Balancing Career Choices in Bio & BioChem

I’m about to get my diploma... and everyone is asking me...
“...what’s next?”

Exploring Careers & Making Choices

David Ortendahl, Assistant Director

Think big. Plan big. Succeed.

Career Development Center
Project Center, Lower Level • www.wpi.edu/+CDC
(508) 831-5260 • cdc@wpi.edu • AIM: CDCatWPI
This session is intended to cover 3 things:

- Provide key questions to consider when deciding on a graduate school program or a job
- Provide resources to guide your decisions
- Offer you time to reflect on your current and future priorities

Good decisions come from experience, and experience comes from bad decisions.

~Author Unknown
So where do I begin?

- Four keystones to deciding on Graduate School
  - Self-Assessment
  - Research Jobs/Careers
  - Researching schools and programs
  - Application/Acceptance
  - Choices- review what is available
Self-Assessment: Key Questions

- Go ahead- start writing down your own answers!
  - What are my short and long term goals?
  - Will an advanced degree help me to obtain these goals?
  - Will work experience help me to obtain these goals?
  - Is another degree required to enter your profession?
  - Am I willing to invest the time, effort, and expense required for graduate study?
Self-Assessment: Key Questions

Whatever you do, do not pursue graduate school because you are unsure of what else to do with your life and career.

• Ask Yourself:
  ▫ Will you be able to focus on one topic or a narrow range of topics for the next 2-7 years?
  ▫ Are you comfortable initiating and carrying out independent research? (Most Ph.D. programs are highly academic and research oriented.)
  ▫ Are you prepared to spend the majority of the next 2-7 years studying while living on a limited budget?
  ▫ Do you need a break from school?
Self-Assessment: Compare Careers

• What jobs are you qualified for with a Bachelor’s degree from WPI? (Check out WPI JobFinder)

• Which jobs will a Master’s degree make you eligible for?
  ▫ Will programs take you right out of college?

• WPI CDC- Is Grad School Right for Me?
  ▫ www.wpi.edu/Admin/CDC/right.html
Research is VERY Important

- **Researching for Jobs**
  - Using CDC Resources, Online Resources, Networking
  - Tracking and evaluating progress
- **Researching for Grad Programs**
  - Using CDC Resources, Online Resources, Networking
  - Meeting benchmarks (tests), visiting,
Job Search Strategies

• Schedule Your Time
  ▪ Establish Measurable Goals
• Make Yourself Accountable
  ▪ Dedicate A Location In Your House
• Make a list of target companies (2 tiers)
• Keep Accurate Records
  ▪ Maintain Filing System
    • Excel Sheet, Alphabetized 3 ring binders, pocket calendars, notebooks, 3 X 5 index cards, etc.
Job Search Strategies... Cont.

- **WPI Career Development Center Resources**
  - Career Fairs
  - Card-Scan Database
  - Corporate Information Sessions
  - Counselors
  - Resource Library
  - On-Campus Recruiting
  - Job Finder
  - Career Search
Research:
Exploring Careers & Programs

• WPI CDC – Search for graduate programs
  ▫ more on next slide!

• Sloan Career Cornerstone – explore career paths
  ▫ www.careercornerstone.org/

• Occupational Outlook Handbook – explore forecasts
  ▫ www.bls.gov/oco/

• Professional Associations – explore industry
  ▫ www.wpi.edu/Admin/CDC/profes397.html
Bio/Biochem websites

**Biochemistry**
- American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
- Biotechnology Industry Organization
- Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
- NIH (National Institute of Health)
- NSF (National Science Foundation)

**Biology**
- American Institute of Biological Sciences
- American Physiological Society
- American Society for Microbiology
- Interdisciplinary Plant Research
- PreHealth Center
- Career Corner Stone Resources

**Biotechnology**
- American Institute of Biological Sciences
- American Physiological Society
- American Society for Microbiology
- Botanical Society of America
- Interdisciplinary Plant Research
- PreHealth Center

These websites and more links on: wpi.edu/+CDC
Participate in Social Networking

- LinkedIn Groups:
  - Biotech & Pharma Professionals Network
  - Massachusetts Life Sciences Start-up Initiative - MALSI
  - Massachusetts Biotechnology Council (MBC)

- Twitter Feeds:
  - #biotech
  - #BIO2010 (for the BIO Int’l conference)
Research:
Finding Schools & Programs

- Resources on: [http://www.wpi.edu/Admin/CDC/grad.html](http://www.wpi.edu/Admin/CDC/grad.html)

  - Some online resources include
    - [Peterson's](http://www.petersons.com) - Peterson's is a leading search provider of colleges and universities, graduate schools, online degrees, private schools and study guides to students
    - [Graduate Guide Home](http://www.usgraduateschools.com) - US graduate schools, masters, doctorate, law programs - Search for graduate school, law school, doctorate and MBA programs by major and state, university contact details and email forms. Sections cover admission tests, financial aid and more
    - [Best Graduate Schools—US News and World Report](http://www.usnews.com) - U.S. News has collected data from more than 12,000 graduate programs to bring you this year's rankings. Start by selecting a discipline for access to our top program rankings.
      - [US News You Tube Video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUtxtqPIxow)
Applications: Resources

- WPI CDC webpage:
  - www.wpi.edu/Admin/CDC/application.html

- WPI Programs:
  - http://grad.wpi.edu/Prospective/degrees.html
Choices:
When Choosing Graduate School

- Is the school accredited?
- Who is the competition?
- Does geographic location play a role for you?
  - Cost of living?
- **What are your research interests?**
  - What have the faculty pursued at the institution?
- Is there Financial Aid/Research Fellowships?
- What Academic resources are at your disposal?
- What is the profile of a successful student in the program?
Choices: When Choosing Graduate School

- For Master’s students- do they offer Ph.D. programs?
- For Doctoral Candidates:
  - Average length of time
  - Previous Dissertation Topics
- Possibilities of funding for research/previous grants awarded?
Choices - Job Search

- Who has given me an offer?
- What are my responsibilities?
- Is there room for growth?
- Will I learn something?
- Will I work well with the people there?
- Is location important?
- What are the benefits?
Choices: Jobs vs. Grad School

- What is my financial situation?
- Am I absolutely certain about an advanced degree?
- What are the pros to each? ... the cons?
- What do I feel comfortable with?
Upcoming CDC Events: your next step...

- 3/18 @ 6pm   Your 30 Second Commerical (FL 320)
- 3/22 @ 5pm   How to work a Bio Fair (GH 227)
- 3/23 @ 2pm   Job Finder Workshop (Anderson A)

Biotechnology/Bioengineering Career Fair-
- 3/25 from noon- 4pm, 16 companies

- 3/30 @ 4pm   How to Network (HL 116)
- 3/31 @ 6pm   Networking with LinkedIn (SL 406)
Final thought...

Choices are the hinges of destiny.
- Pythagoras -

...Do great things!