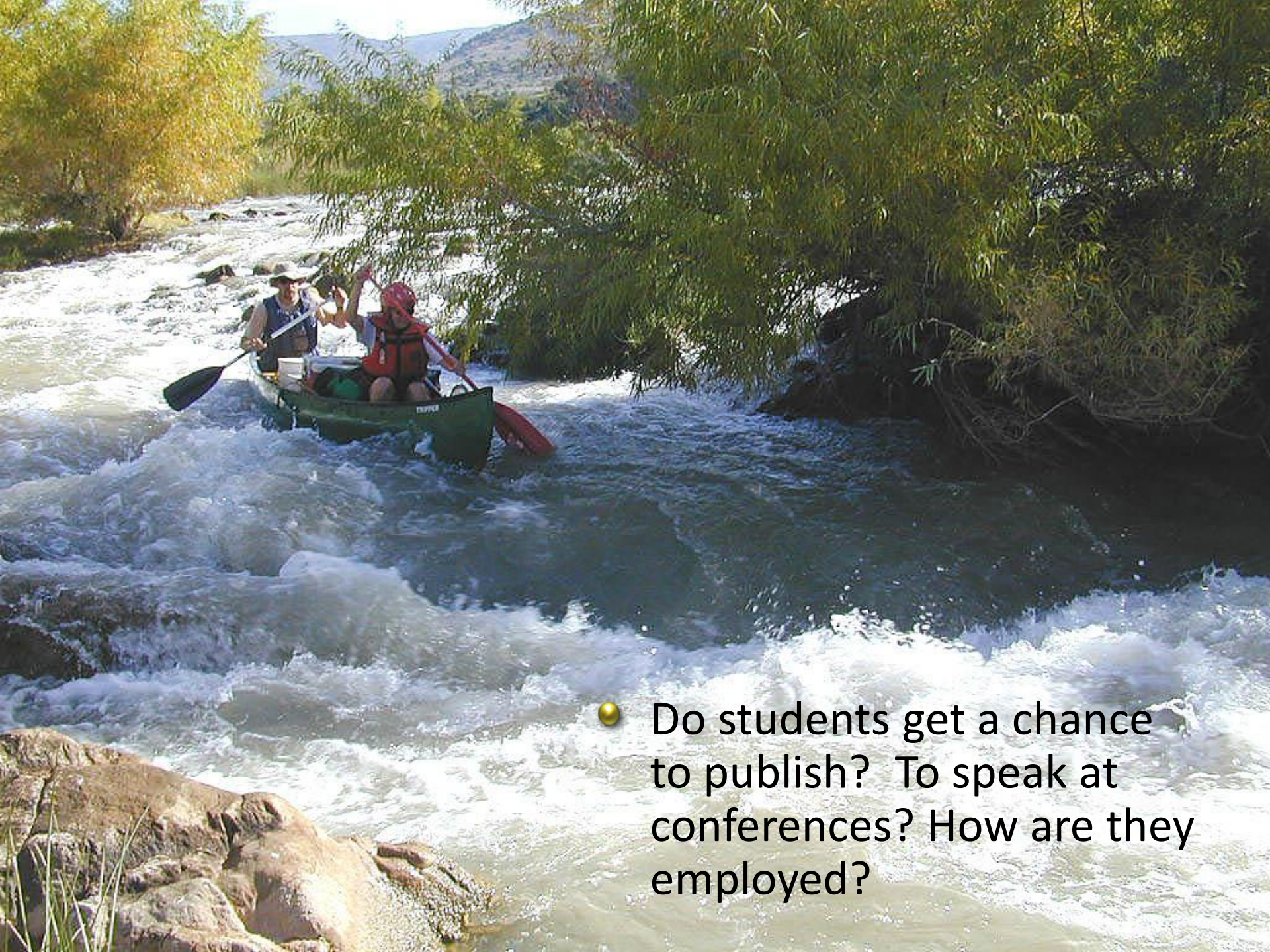


Apply for projects you can be passionate about.



● Visit/speak with professor – to determine if they have an opening, learn about their program.

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- Do students get a chance to publish? To speak at conferences? How are they employed?



- Talk to their former graduate students.

How do you increase your chances for being selected?



