



The G.S.A. NEWSLETTER

*a publication of the
Graduate Student Association
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine*

VOLUME 8

NUMBER 3

JANUARY 1999

Editorial:
**School of Medicine must have
updated online course listings**
by Jutta Beneken

In the accompanying article Tina Tenenhaus summarizes the results of a GSA survey of student opinions on the electives that are being offered to graduate students at the School of Medicine. The survey shows that many graduate students are highly dissatisfied with the choice and type of classes that are available. Students are interested in taking seminar- and journal club-type classes where they can interact more directly with faculty members.

It is also clear that many students may not even be sure what their program's elective requirements are. After their first year, graduate students are essentially on their own with respect to arranging their required coursework. A flexible schedule and a low course-load can be one of the perks of being a senior graduate student, but classwork still remains an important aspect of graduate education.

At the School of Medicine, graduate students in their second year and beyond face a difficult task when trying to decide what classes to take in order to fulfill a requirement they vaguely remember being told about at Orientation. The problem is two-fold. For one, as indicated by the survey results, the choice of classes that are of interest to a majority of graduate students is quite meager. In addition, detailed information about class topics and meeting times is difficult to obtain.

At the beginning of each quarter, all students receive in their departmental mailboxes a list of all courses offered at the School of Medicine, issued by the Office of

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Choice of Electives:
Results of a GSA Survey
by Tina Tenenhaus

When choosing which graduate school program to attend I'm sure many of you put Johns Hopkins at the top of the list because of its excellence as a research institute. In addition, you probably considered the thorough first year curriculum, which many programs here offer, as a great way to get up-to-par in your field. But one thing you may not have thought much about until a year or two into your graduate education is electives.

In September of last year I conducted an e-mail survey to determine how satisfied graduate students here are with the selection of electives. I did this because informally I sensed some disappointment about the quarterly course offerings published by the Office of the Registrar, and I thought it would be important to determine how widespread this dissatisfaction is.

In short, many people are not satisfied with the overall selection of electives (43% of 83 respondents). Responses were received from all departments and programs represented by the GSA, with the exception of the Art as Applied to Medicine program. In the BCMB program, the largest graduate program here, 59% of 37 respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. In a breakdown by department, 40% of 18 and 81% of 11 respondents in MBG and CBA, respectively, were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the selection of electives. Other departments had 10 or fewer respondents.

The source of this dissatisfaction is clear when one compares what students want with what is available. Three questions in the survey addressed what type of class organization graduate students would most prefer. Based on the answers to these questions the

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Upcoming GSA Meeting February 9

GSA Meetings are held on the
2nd Tuesday of each month at
4 pm in Hunterian Room G-3.

Notes from the GSA

Upcoming Events

GSA Happy Hour

Thursday, Jan. 21
5:30 pm, Bodian Room
Beer, snacks, and fun!

Alicia Showalter Reynolds Memorial Lecture

Dr. Beatrice Hahn, UAB

Wednesday, Feb. 17th!
3 pm.,
WBSB East Lecture Hall

We're Looking for a Few Good People

Interested in Photography or Writing?
The Newsletter is looking for volunteers to assist with photography of GSA events. Film and developing are provided. We're also looking for writers to contribute a regular column or feature article.

Send email to <ehsiao@jhmi.edu> or <jbeneken@jhmi.edu>, or contact any Newsletter editor for more information!

Course Listings, continued

the Registrar. Much like each semester's registration packet, which arrives several days after the deadline for returning the registration forms has already passed, this "Schedule of Courses" often arrives several days after the start of classes. An exact copy, however, is also available on the web at <http://inonet.welch.jhu.edu/education/course_schedule/9899/som/term2.html>.

The information content of this course listing is rather insufficient. Students who wish to plan their schedules for the upcoming term have nothing to work with except a vague course title, an often undetermined meeting time, and the name of the course instructor. What this course listing lacks is a description of the class. It should include a list of topics to be covered, a preliminary list of guest lecturers, if any, and a list of requirements and prerequisites. In some cases this important information can only be obtained from course announcements that are usually posted only in the elevators and never make it to our mailboxes.

For the benefit of the students, an up-to-date listing of all courses offered each quarter and/or semester must be consolidated and posted on the web. Currently the SOM Office of the Registrar maintains a website which contains information about electives (the "SOM Electives Book" at <http://inonet.welch.jhu.edu/education/course_desc/som_elecbook/contents.html>). However, this information is geared mainly toward medical students and is only current as of the 97-98 academic year. This page also has a list of all departments which links to a description of all the courses being offered by each individual department. Essentially one would have to follow all the links to all the departments to obtain a complete list (and description) of all the classes being offered. However, one would still lack exact information as to when and where a particular class is being taught.

