Shuhui Lin: Hello. So we will go ahead get started. Thank you for participating in our graduate, our first webinar for the pre-arrival webinar series for graduate students, professionalization and support. So a little bit about the webinar series, the pre-arrival webinar series is a webinar series provided to incoming international students, hopefully helping incoming international students to help arrange arrival plans, and for traveling to and living in Iowa City, understand orientation expectations and responsibilities, transition to student life and academics at the University of Iowa. The webinars will be recorded and posted on our website after we have them transcribed. So if you need to access our webinars afterwards, please go to our website and they will be posted there. So during the webinar, if you have any technical issues, for example like cannot hear us, or cannot see our shared screen, please let us know in the chat function. If you have any questions related to today’s topics, please use the Q&A function to post your questions. We’ll answer them live at the end of the webinar. If you have not received your I-20 or DS-2019 yet, you can pay the e-Ship-Global fee for us to mail your documents. Once you have the documents you can apply for the visa. And the information contained in the pre-arrival checklist, this information is in the Pre-arrival checklist in iHawk.

And some important days. So International grad student orientation is in the week of August 7 to 10, and then international undergrad student orientation is the week of August 12 to 19. So now I will give this to our speakers today.

Jennifer: Great, thank you, Lin. Hello everyone, my name is Jennifer Teitle. I'm an assistant dean in the graduate college here at the University of Iowa. The graduate college is a unit that oversees degree completion and helps organize and provide support for graduate students and post-doctoral scholars here on campus. So master’s students, MFAs, PhDs, and post-docs. And I’m joined today by a graduate assistant that works at our office who is currently a PhD student at the University of Iowa, and who’s going to introduce himself now.

Sunny: Sure. Thank you, Jen. My name is Sunny, and I'm! international student from Hong Kong. I'm a third year doctoral student in the counseling psychology program at the University. So I'm actually a graduate assistant at the graduate college, and working on a lot of workshops, and professional development, and career guidance with our fellow international graduate students on campus.

Jennifer: Great, Thank you. Okay. So we're going to go ahead and get started. And we have several slides today, and several programs to talk about. But it doesn't even fully encompass all of the opportunities that are available here for graduate students at the University of Iowa. And that's in part because there's a lot of sort of small programs. But there's also opportunities and programs that happen within your own home academic program. And so we're going to talk about that a little bit as well. This building you see in the background, of course, is the beautiful old Capitol Building, on the Pentacrest in Iowa City. Sunny and I walk by this every day. It's a really pretty area with a lot of old buildings. This is of course a picture taken at night.

So to give you again that overview of professional development and how we see that for graduate students on campus, it's missing a little bit on this slide but I'll just read it to you. So we see professional
development as a way to prepare for your future career. We want your graduate experience to be including more than just coursework and publications. So our effort is really to connect you to a wide range of resources, some of which will be inside your department, but a lot of what we do will be helping you connect outside your home academic department with experiences that will enrich your graduate degree program. Sunny, did you want to talk a little bit before we go on? Talk a little bit about your experience within your program to get that perspective?

Sunny: Okay, sounds good. So as a graduate student, I actually came here since fall of 2015 as a first year PhD student. And my experience actually, falls in the kind of wide range of experience, I would say. Because, being a PhD student, on top of course work, of course, there's things that actually vary by program, vary by different departments in the other colleges, but based on my experience in my own department, they actually require students to kind of do a lot of networking. Also like kind of professional development in terms of going to conferences, going to a lot of workshops, and going to my practicum. So on top of coursework, on top of your own research, because you're still kind of expected to do a wide range of different professional activities. So this is actually something that I think across the board, most of the PhD programs, most of the masters programs here are, The faculty are like, the advisor that you're working with would advise you to do more networking, because that's actually the culture that build up in the graduate schools and graduate departments. Because it's actually, I consider that as my career, because PhD is actually 5 to 6 years in the program, and networking is really crucial as a graduate student because that would actually help you facilitate the process of kind of employment and career in the future. So that would be really helpful, if you actually can spare some time besides going to classes, doing your own research, you actually kind of, you just submit some proposal to professional conferences in your own department. I mean like, across the nation. So that's actually something that I've been doing a lot and I think that's actually really rewarding experience for me to really see something that is actually meaningful to my career.

