

The G.S.A. NEWSLETTER



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

VOLUME 7 NUMBER 1 SEPT./OCT. 1997

A Graduate Student Mover's Guide

by Matt Wallenfang

As I finish unpacking the last of my stuff into my third apartment in three years, I have decided that perhaps it is time that I share what I have learned - in a sentence, there is no greater hell than moving. I know, big revelation there. But a little bit of knowledge can make fighting the battle of finding the perfect apartment a bit easier. It seems as though the advice that most graduate students are given on finding an apartment ("Charles Village is nice") is a bit lacking. And so with that I would like to present what I hope to be the first in a series of articles on moving in Baltimore. This month I'll focus on general things to consider when deciding to move.

1. Be prepared to spend some time looking. The only way to really get an idea of what is out there is to look first hand. While many places aren't available to look at until a month before the lease starts, it is often useful to start looking earlier than this just to get an idea of what sorts of places are available and how much different places go for. This way, when you come to a situation where you have to make a quick decision on a place, you can do this with confidence.

2. Consider a range of different locations. Sure, Charles Village is convenient. However, too often students get the impression that it is the only option. Other areas to consider include Fells Point, Canton, Mt. Vernon, Downtown, and any number of suburbs. In future installments of this column I hope to feature different areas around Baltimore to give an idea of what is out there.

3. Make a list of your priorities. Does the thought of dragging your laundry down the block make you cringe? Do you need quiet sleep or does the thought of being in the heart of it all thrill you? Is
can't p. 4, Mover's Guide

"Life and Times" Welcomes New Students

by Peter Torgg

Welcome to Hopkins and this new feature in the GSA Newsletter. As a second year graduate student, I hope to share with you some of my personal experiences about life here at Hopkins and in Baltimore. My goal is to enlighten and entertain while throwing in some useful information for good measure.

I remember my orientation day as clearly as if it were captured on film. All new students, graduate and medical students alike, gathered together in Turner Auditorium for the introductory speeches by the faculty and administration. I looked around the lecture hall wondering who else were the "first years" in my program. That pretty red-head with the notebook? That guy with a cast on his foot stumbling into the lecture hall? It was an exciting and nerve-racking time: a new school, a new city, and a new life. In one sense, it was refreshing. No one knew me, and that could give me a lot of freedom to redesign my image here. No old friends would be shocked if I decided to party hard on a school night. I could begin anew. Then again, since no one knew me here, I'd have to start all over. My thoughts drifted once again to the other "first years." What would they be like? All I had up until then were names on a piece of paper. It was time to put faces to those names.

The opportunity came soon enough. Later in the afternoon, we were split up to have lunch with the directors and new students in our program. The table was set up like a big "H" so I ended up with just one new student in front of me. First thing he said was "I saw your web page from college." *Great, I thought to myself, already I'm labeled as a big dork.. These are going to be a long five years.* Still, as the afternoon progressed and I talked to a few more of the other first years, my spirits lightened considerably. I was impressed with the fact that everyone seemed so friendly and
can't p. 4, Life and Times

Upcoming GSA Meeting

September 9

GSA Meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 2pm in Hunterian Room G-5.

NOTES FROM THE GSA

FALL NEW STUDENT BASEBALL GAME

ORIOLES vs. CLEVELAND INDIANS

Monday, SEPTEMBER 15, 7:35 pm

FREE for new graduate students!!
For all other graduate students, tickets are \$9 or \$11

Tickets are available from:
Jutta Beneken, 703 Hunterian
Kellie Cummings, 104 Biophysics
Laura Korb, 664E Ross

GSA FALL PICNIC

Saturday, September 13
(rain date Sept 27)

12-5 p.m.
Garland Field, Homewood

Food, Music and Fun

Questions? call Kellie 5-8286

Why you should care about...

Choosing an Advisor

by Tara L. Riemer

This is one of a series of articles discussing my opinions on issues impacting scientists or graduate students in the sciences. My objective is to convince you that during your graduate career, you should pay attention to more than just research. I have developed a companion internet World Wide Web page with links to related sites. Stop by <<http://www.bme.jhu.edu/~triermer/issues.html>> if a topic catches your eye or to check out past articles. Feel free to drop me a line <triermer@bme.jhu.edu> with comments or to suggest a future topic.

The best advice I received when beginning to choose a lab was to consider the per capita computer and refrigerator availability of the laboratories in my decision. While I did not trudge down the halls from lab to lab, measuring the cubic feet of refrigerator space available for lunches and counting keyboards, the comment did open my eyes to the many aspects of laboratory life beyond the bench top.

While some graduate students enter the gilded gates of JHMI knowing exactly the lab they will join, most are at least somewhat unsure, if not completely clueless. While professors' research interests are definitely a key element of the lab search process, they should by no means be your sole focus. First, rule out certain labs on the basis of research areas you wish to avoid, and then consider the remainder with the goal of selecting an advisor, not a lab.

