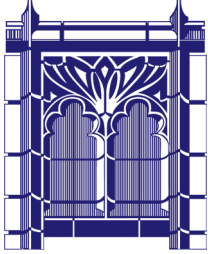


Maximizing the Benefit of Department Colloquia



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL **mentor memo** AUTUMN QUARTER 2009

This Mentor Memo, part of a series, responds to graduate students' requests for advice about navigating graduate studies successfully.

The series also addresses topics in career preparation and professional development. For more information and to suggest topics, contact Graduate School Dean Jerry Baldasty at baldasty@u.washington.edu.

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There are several good reasons to attend department colloquia:

Learn about your discipline. Even if the topic is not directly related to your work, you may find it useful to know more about your field and the type of work others in the field do. You may work with people, later in your career, who do similar work.

Learn about the research methods used by others. At some point, you might be glad you had a broad exposure to the research being discussed. For instance, during a job interview, you might be able to talk intelligently about the work done by people interviewing you.

Learn about presenting your ideas in public. See how people present their work; observe what works well and not-so-well in a presentation. This knowledge will serve you well when you present your own work, and may be very useful when you present a conference paper, or more importantly, when you interview for a job.

Network with your department's guest. You might want to call upon this guest for help, or you may interview at his/her institution, etc. The academic world is really fairly small; there's a very good chance you'll see this person again—and you might greatly benefit from having established even the most limited level of rapport when s/he visited your department.

Be an active member of your department's intellectual community. The first step to being an active member of your department's intellectual community is simply to show up. That matters. Be engaged with your colleagues and ask questions (either in a Q&A session, or if you are shy, on your own after the talk).

Show support for your department. If it is an official department colloquium, you should be there. As a graduate student today, and as a new faculty member a few years from now, attend! Show you are a good departmental citizen. Your colleagues today—and the chair of the department you join—will notice your absence or presence.

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