Jennifer: Thank you. So on our next slide, you can see broad competency areas. There's 8 of them listed here, and these were decided on by groups of all the different units that provide professional development to graduate students outside their home department. So these people include, you know Brandon that works here in international student support services. And people from our writing center, which I'll talk about a little bit later in this presentation. People From our Conversation Center, where people learn those conversational English skills for networking purposes, as well as our center for teaching and other places. So all of those individuals got together, and we put together sort of a competency map, so that students could go to one place, and see what kinds of resources were available in the different categories. So as you can see the competencies here, our fellowships and grants, careers, communication, diversity, wellness, so your health and wellbeing, teaching, research and publication, and leadership. And our expectation here in graduate school is that you'd be participating in all of these in different ways. Maybe at different levels. You see by the light bulb there, research and publication. That's going to be a primary concern for somebody say in a PhD program. That's a big part of why you're here. And your primary mentor in developing that competency is going to probably be your faculty member, or other faculty mentors. That said, you might be applying for a grant with your research. Something that would get you to travel to a conference. In that case, you might work with our office over in the graduate college, and that's grant writing support. So that you understand, not only how to be conducting the research, but how to write a grant to get funding for
travel or some other, you know, equipment, related to the research that you’re doing. So we do offer those kinds of supports, and we all, for the most part try to work together and send people to different offices as needed. And we’re going to talk about some of the specific offices across campus that offer some of these different competency areas.

First I wanted to highlight something about teaching. So this would be under that teaching competency. And this is a program that runs out of the graduate college. It’s called the Center for the Integration of Research Teaching and Learning, it was actually started as a national NSF effort from our National Science Foundation in the U.S. And it’s, there’s local centers, for this you can see the acronym CIRTL. There’s local CIRTL centers at over 40 institutions in the U.S., big research institutions, and the goal is to help prepare you to be a better teacher. So through this program, you can actually get certificates. They’re not on your transcript, but they’re what I would call a mini credential.

Through either doing professional development on campus, of which we offer a lot related to teaching from different programs, or by doing something called a teaching as a research project. So what that project would allow you to do is if you’re say, in a biology PhD program, you would design a project about, a small project, about your own teaching. You would do a little bit of research, the Graduate College offers some funding for students that are doing this over the summer, and when you complete it, you get a certificate. And you sort of present your small educational project. So what this does is allow you to alongside your research skills within your home program, be developing skills as a high quality teacher, which is of course, an interest of a lot of the graduate students that we work with. So again, CIRTL is an option, a lot of the things that are going to show you are choices that graduate students have, but we do like to highlight that depending on- you may not even know now, you’re not yet in grad school. But depending on what happens when you get here, what you see as your other additional interests alongside your program, some of these offerings might turn out to be the right thing when you know, you’re in graduate school and you start thinking teaching is really where I want to focus. CIRTL can help you do that that kind of move. Do you teach, Sunny?

Sunny: Yeah, I do. As a PhD student, even though it’s not a requirement, there are a lot of opportunities across campus that you can teach. I mean for me as a counseling psychology student, I don’t actually usually teach a lot of counseling psychology classes, but I do actually go to the department of psychology, department of sociology, just like to apply for any teaching assistantship throughout my PhD program here. I think that there are a lot of opportunities that you can actually teach and I’m also like kind of taking a certificate program in my college, it’s called the certificate of college teaching. It’s actually offered by the College of Education. And this is actually an opportunity for you if you’re actually really interested in teaching and passionate about teaching, and how to teach a class that is actually structured and also kind of systemic kind of teaching method. Those kind of certificates, actually there’s a lot of requirements, but the requirement that you need to take is actually two mandatory classes that are actually taught by a couple of high education professors in my college, and at the same time simultaneously, you actually need to take a practicum class, meaning that simultaneously you do teach a class, maybe outside the department or within your department, that can actually show how you actually apply the skills into your college teaching classes. So there are a lot of opportunities regarding teaching. Besides CIRTL, CIRTL is really really structured, it’s a really good program for you to participate in, but there’s also another opportunity in college of education that you can actually apply and you can actually get a certificate, which is really neat because, yeah.
Jennifer: So CIRTL actually encompasses the teaching certificate. So you get, you have all the CIRTL certification if you went through the center for teaching certificate, the transcribable one.

Sunny: Oh, nice.

Jennifer: You never knew!

Sunny: yeah, I never knew. That’s good information, okay.

Jennifer: Well, there, you can apply if you want. Okay, you learn something new. Another opportunity that's a cross campus opportunity, very popular with our international graduate students, is our three minute thesis competition. And this competition challenges graduate students to clearly and concisely articulate their research in just three minutes. You can actually go to our website and watch 3MT videos. Our 3MT winner last year was an international student. Maybe not our first year. I'm trying to think, no. Maybe it was two years ago. It's a very popular competition, broadly with international students. I think in part because of sort of the challenge, and the opportunity to really provide this high quality, concise presentation of your research. Right? And I think it's useful in a lot of contexts. So on-campus support for that includes our speaking center, where I know our students go in preparation for this event, the event is held in the theater, there is electronic voting for winners. There's prizes offered. It's pretty celebratory. And our winners of our three minutes thesis competition actually go on and have done a lot of different either events, I know they have their pictures on banners in our downtown right now, highlighting their research, they also end up with really high quality photos of them doing presentations as well as video, which is very very useful once they're getting towards the job market stage.