The online version of the SOM Catalog (which can be found at <http://inonet.welch.jhu.edu/education/course_desc/som_catalog/Contents.html>) is also that of the past 97-98 academic year. The only up-to-date information available on these webpages is the SOM calendar for 98-99.

The state of these web pages pales in comparison to those of the School of Public Health and the School of Nursing. The School of Hygiene and Public Health maintains a detailed and current listing of all courses by term and by department, including a detailed description of the course, room assignments, and the exact day and time of the class, if known. This page can be found at <<http://www.jhsph.edu/SASS/pubs/crslists.htm>>. The School of Nursing also has their 98-99 course information ("Annual Course Book") available online at <<http://www.son.jhmi.edu/Coursbook/TitlePage.html>>.

In comparison with online course listings at other institutions and graduate programs around the country, those of the School of Public Health and the School of Nursing are exemplary. In order to present its high academic standard and educational objectives on a national and global level, the School of Medicine must make an effort to have updated and detailed course listings, catalogs, registration information, and academic calendars available on the web. If anything, it will be for the benefit of its current and prospective students.

Survey, continued

ideal class has 10 to 20 students, is mostly literature-based, includes a short lecture, and would require about 2 to 4 hours/week for one academic quarter (about 10 weeks). How many classes like this are offered? Very few.

So what can we (YOU!) do? Dean Hildreth and Dr. Maloney emphasized the following: if there is a topic you'd like to have offered, (and based on your comments, I know many of you have some great ideas), you should talk to the appropriate professor about him or her teaching a class. I know what you're thinking: "But they already teach medical school classes and they won't have the time." This may truly be what our professors think, but they should know that at least administratively it is very simple for them to set up a class. All they need to do is inform the Office of the Registrar of their intention to offer a class.

Most importantly we're not asking for long lectures and class handouts. In the comments section of the survey a few students made the point that they would like to see more seminar classes offered. These classes would expand on what we learn in the first year courses and should become an integral part of our graduate programs. Interestingly, many students were not even aware of their program's elective requirements. This may be indicative of the low priority put on electives by the faculty and program directors.

All we want is an opportunity for the faculty to share their expertise in an informal discussion format (for credit!). I imagine many faculty members would actually enjoy such a teaching opportunity. With the experts in so many fields right here it would be a shame not to have the opportunity to learn directly from them.

Volunteers Wanted **Pain Study**

For Women Only: The Department of Neurology seeks healthy women ages 18 to 45 who are either pregnant or not pregnant to participate in a study at the Blaustein Pain Treatment Center that is investigating the influence of hormones on the perception of labor pain. Strict confidentiality is ensured, and there are no risks to mothers or unborn children associated with the research.

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Book Review

by Tara Riemer

A Ph.D. is Not Enough: A Guide to Survival in

Science by Peter J. Feibelman

(1993 Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, GSA library book #0301 and 0302)

Peter Feibelman, a solid state physicist at Sandia National Labs, admits at the outset that his “scientific career almost never happened.” His goal in this book is to provide basic insights into the reality of scientific research to make pursuing a research career easier for today’s rising young scientists. His principle message is, as the title suggests, that it takes more than just having a Ph.D. to be successful in science.

Feibelman’s advice may seem basic and even obvious (choose a good advisor, give good talks, write good papers — and plenty of them). But his tell-it-like-it-is approach reveals the inside scoop on what makes a good advisor, how to give a good talk, and when you should write papers. This type of survival training is not part of graduate curricula, although I believe it should be!

At barely over 100 pages, A Ph.D. is Not Enough is a quick read, and well worth every minute for any graduate student. New students will get their eyes opened to what is truly valued in the world of science. Students close to graduation will be drawn towards his advice on choosing a career path (academia or industry?), preparing for job interviews, and what to accomplish during a post-doc. I recommend reading and re-reading this book on an annual basis, as you will take away different messages at each stage of your scientific training.

Two copies of this book are available for check-out from the GSA library, located in Hunterian G1. It is also available for purchase from Amazon.com for \$10.36.

GSA Newsletter

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The pen is mightier than the pipet...

Please send any poems, short stories, creative writing, photos, or black and white art to the **GSA Newsletter!** Submissions for the next issue are due March 12. Contact any editor for a copy of the 1998-99 Submission Guidelines!

On the Wild Side:

Patapsco Valley State Park

by Ed Hsiao

Patapsco Valley State Park is one of the historic regions of Maryland. It is made up of several areas, including Hilton, Daniels, McKelden, Avalon, Orange Grove, and Ilchester. Many of these regions are “lost towns” – old company cities that have long since disappeared. Each of the areas offers a variety of outdoor activities and picnic areas. Two of the most popular areas for hiking and biking are Avalon and Orange Grove.

