BUILDING BRIDGES MENTORING PROGRAM

10 “MUST-KNOWS” TO SURVIVE CADC GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Know what you are about. Maintain focus on your goals and objectives. Remember that you were accepted for a reason, so don’t sell yourself short.

Read broadly. If graduate school is about anything, it’s about reading. Students who only read what’s on the syllabus, or search Wikipedia rather than the primary texts, are going to have a difficult time when it comes to writing a dissertation. Read within your discipline and across other disciplines.

Know your advisor and other members of the faculty. It is essential to have a good relationship with your advisor. Remember that your advisor has your best interests in mind. Your advisor really wants you to succeed. Never be afraid to speak with and ask advice from other members of the faculty in your department.

Share your work with your peers. Remember that you are in a learning environment, and some of your fellow graduate students can give you superb feedback.

Understand your research interest. Graduate school should be an intellectual exploration. Read in different areas and be open to new ideas but don’t get too inundated. Choose a topic that is intellectually interesting to you and focus on it.

Time management is key. It is important to stay organized. Procrastination sometimes makes for a more stressful workload. Graduate classes are much different from undergraduate classes. Prioritizing tasks and budgeting your time are essential for success.

Divide your work up into sections, and take breaks in between. Make lists so that you can cross items off as you finish; schedule things like “eat lunch” or “do laundry” so you feel as if you are accomplishing something. A list helps with prioritizing tasks.

Maintain your lifestyle. Take care of your body. Make sure you eat well. Good nutrition really can make a positive difference in how you feel. Try to get enough sleep. Take time for yourself each day. Set aside time to do an activity that you enjoy.

Manage your money. Don’t stress too much about money, just be conscious of how much you spend, and try to budget. One way to cut down costs is to pack a lunch every day and do more cooking instead of eating out. Do the math—it adds up!

Encourage criticism and timely interactions with your professors. The more criticism you get, the better your writing will get. You cannot improve if you do not receive feedback. Professors are here to help and to advise you.

Get involved—get a life! Being involved in your school, community, or field of study is very beneficial. Your overall experience will be enriched because you will have the opportunity to meet a lot of people, establish contacts, and provide a balance between the stresses of school life and more relaxing activities.

TAMIKO POWELL MELHADO,
MASTER OF BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

Timiko graduated in 2010 and is currently employed as a Designer and Project Manager for Hoskins Architecture, LLC in Birmingham, AL.

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Nicholas Patterson, Master of Industrial Design

Know that a lot of your money will go towards this major. Professional fees, supplies, different trips to plants and research sites.

Don’t be threatened if you believe your drawing skills aren’t at their best. Design has many different aspects where talent can be shown, and as you move through the program, your skills will naturally get better all around.

Your time management skills will be the most important factor in your success in this major.

Hard work shows through any talent. The harder you work, the more pleased you will be at the end when you step back and look at what you have created.

To do well, you must take PRIDE in your work for it represents you.

Learn to communicate with friends and teachers. In INDD, you will be subjected to many different people and personalities, and you will work hand-in-hand on projects with a lot of them.

Learn how to take criticism. Your work will be in front of many people who will judge and correct when they see something wrong. Remember, everyone’s here to make you a better designer.

Find an upperclassman who you respect both as a person and professional, and learn from them. Get as much experience as you can.

Learn how to think about the world through a designer’s eye, seeing each piece and how it fits and why it’s there.

Have fun. It’s not worth doing if you’re not enjoying yourself.

Bobbi Curry, Master of Real Estate Development

Be proactive. The more you give, the more you get back.

Learn from your classmates. The MRED program has people from different professional backgrounds, and their different experiences add to the learning process.

Be resourceful. There are lots of grants, fellowships, and scholarships, so find them to help with finances. There are also other resources available to help with information for school projects.

Take advantage of networking. Memberships to several professional organizations are given to you in MRED, so become active and meet people for business and job opportunities.

Manage time well. Since there is no set class time in MRED, you must make time to study and stay on track with the schedule on your own, so find what works.

Know that it is expensive, but a great investment. The program is very expensive, and there is travel to pay for every semester, but it is an investment in yourself that yields great returns.

Build relationships. Because this is an executive program, your classmates, visiting lecturers, and companies/people you meet during field study trips are possible business connections and good to have in your network.

Have confidence. It will help you get further and do better.

Ask questions. Do not be afraid to ask relevant questions.

Make sacrifices. There will be sacrifices made to get through the program but set your goals. Know the sacrifice is temporary, and the reward will last.

Franchesca Taylor, Master of Community Planning

Read about communities and planning theories, about anything.

Be open-minded. Your background makes you unique, so do not expect that everyone will see the world like you do.

Know what you want to specialize in. Community Planning has many different avenues, so it will help to have a personal interest that makes you excited.

Don’t be bogged down by the realities of the profession. Despite the data, there is hope.

Network. Having intellectual conversations about the profession will help you shape your perspective.

Get out of Dudley. Know that you can take electives in other related fields that are more suitable to your interests.

Be passionate. Advocate for whatever your interest is.

Get to know the second year students. They will help you learn the ropes.

Talk to your professors. They are willing to listen and will give you great professional advice and point you in the right direction.

Invest in improving your writing skills. There is a lot of research and writing, and it is imperative that you can communicate effectively.