I want to talk a little bit about grant writing and grant writing support. This is something that a lot of new graduate students are interested in. we do a lot to try to support graduate students’ efforts to write for funding. We understand, that's a key part of graduate school, but then your future life if you're working in academia or a related industry. So as you can see here in this picture, this is actually at the graduate college in one of our offices. This is a grant writing community, where we bring together faculty members with experience reviewing that type of grant. We bring together winners who have won that grant in the past, we bring together applicants, and fellowship support people, who can kind of help you with the nuts and bolts of writing and all those people get in the room together, and we discuss the opportunity that you're interested in and kind of trying to provide early support for how you would go about the process of writing that grant. There is also on campus something pretty special and unusual, which is Individual support for students writing big grants and fellowships. So students can actually come to our offices and work with somebody who's really skilled in grant writing to kind of get the hang of it, and get started with their grant. It's additional support to working with a faculty member but depending on which department you're in, your faculty member may be more or less tied to that process. So they may want to read a slightly later draft, you don't know how to get started, there's people that can kind of help you with that process. In addition to our offices, the writing center, which is a large robust center here on campus, also helps with grant writing support if you need additional kinds of support. So that's something that is popular with graduate students, and I think really important to get started with early, I guess I would say.
Sunny mention networking, and networking is something that we talk about as really really critical to your graduate school experience. So it’s, you get started in grad school, Sunny would probably agree, and it’s pretty hard to think about anything else. You kind of think about research all the time you’re kind of focused. It’s certainly very hard to think like, who else should I be talking to? Who else should I be meeting? But we try to provide some support for making that happen. And I know that’s a big thing on the program level. What kind of program level supports? Do you all get together to socialize and graduate students with each other, do you have a chance to socialize with faculty or with former students from your program?

Sunny: I mean, I do. I’m really fortunate that I actually have a really supportive and also like really kind Faculty members in my program. They actually set up a lot of list serv, within the program. We actually have list serv, we have a Facebook page. So students can actually post questions and kind of things that’d actually facilitate the conversation, facilitate feedback exchange as well. On Facebook as kind of a platform, and also on email, list serv as a platform as well. So in terms of within the program, we do actually establish a lot of different opportunities for students to really connect and bridge with the faculty members. And each of my cohorts, in my program, basically each cohort actually needs a kind of student representative to stand in at the faculty meeting every month. But that’s not really typical across the board, I believe like across the campus. But I think in my program, and also kind of, A lot of times that networking is really important because my upper class colleagues will tell me what’s coming up next, in conferences, and maybe I don’t know about those resources and they are all able to kind of provide me a lot of resources. because I’m actually doing my comprehensive exam actually next week, if I don’t actually get a chance to talk to my upper class colleagues, and I don’t know how to start my papers, how to start my written materials. But they are actually willing to kind of send me a lot of written materials they have done before, so that I can actually have a template see the structure and how they write it. It’s really helpful for me to kind of really think about what I should structure, and my paper. And also the other thing I would like to mention is that like, networking doesn’t actually limit you to your own program. Like, if you actually can get some time, spare some time to really see kind of network with somebody actually outside the program, maybe you can actually get more support from them. Because a lot of times that within your program, I really kind of understand that because, within a program, there are a lot of things that you want to don’t want to share, especially your emotional concerns or kind of concerned about academics sometimes, because a lot of people actually in the program have evaluative role of your performance. If you actually branch out to different people, different students, colleagues, across the campus, that you will be able to share something that you really want to share. Kind of like some stress that you actually encounter, maybe in your graduate program. So that you can actually get additional emotional support, and then your network will be kind of like wider because you actually, I mean finding a job after you graduate school could be really difficult, and then you want to kind of look out what other opportunities that you can actually get like besides, something that actually, within your field. Because sometimes jobs can be obtained when you actually network with somebody else. There is not just within your program.

Jennifer: Absolutely. We know each other by your industrious networking.
**Sunny:** My first year, basically my first year actually is my first time that I met with Jen, and from then on, Jen actually knows me as a person. So we connected, and Jen actually secured my graduate assistantship since last year fall. If I didn't get this connection, I may not have any graduate assistantship on campus. So I was fortunate.

**Jennifer:** This is definitely how it works and, you know they estimate that over 70 percent of U.S. jobs that people obtain, they actually know somebody who's working at that company. And it's not to say that the person working at the company just gave them the job, but it's just very common. Particularly here in the US, that a place where you'd want to work, maybe you've talked to somebody, maybe you've met them at a professional conference, or emailed with them a little bit on LinkedIn or another resource. So the networking piece in grad school is really crucial, even though it is initially kind of, kind of tough.