To get to the Avalon area, take I-95 south to exit 47A (I-195 east towards BWI airport). After approximately 0.75 miles, take Exit 3 (Route 1 south) towards Elkridge. Stay to the right onto Route 1. Look for the entrance to the Avalon area on your left. The Avalon parking area is approximately 1.5 miles further along the access road (you will pass under a B&O railroad bridge and the I-95 bridge, then over the Patapsco river). A nominal entrance fee may be required, depending on what day and season you visit the park.

Avalon was originally founded around an iron forge that was later owned by the Ellicott family (the second Ellicott ironworks was located just a few miles upstream in Ellicott City). Avalon was destroyed in 1886 during a major flood through Patapsco Valley. The remains of the mills, canals, and stoneworks are still evident along many of the hiking and biking trails in the area.

For a nice walk on paved paths, start from the parking area and cross back over the Patapsco River bridge to the north bank. Follow the Grist Mill Path north-west, along the Patapsco River. At the swinging bridge, cross over to the south bank (the Orange Grove area), and follow River Road back to the parking area. Round trip is about 4 miles.

Like Avalon, Orange Grove was originally a company city. The city was centered around a flour mill built in 1868 by the Gambrell Manufacturing Company. While this mill survived the 1886 flood that wiped out Avalon, the mill was destroyed by fire in 1905. The remains of the building and near-by factory houses can be seen by the swinging bridge.

For the more adventurous, a variety of trails originate in the Orange Grove area. These trails are popular with mountain bikers, hikers, and even horseback riders. The trail marked by orange blazes is particularly scenic, with challenging terrain and lots of side trails. These trails are also open in the winter for snowshoe and winter hiking. For more information and maps, see Alan Fisher’s book Country Walks Near Baltimore (1993) and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources web site <<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/central/patapscovalley.html>>.

This is one of a series of articles featuring outdoor recreation areas near Baltimore. Comments and suggestions are always welcome, and should be sent to <ehsiao@jhm.edu>. As always, take only pictures and leave only footprints. Please note that activities that may cause excessive erosion, such as mountain biking and horseback riding, should be avoided in the 24 hours after rain or snowfall. See you on the trails!

GSA Web Page

Make sure you check out the GSA Web Page at <<http://www.med.jhu.edu/gsa>>. You'll find everything from local happenings to GSA meeting minutes. Back issues of the GSA Newsletter can be found at <<http://www.med.jhu.edu/gsa/news.html>>.

Making your (Ph.D.) Career Choices

by Jutta Beneken

When I was fourteen years old, I wanted to become a fighter jet pilot. (This is true. I also never played with dolls. By the way, was anyone else similarly affected by "Top Gun"?) Naturally I would never have guessed that twelve years later I would be a scientist in a white lab coat whose vocabulary includes words that dumbfound a large majority of the general population. Back then I was convinced that flying a fighter jet would be a ton of fun. A few years later I became convinced that doing science would also be a ton of fun, and much less nauseating.

The 1998 GRO/GSA Career Symposium this past November convinced me that finding a fun job should be everyone's priority. The event sparked discussion and debate among students and faculty about career concerns. Nearly one thousand members of the Hopkins community (from the JHMI and Homewood campuses) attended eleven panels, talks, and workshops spanning a fifteen-day period.

As a member of the symposium organizing committee, I want to state explicitly that it was not the goal of the symposium to discourage graduate students from a career in academia, as seems to have been the fear among many faculty. Rather, the GRO and the GSA wanted to encourage and help graduate students in their career planning efforts. The symposium also presented a variety of careers

in which a Ph.D. and a solid knowledge of science could be put to good use.

It is undeniable that graduate education is undergoing a significant metamorphosis. According to the 1998 National Research Council Report "Trends in the Early Career of Life Scientists" (presented by Dr. Shirley Tilghman at the symposium), more than half of the Ph.D. graduates in this country end up with a job outside of academia. The report does not distinguish between whether or not these Ph.D.s planned to be outside of academia or were forced to do so by the nature of the job market. Nevertheless, many students are critically rethinking their intended career paths, and considering non-traditional careers.

To me, two things are clear. One is that the perception of what it means to have a science Ph.D. is changing, especially among non-academic employers. Apparently word has gotten around that potential employees with a science Ph.D. are resourceful, skillful, dedicated, critical, and extremely knowledgeable; not the stereotyped scatter-brained nerd. Also, we are being trained in much more than simply science: problem-solving, public speaking, writing, editing, computer skills, etc. These skills may not always be obvious. All graduate students should be aware of their own skills, and factor them into their career choices.

Point number two is that if you find a way to unite your skills with your passions, you may just have found your dream job. Your passion for science is evident from the fact that you're sticking it out through graduate school. And graduate school is exactly where you're developing all of your hidden skills and talents so that you can go out and land that job (be it in academia or not) that has a very simple description: "fun."