Inside Info! - What professors fear

- A student who is unmotivated and will not complete things
- A student who cannot get along with people (including professor)
- A student who will embarrass them with their project sponsors and supervisors
- A student who will finish their degree, but will not publish their work in a scientific journal



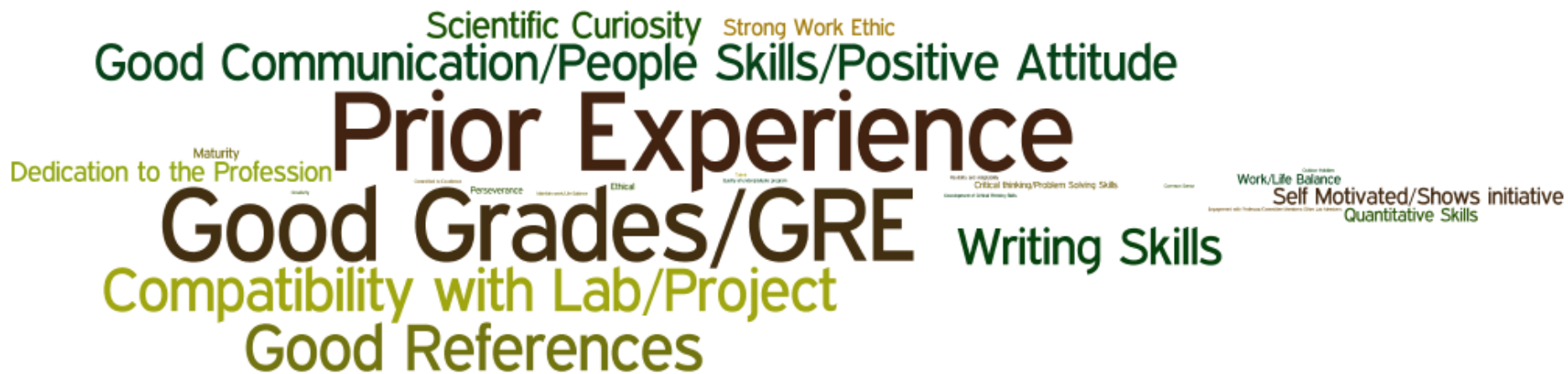
Minimize these for highest success!

Inside Info! – Your professor wants you to succeed. Badly!!!!



“List the three most important things you look for when selecting a graduate student”

(The larger the word, the more times it was mentioned)



$n = 42$ Faculty (U.S.G.S. Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Leaders and Assistant Leaders)



Volunteer, Volunteer, Volunteer!!!



Make sure your references will give you a good recommendation! ...And make sure your references are good ones!

How do you succeed once you are in?



“List the three most important factors a graduate student needs to succeed in graduate school”

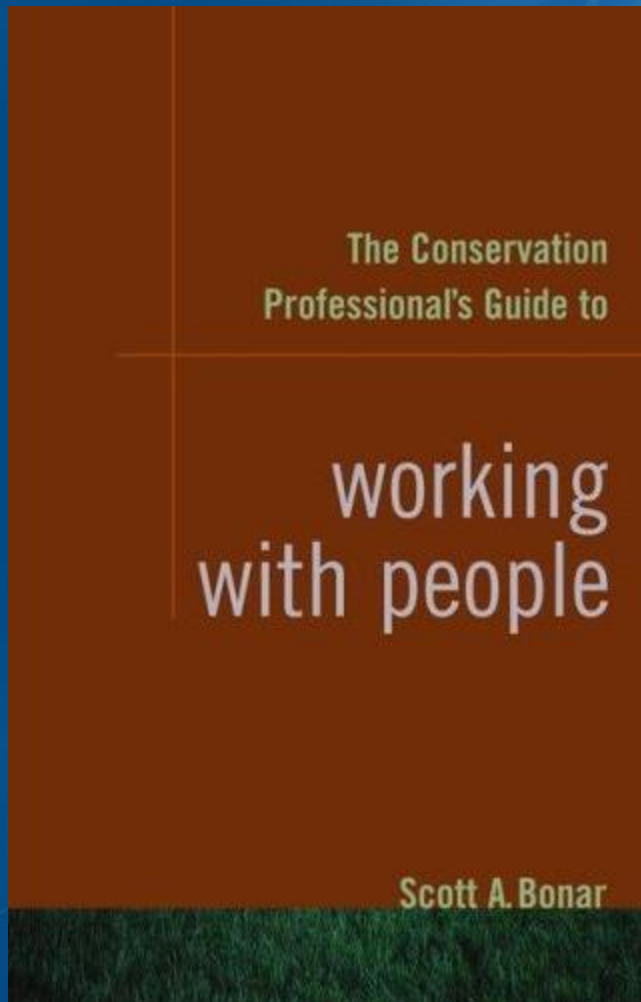
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Learn People and Communication Skills