But it's really important to be doing. So, the last thing that I really wanted to highlight is some of the many many centers that occur out of our rhetoric department. So our rhetoric department not only teaches a lot of undergraduate students about sort of conversation and speaking and public speaking, but they also offer a lot for graduate students these days. So they have the speaking center, which is the place that I said students go to to prepare oral talks, such as the 3MT, or can prepare for a conference in their own field, so they can work with a specialist who is not say a specialist, maybe if there are biology PhD, not a biology specialist, but a speaking specialist. And so they'll help them really under- you know kind of break down their content and figure out how to best speak to an audience in their own field, or in a different field. There is a writing center here on campus that includes writing dissertation summer camp, where you can apply, and they'll actually help you. The dissertation process is pretty tiring, that's at the end of a PhD program, you'll be doing a lot of intensive writing, and our writing center offers these camps where you can go, you'll work for a couple of hours, they have coffee and bagels, and maybe they'll give you some additional writing tips on ways to be most productive. They also just have appointments that you can make and go work with somebody at the writing center. To support you, say if you're doing coursework, and you have a term paper that you need to finish, they can support you in those efforts. And then I also want to highlight our Conversation Center, which is very popular with international students, and it's relatively new. That's a place where students can go and just practice conversational English, just practice conversations about broad ranging topics. So often, the piece I think that holds students up from networking, all students that we work with in graduate school, is that they don't feel so comfortable having a conversation, and they feel very stressed in graduate school, and a conversation seems like the last important thing on their minds. But as Sunny and I just sort of described, being able to have a conversation and build a social network as well as a professional network is really really essential. So if those are skills that you want to further develop in graduate school or as you’re networking, the Conversation Center is a really good place to do that.

So we're back to the beginning here as I said, our goal was to highlight several of the resources that are here broadly on campus, as well as trying to give you a bit of an insight into what you do in your individual program. But the truth of the matter is that these two work together. So you're working in your individual program, and you're working broadly out on campus taking advantage of different kinds of opportunities. There's not time to take advantage of them all. But here during your graduate school program, I think you'll find some that are a nice match for your interests.
Sunny: And one more thing. When you are thinking about diversity and inclusiveness on campus, I would say U of Iowa is actually having a lot of international students, and also having a lot of different people come from diverse backgrounds. I would say people here are really kind of welcoming and also really friendly for you to kind of like, if you actually really need academic support, and sometimes you want to kind of build up your social network for support, here is the place that you actually want to be because there are a lot of different individuals that decides to really dedicate work in research and scholarship, but at the same time, they actually really kind of branch it out to different individuals to learn about the cultures. and I think as an international student myself, It's really important for you, just feel like I'm being family. That I'm being welcomed in a community that I don't usually, that's really kind of a stand out point, that I think outstanding point I mean, to kind of think about considering U of Iowa as your institution, because that's actually your higher education institution, because those are some of the support that's much needed as international student, because you come from another country, and then you actually, maybe having your parents not coming with you, and then kind of actual living independently in a new culture. If you don't get actually get that kind of support and also like, that kind of vibe of being welcomed, it's really hard for you to get through the program. But here in Iowa, I didn't actually feel that, because everybody around me is really supportive and really kind of really helping me to get through some of the obstacles in the graduate program, and help to guide me through this kind of difficulties and challenges in the graduate program, which is actually really beneficial for my career in the future. Yeah.

Questions & Answer

Jennifer: We'd be open to taking questions. And, then to let Lin take over the keyboard and find where your questions are.

Michael: Okay. So we only have a few questions right now. And so if anybody has more questions, please feel free to ask them while we answer some of these. Our first question is from somebody who comes from a different educational tradition, and they want to know, they want to better understand the hierarchy of graduate programs. And their question is, who is really the most important person for me if I want to succeed in my studies?

Jennifer: Without a doubt, that person is your advisor. Your academic advisor. So you'll have a really close relationship, and I'll let Sunny speak to this in a moment too, he'll tell you about it, but we sometimes call academic advisors, you know, there's a like your academic mother in a PhD program or your academic father, I was introduced to these terms when I did a PhD years ago, and it's that level of close relationship. That said, we strongly urge in the programs that, the research that talks about graduate student success, demonstrates that students who have more than one mentor do better. So your academic advisor is going to be your key person, but you're going to seek out other mentoring relationships. Sort of in the way that Sunny described. So whether that's other faculty in your department that you just feel close to, and that you took a course with them and they're supportive of your work, whether that's somebody in ISSS, whether that somebody in the graduate college or the writing center, maybe the DGS, which is the Director of Graduate Studies, which is sort of the head faculty member in your department related to graduate education. So you're going to want to try to cultivate at least two other relationships. So ideally, you'd have about three different mentors that you
feel comfortable going to if you’re struggling with something. Because your struggles will be different. And mentors will help you with different things.

