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I entered the Ph.D. Program in Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences in September 2005 and graduated in September 2009. Upon enrollment, I had a master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology from Brooklyn College and had taken two doctoral classes at the Graduate Center, which had confirmed my interest in pursuing a Ph.D. Before initiating doctoral studies, I identified a clinical population of interest for my research and met with my advisor, Dr. Richard Schwartz, to discuss plans for doctoral study. I refined my research interests during the first two years of study, which paved the way for my progress during the subsequent years. As a doctoral student, I worked part-time as a speech-language pathologist, taught at Brooklyn College for two years, served as a lab manager for one year, and completed an NIH pre-doctoral grant – all with the support of my remarkable advisors and mentors, Drs. Richard Schwartz and Valerie Shafer. Amidst these tasks, I reserved quality time to socialize and travel with family and friends, albeit, in moderation. Fortunately, the intensity of my doctoral studies was outweighed by the reward and fulfillment that they engendered.

Here are some suggestions for timely completion of the Ph.D. program in Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences:

- Establish a clear career vision with short- and long-term goals to direct your pace and degree of productivity.
- Select an advisor who has similar research interests, whose work style and personality suits yours, and one with whom you will likely enjoy interacting. Consider whether the advisor has access to resources and opportunities that you might require and adequate availability to provide you with guidance. Also, consider the structure of the advisor's lab and whether it matches your needs.
- Select a research topic as early as possible. Consult with your advisor and other faculty members periodically to refine your research agenda.
- Participate in lab meetings and activities, colloquia, and departmental events on a regular basis. These events will provide opportunities for learning from faculty and fellow students and may foster enriching collaborations. Use these events as opportunities to ask senior students about their experiences and suggestions for advancing in the program.
- Set strict, realistic deadlines to meet program requirements. Inform your advisor and fellow students of your deadlines and ask them to assist you in meeting them in a timely manner. Take responsibility for apprising your advisor of progress you have made and challenges that you are confronting as a student.

- Teach college-level classes to gain experience and exposure to academia but teach no more than one course a semester. Recognize that teaching preparation will likely take as much time as you have, so dedicate a limited number of hours per week to preparation and limit yourself to that block of time to complete your preparation.
- Designate a minimum of two days per week as your “GC only days.” Dedicate these entire workdays to your classes and research without permitting the intrusion of any distractions.
- Focus at an early stage on building your curriculum vitae. Accustom yourself to thinking, “What do I need to do now to enhance my CV?” and “What do I want my CV to look like when I graduate and apply for an academic or research position?” Asking yourself these questions will assist you in determining whether particular tasks are worthwhile in the long-term.
- Seek intramural and extramural funding to support your doctoral studies under the assistance of experienced mentors.
- Strive to achieve a proper balance between work and R &R. Always keep your eyes on the “finish line” and consider whether your personal activities are considerably delaying you from achieving your goals.
- Seek quality mentorship from faculty and students and support from family and friends.