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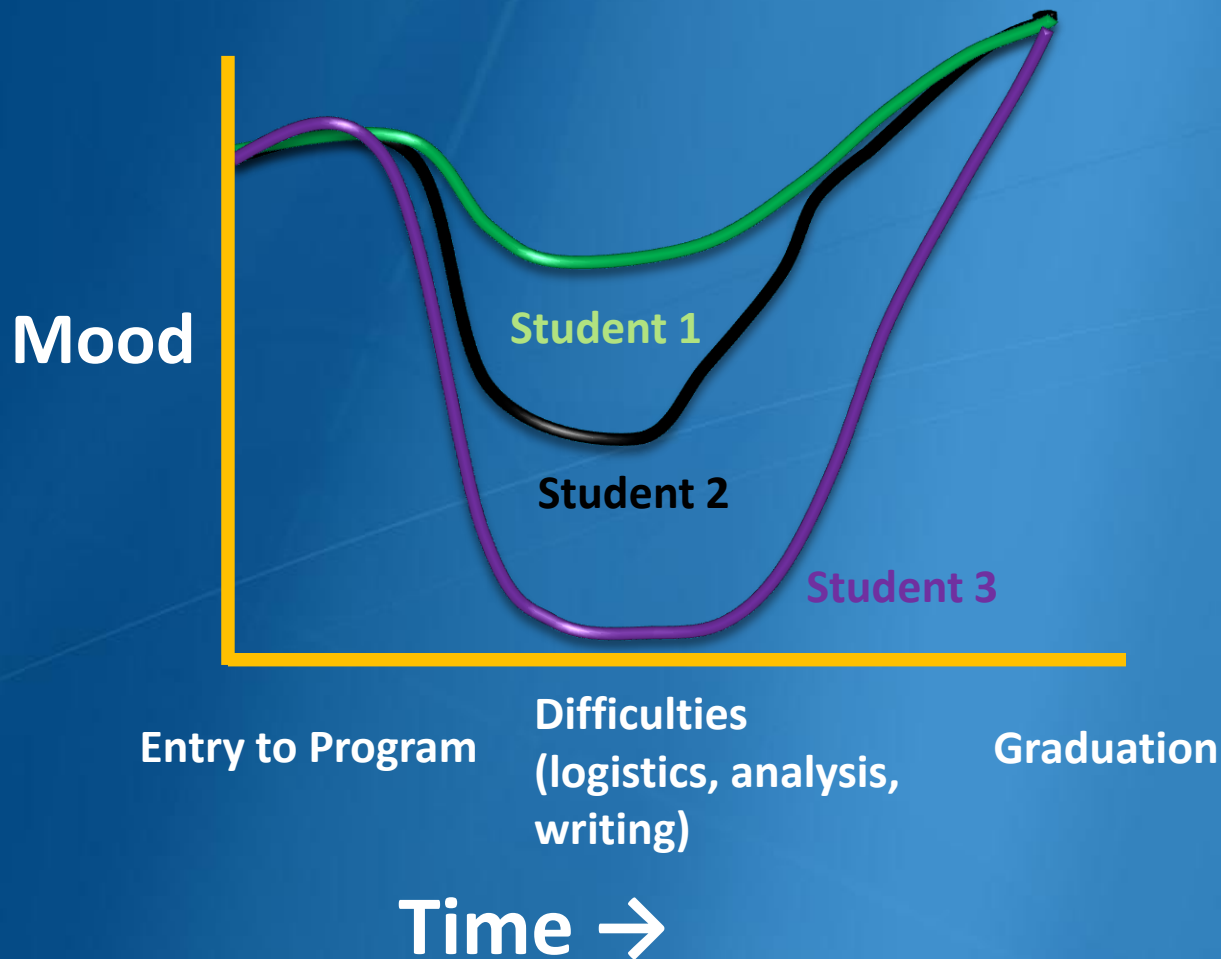
Show Initiative and Strong Work Ethic!

Grad school great! But sometimes
daunting...



Inside Info! Perseverance is Key!

Typical Graduate Student Mood Over Time




How do you persevere?