You want to try to avoid, even though your advisor’s most the important person, you want to try to avoid expecting them to provide absolutely everything for you as a graduate student. Because they're just not able. So you will find soon that there are things they really specialize in and they will be your main support, but they can't do everything. And so it's on you as a graduate student to be cultivating these other relationships to help you in graduate school. Sunny do you want to speak to that?

Sunny: I'll echo with a lot of what Jen just said, on top of that, based on my experience, a lot of advisors are busy with other agendas as well, as Jen actually mentioned that you actually kind of need to proactively ask and seek feedback. When I actually come in to my advisor’s office, I actually prepare a lot of questions in my head, or kind of jot it down in my notepad, so that I know what exactly I’m going to ask my advisor, to help him to guide me through my dissertation process, or even my comprehensive exam process, and all that stuff that's kind of a milestone in your PhD program. So you kind of want to get your questions answered, in a more kind of structure and you want to know the answers. So the advice that I would give you is to actually prepare something that is kind of, thoughtful questions that you can actually ask your advisors. If your advisor is not available, you actually can kind of branch out to other faculty members that are actually close to you, like you have taken his/her class, that you feel like there’s a kind of connection built up in that relationship. Then you can actually ask them questions like during their office hours, or email them. In this kind of American kind of academic context, knowing how to kind of email each other is actually really kind of the best way to touch base with your advisor, touch base with other faculty members, because we can actually set up an appointment with my advisor and also kind of other faculty members by emailing them. And also, if you actually have some simple questions that can be answered in the email you can do that as well. But I would say that kind of having a close relationship with your advisor is really crucial to get you through the program because in fact, kind of essentially, your advisor will be a chair for your dissertation committee, a chair for your comprehensive exam. So just make sure that you actually have kind of close relationship with your advisor, so that they know actually what your struggles are, so they can actually help you out and kind of guide you through in this journey. Because this journey could be difficult at times, and those kinds of supports are much needed, in terms of your career development. So.

Michael: So we have another question here. And this question is, can all graduate students receive assistantships? What is an assistantship, and do I need to have perfect English to get one?

Jennifer: Yes, okay. So an assistantship can come in a variety of forms. It can be what's called a GA a graduate assistantship, and those can be research assistant, that sort of the big term that kind of covers everything, they’re research assistants, they might be doing research, they might be doing other sorts of help on campus. Sunny, for example, is a GA that helps our office with outreach and development. There's also an RA, which is very popular in STEM fields, this would be research assistantships, and those are students that focus primarily just on research, and those are often, if you’re in a STEM field, those are sometimes awarded through a faculty member’s grant. So you might be a participant on their grant as a research assistant, or in some other capacity. So you're being paid to help with that faculty member’s research or work on your own research sometimes. But mostly the other. And then there's a TA, which is a teaching assistantship. And that's where you're paid to be teaching basically, so you're
teaching undergraduate students. So GA is anyone that's a graduate student assistant, TA is a teaching assistant, RA is an, and you hear all of these terms being tossed around kind of loosely on campus. And sometimes you hear one for the other, so it’s not so important that you’re so specific. TA is generally for just teaching most of the time. So those are the definitions. People do not have these positions guaranteed when they come to graduate school. Depending on which program you are in, they will talk to you about the availability of assistantships, whether you’d be teaching a course, your English skills would be more important for your teaching, often, and I think the other webinar addresses this to some extent, right? With Maureen, she’s going to talk about some of the testing and what’s required. Right?

Lin: Yeah. So we, in the orientation one, one of our last ones, we will talk more about teaching related English assessments.

Jennifer: So there are some details that are required here at Iowa that Maureen knows the specifics of. But unsurprisingly, your English needs to be at a certain level to be teaching undergraduates. But it’s something, I would say that’s something to work with your program on very specifically. It is possible to pick up graduate assistantships in other places across campus, say at the library, or at some other center, but it’s not common, and I wouldn’t rely on that as a graduate student. I would really focus on your conversation with your potential advisor with your program, trying to ensure that there would be some sort of package where you’d have funding for say, five years of your doctoral degree. For master’s students, in cases the master’s student talking, this is less common. Assistantships are overall less common for master’s students and you would need to consult with your home program. You want to speak to that a little bit?

Sunny: I think, in terms of funding and support, Also assistantship supposed to be fair across programs. And based on my experience, like, my program didn't actually guarantee my funding at the beginning, but like the faculty, if you actually email them, email your advisor, or email other faculty members within your program to ask for whether they actually have some federal research funding actually just recently came out for the research projects, then they would be able to kind of offer you something, like that's actually another opportunity for you to kind of reach out for, because if you actually like kind of maybe not guaranteed funding at the beginning. I mean, when you get admitted to the program, and then you don't actually guarantee funding, but like remember, just be really kind of persistent, seeking out for funding. Because that's how you actually really want to kind of, kind of network. Like we mentioned, networking is really important. because a lot of times that funding will actually come out maybe sometime, like two weeks or one, even one week or a couple of days before the fall semester stars. It's a really really stressful period of time I would say, but just be sure that you actually kind of keep checking, and also regularly, maybe two weeks, kind of maybe every other week, you actually kind of check in with your faculty members, your advisor, or some other folks across campus to see whether they actually have available funding for you to go forward. So a lot of times that you just need to kind of be really consistent in this process because a lot of people on this campus actually are really busy, you just kind of send out like a friendly reminder, just saying that I'm still kind of wanting to kind of secure my funding for next year, would you might actually kind of offer me some tips? And do you know anybody actually across campus that actually needs some research assistant? And also graduate assistant? So that actually I can actually support my education here. So that's what I would do. I would recommend.
Jennifer: So now that's a very good strategy for anybody that's in a program where funding is not guaranteed. And that is a handful of programs here on campus, but then at the same time, you may be in contact with your program, and it may be very common. Many of our programs are always fully funded, and there's always sort of a setting. So it just depends on the program. But if you find out that it's partial funding guaranteed and partial that you need to find on your own, Sunny’s approach, Sunny is the king of being able to reach out really comfortably to people and kindly, and sort of prompt them and ask what’s going on, and ask if funding came through. But it’s been really effective for you. So it’s a good strategy. Yeah.

Michael: We’ve got a question here, which is probably best answered at a later webinar, but the question is my TOEFL score is less than 100 and do I have to get a new TOEFL. And so Lin, what day was the one that Maureen Burke is going to present?

Lin: It’s on July 13th.

Michael: so July 13th you'll be able to get the best answer. I can say that graduate students can start studying even if their TOEFL score is under 100, but if you want to be exempt from English testing on campus, you may need a higher score. And to get the authoritative answer on that, listen to the webinar that Maureen Burke will present because she’s the expert on those things.

We have another question here. So this is somebody who had cultural problems at another university, and they want to know what organizations we have on campus to hopefully not have cultural problems here. What kind of organizations do we have to help students adjust to the culture at the University of Iowa campus?

Jennifer: That’s a good question. So I think a lot of those programs actually going to come out of ISSS. So, for example, Sunny and I have been participating in a series of workshops that’s focused on, you know, cross cultural adaptation to things like academia or seeking employment, or those bits and pieces that have a focus on graduate students. I know that socially, international graduate students are sometimes active and, you know, through that, I don’t know if we have any official professional like organization that is just dedicated to international students right now.

Lin: I think at the graduate level, I haven't heard of any yet. We do have an International Student Advisory Board that Sunny was part of a few years ago. But then, that is kind of a once a year application, but it's not kind of an organization. I would say usually from what I've seen at the department level, there's more kind of networking and social activities happening at the graduate level within your department.

Jennifer: This is the overall thing with graduate school versus undergrad, right? So in undergrad, there's a lot more co-curricular outside the classroom sort of activities and opportunities like that. In graduate school, a lot of the focus and emphasis is really at the department level, the program level. You’re within your discipline and you probably imagine yourself, say you’re in pure math, You probably imagine yourself as a pure math student most of the time, rather than thinking about just being a graduate student generally. So, within your small program or department, again I have to say those supports vary. We do have through ISSS, and tremendous support, we have a center for diversity and enrichment, we
have an office of graduate inclusion that sort of helps provide some of those efforts. But it wouldn't supersede what you'd be doing at a program or department level.

**Sunny:** I would say that, but a lot of times that like that being said, I think a lot of times that I seek support culturally, I think there are a lot of cultural houses on campus. There are a bunch of cultural houses, and also like RAC, which is actually the women's resource and action center, that is actually geared toward student's kind of emotional support and also professional support as well. And those kind of resource center is actually being available for all of students on campus. and basically we actually have LGBTQ resource center, we have Asian, I don’t remember the name of it, but Asian and Asian Pacific Islanders cultural house, and African American cultural house, there are a lot of, like Latino cultural house, there are a lot of different cultural houses that you can actually get some like kind of support academically, if you actually want to talk to someone like kind of know, be more, make friends from different backgrounds, diverse backgrounds. Like those are some of the places that you can go to. I know that every semester they are really dedicated to a series of workshops and programs that offer to students across campus. So you can actually attend those events, like most of them actually offer food and refreshments, like to kind of support you. I like, kind of actually attend those workshops, and then you actually get to network, and you get food to stuff your stomach, and all those kind of stuff is really cool like that. Actually, I really enjoy doing it, and it's like culturally, I think a lot of different corners on this campus actually offer you the cultural support that you may need.