- Realize that things *will* work out over time with persistence – keep at it!
- Say to yourself “when I finish” never “If I finish”
- Maintain Work/Life Balance!
 - Get involved with other students
 - Get some exercise
 - Leave some time for fun stuff
 - Keep ties with old friends/family
- Keep perspective



Nothing is worth your health or safety

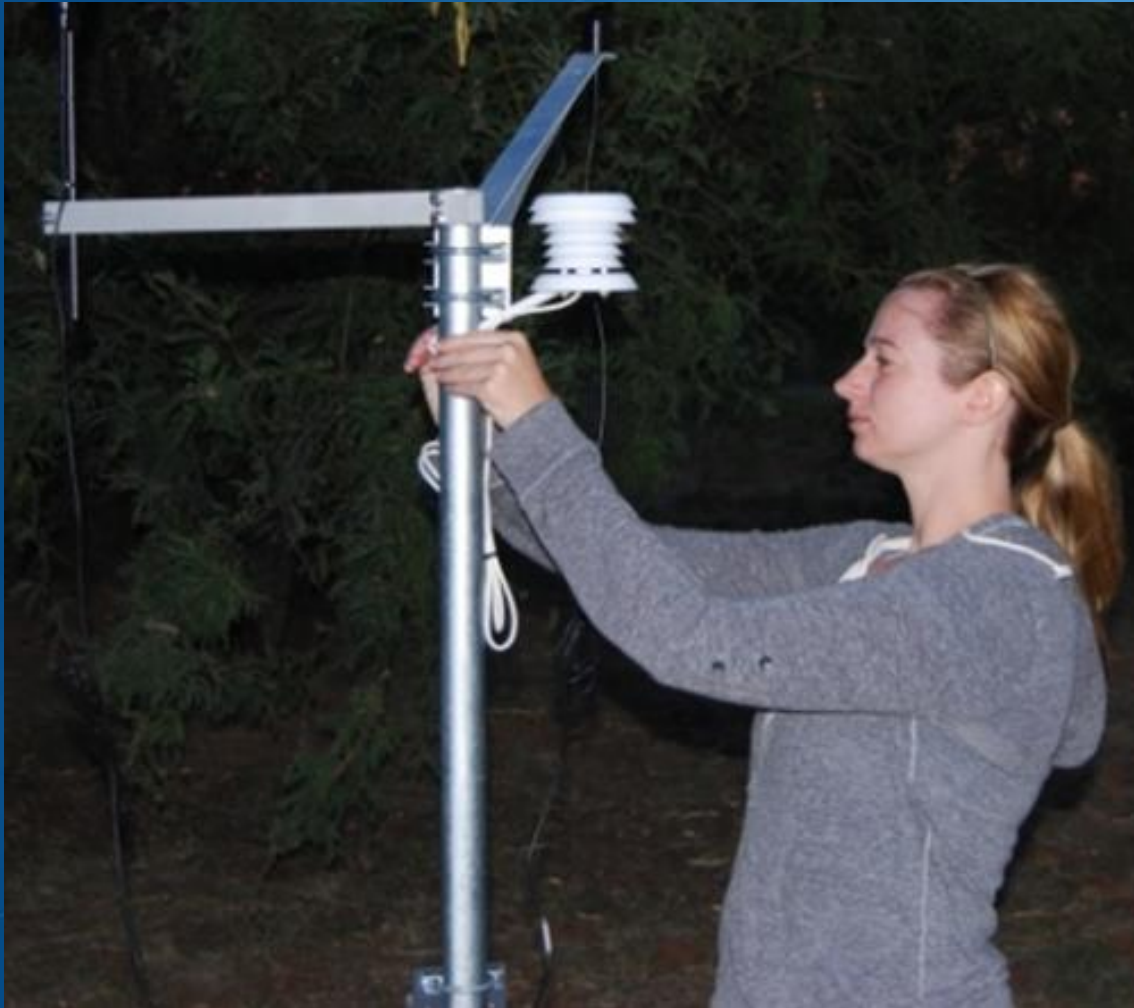
A group of three people are in a small motorboat on a turbulent, brown river. The water is churning with white foam, indicating rapids. The background is a steep, rocky cliff face with sparse vegetation. The boat is a light-colored inflatable with a white outboard motor. The people are wearing hats and outdoor gear. The overall scene is one of a challenging outdoor activity.

How does graduate
school translate into a
good job?

You are “interviewing” all through graduate school

- Get to know your project sponsors
- Do good work on your project and tell your sponsors about it
- Underpromise, overdeliver
- Present your work at conferences
- Meet deadlines





...and all
along the
way you
are making
contacts
for jobs



Graduate School is
fascinating,
memorable, fun,
extremely hard work -
one of the most
difficult things you will
do...

But it is usually well
worth it!

Best of luck in your endeavors!

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