**Jennifer:** Do you want to speak to ISSS opportunities at all?

**Michael:** I think that all the things that were mentioned were good. ISSS does provide regular programming for certain cultural events that happen throughout the semester. It's a program called life in Iowa, and we regularly invite all students. Now grad and undergrad, but I do think more of our attendees are graduate students, especially graduate students who may have family members here with them and want to get their family out in the community, and experience different events, different things that they might not be used to. That’s a great way for people to experience things like pumpkin carving for Halloween, and decorating eggs around Easter time, and we've even taken trips to farms because we have different communities here that have different ways of farming. It's something that a lot of our students really enjoy.

Okay. We've got a really good question, here that ties into some of the extracurricular activities. Someone wants to know, is it hard to combine graduate work and research with extra activities?

**Jennifer:** Yes. Yeah. So this is the thing. You’re always going to be asked to do some sort of balancing routine in graduate school. Even if I said to you right now, you’re not going to do any extra activities, the day is not long enough to do all the research that you want to do in graduate school, and to write all the papers that you want to write. And so we would never come here advocating for you to not focus on your research and your writing, but we are here to broadly sort of say that, for a career, to be successful and to get a career, and be able to talk about, you actually need to do a bit more than that. So you need to be adding other things even though yes, it is difficult. You know we have a panel at new graduate student orientation each year where graduate students talk about things like their schedule. So what time of day they wake up, when they exercise, when they work on writing. You know, if you've written before or written related to research, you understand that you actually can't do that all day. You can't just sit down and write for 9 hours straight. You won't be very productive. But you could maybe write for
two hours in the morning, and then take some time for a wellness activity, and then maybe do some course reading. So breaking out your day so that you can include some other activities, not only for wellness related activities, but other professionalization activities, is really valuable. But that balance, that timing, is pretty specific to individuals. So I work with a lot of students on setting goals, or understanding kind of how you could lay out your week to be productive, other people on campus in similar roles to mine do that as well. But it does ultimately kind of have to be on you to figure out that balance. I’m hoping maybe Sunny will talk a little bit more specifically about how to balance, because I know you balance a lot of different things.

Sunny: Right. Exactly. Thank you Jen. So I think, I would see self-care and wellness piece is actually kind of like extra activities that maybe you ask the question about activities that you enjoy doing, that actually can help you to recharge your energy. Because, sometimes if you actually kind of wearing different hats, like that’s actually a kind of going into different roles within a day, you’re actually going back and forth like mentally and also physically across campus, that could be really tiring. If you don’t actually have extra maybe like, your night hours could actually do something that you want. Maybe just like simple, like kind of, listening to music, watching a movie, or something that could be like, really help you to put your academic work to the side for a little while that actually can help you to recharge and resume your energy for the next day, because that’s actually really important. Because as a graduate student, you basically live in the kind of really fast pace, and also kind of fast changing environment. Every day you actually encounter a lot of different kind of aspects of the professional activity. For me, for myself, there are couple of things,

Jennifer: Can you walk us through a day?

Sunny: Sure! a typical day for me, Tuesday and Thursday basically I actually in the morning, I do my practicum as a psychologist in training in the hospital, and I teach at noon and I go back to hospital in the afternoon, and sometimes I have a meeting in late evening because I just can’t, I don’t have time in the daytime. So, Tuesdays and Thursdays are like that, basically. Monday Wednesday and Friday sometimes I have courses and classes. And also I am kind of, I need to work as a graduate assistant for the graduate college. So there are multiple roles I need to kind of handle on a day to day basis. So for me, I need to kind of set up what is actually something that I enjoy doing and meaningful to me, just kind of in addition to my academic work. I just need to kind of find some time out of my schedule, to really feel that like I can be myself. Because when you’re actually working on a lot of stuff on a daily basis, sometimes you lose your mind because you don’t know, you lost your mind sometimes. Because it’s really hard for you to really focus on the kind of mindfully working. Basically what I’m saying is actually mindful working. But I think self-care and also extra activities, really really essential. to just like spare up some time for yourself only, or some times that you can take care of yourself like, maybe sometimes like cooking, maybe sometimes hanging out with friends, which is actually a really really important part of your graduate life here. and also in the weekend, I spare like maybe, basically all of Saturday, I just do like a lot of self-care stuff like, maybe hang out, going to brunch with my friends, and also hanging out in a coffee shop, just like to kind of grab a leisure book that I can read for my free time. So you just need to kind of think about, yea. Really clearly like, what would really kind of make myself, more as a person, not just like kind of doing work all day long, because that’s actually as a human being, we have capacity. We cannot actually, we’re not robots, we’re not machines that we actually work like 24/7 without any rest. And rest is really really important. If you actually don’t get enough sleep that’s
not good for your health because you cannot actually function well for the next day. So just remember all those little stuff would actually help you to go through your graduate school career.

Jennifer: and as far as getting into that pattern and understanding what the pattern will be for you, that’s something that colleagues can also help with, your advisor can help with, as you learn to sort of figure out what the right pattern of work is for you. But to go to your earlier question, it’s hard to imagine a graduate student, PhD student at any institution anywhere, not feeling like it’s a lot of work. It is a lot of work, it’s just a lot of work for sure.

Michael: Okay, looks like we’ve got about two questions left here. So this person wants to know if they want to attend a research conference and don’t have money to travel or register, who do they ask for help?

Jennifer: So here on campus we have, we should have mentioned this before. Graduate student senate, which is a group that all graduate students can participate in, they actually have representatives from every single department on campus, and the graduate student senate awards travel grants for research conferences. So you have to write them a proposal by the guidelines, if you were to look up GSS Uiowa right now, you could see what the guidelines are. But sometimes students struggle the first time that they write these. They’re not long to write it all, they’re short, but the style of writing is grant writing. If you’re not if you’re not familiar with that there’s some things that we can do to sort of support the first time that you write these. I know they may even have a template online now or some sort of any other additional support. But these have rolling deadlines. So it’s not just once a year you can apply, there’s multiple deadlines available because conferences, depending on what your discipline is, may happen at very different times of year. So those travel grants are possible, and then also the graduate and professional student government, GPSG, also has traveled grants available that you can read about on their site. So both of those are possible, as well as some within home departments, like the college of education has travel grants, some other colleges have travel grants available to help their students get to conferences. The thing is, we all acknowledge in Academia that going to conferences, professional conferences, is an essential part of your academic training. So it may not always fully be covered, and especially, if your comfort as in Finland, that’s more challenging to get it completely covered. But if it’s in Michigan, You know, that’s not too, it’s not too tough, and most of that would be covered. So it just it depends a little bit on the particular conference, how many you’re doing that year. But it does require you to independently seek that funding from them, which is a big change in graduate school, right? Nobody is seeking you out to give you the money, you’re seeking them out to ask for the money. So I think that’s a big difference.

Sunny: And Basically, I love going to conferences. And I feel in terms of funding support, going to conferences and also professional development, U of Iowa actually offers a really kind of secure support funding support in particular. Because, A lot of GPS, GTSS and also my home department also my home college actually offer a lot of different opportunities to apply for travel grants. and their application is so streamlined that you actually can fill out like, I mean, I would say for me, if you actually know like the procedures, because they actually ask you for abstracts, and also a proposal, and basically what’s meaningful to yourself going to that conference, I mean those kind of questions is actually really kind of self-reflection after the process of going to the conference. So it’s really streamlined, and they’ll maybe ask you for writing a 500 words kind of self-reflection piece and then you can submit a travel grant. So it
doesn’t have to take you a lot of time to apply for a grant. If you actually first author a proposal, you are most likely to get the funding. Because you actually dedicated maybe tons of hours doing like first author on the presentation and they recognize it, and sometimes if you actually first author, like GSS grant, like GSS travel grant, If you actually first author of one of the presentations, you don’t actually write, they actually ask you how many percentage that you actually dedicated to this project. If you actually write a hundred percent. They don’t ask you like further questions about like, what exactly do you do, because they actually understand that you actually put in a lot of time already. So, I mean this process is so streamlined in terms of application, and most of the time if you are first author or second author, it’s most likely to be able to be reimbursed for your travel.

**Lin:** So we’re actually getting pretty close to the end of the time. So I just want to highlight a few things before we leave. And I know that there’s one more question on which we will try to, if you want to send us an email we will be able to get your question answered. So, but for the upcoming series, the next one on April 13 is actually an undergrad focus. If you want to tune in and listen to that, that will be good as well. But really the next one on the April 27th is international student employment. And that’s geared towards both Undergraduate and Graduate students. We have posted an assessment in the chat function, if you can take a minute to fill out the assessment and give us some feedback that will really help, that will be really helpful to help us improve the Webinar Series. As I said, our webinar is recorded, and then we’ll post them on the website later on. So if you do want to come back and listen to the Webinar again, you can always do that. Thank you for participating in our Webinar today.

**Jennifer:** Thanks everyone.

**Sunny:** Thank you everyone, hope to see you soon.