The lab PI (principle investigator, i.e., the professor) sets the tone of the lab in many ways. This is the person who will effectively be your boss for the next five years. She will decide, to a point, when you work, and when you can vacation. He makes the final decisions about whether a new computer is needed, and whether the broken lab food/drink refrigerator will be replaced. She decides whether or not to pay for your trip to a conference and how much time she will devote to the preparation of your first conference presentation. He is the person with the most influence over your career if you choose an academic research route. In short, your advisor can make both your academic and personal lives miserable or marvelous.

It is critical to have a candid discussion with a professor about his expectations before you decide to join a lab. Does he expect an 8-5 work day? A 10-7 work day? A 9-9 work day? Can you choose to work noon to midnight? Does she have a set idea of what it takes to graduate, such as three first-authored journal articles, five years, seven years, after your first Nobel? Are there weekly lab meetings? If you are unable to have such a discussion at the outset, it may be a bad omen for the future. Of course, other lab members are often the

con't p. 3, Advisor

TAX THREAT BREAKS SUMMER CALM STUDENT RESPONSE HITS CONGRESS

by Jutta Beneken and Ed Hsiao

Near the end of this past June, while most of us were thinking about baseball and summer vacations, the comfortable pace of summer in graduate school was rudely interrupted by... no, not an act of God, but an act of Congress.

As part of a \$135 billion tax relief effort, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a Tax Relief Act containing a phase out of a tuition tax waiver given to graduate students and research assistants under Section 117(d) of the Tax Code. Loss of this tax exemption would increase the typical Hopkins graduate student's taxable income from \$15,000 to \$37,000, leaving a net income of around \$6,000. The Senate and White House versions of the Tax Relief Act left the tax exemption intact.

In response to this threat, the GSA formed the Ad hoc Committee on Section 117(d) to inform students and faculty about this and other aspects of the tax bill that would directly affect graduate education. The Committee, led by Jonathan Choi, Tara Riemer, Catharine Johnson, Kellie Cummings, Eric Sobie, Ed Hsiao, Jutta Beneken, and Laura Korb, disseminated information and encouraged people to express their concern by contacting members of Congress.

The GSA Committee also worked with other graduate student associations at Harvard, MIT, Stanford, and the Univ. of Pennsylvania, and with the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students (NAGPS). A nationwide email was distributed to graduate students, faculty, and administrators. Other efforts included writing letters to the editors of major newspapers and compiling a press package that was sent to several major newspapers and news stations.

By July 16th, the House negotiators on the Tax Bill Conference Committee had eliminated the proposed Section 117(d) phaseout. The final version of the bill passed by the Conference Committee retains section 117(d), marking a huge victory for all graduate students.

This mid-summer's tale ends on a good note. By early August, both houses of Congress had accepted the compromise version of the Tax Bill. President Clinton signed the bill into law on August 5th. Graduate students all over the country can breathe easier and bask in the glory of their success. As Rep. James McGovern (D-MA) writes in a letter to the NAGPS: "I firmly believe that without your efforts, we would never have been unable to save Section 117(d)." Thanks to all who wrote or called their Congressperson and kudos to the students who spearheaded the nation-wide effort.

1997-1998 GSA Officers

President	Laura Korb	614-4959	lkorb@welchlink...
VP	Tara Riemer	955-9603	triermer@bme.jhu.edu
VP	Kellie Cummings	955-8286	kbc@welchlink...
Secretary	Jutta Beneken	614-2533	jbeneken@welchlink...
Treasurer	Alan Meeker	614-4974	ameeker@welchlink...

GSA Web Page

Check out the GSA Web Page at
<http://www.med.jhu.edu/gsa/GSAmain.html>. You'll find everything from local happenings to GSA meeting minutes to back issues of the GSA Newsletter. Bookmark it!

Write for the GSA Newsletter!

Informational meeting on
Tuesday September 23rd at 1pm
in Hunterian G2.
Bring ideas or just come by!
Contact any editor for more
information.

GSA Newsletter Editors

Edward Hsiao	ehsiao
Jutta Beneken	jbeneken
Alan Meeker	ameeker
Carolyn Sevier	csevier

fax 955-0831
attn. Ed Hsiao,
PCTB 607
snail mail: Ed Hsiao,
GSA Newsletter
PCTB 607, 725 N. Wolfe St.
Baltimore, MD 21205

con't from p. 2, Advisor

best source of information about the lab PI; you should definitely use this resource before beginning a rotation or joining a lab. Find out when the professor is in the lab and how available she typically is to the students. Does the PI design the projects and dole them out, or is every lab member expected to work and design experiments independently? Is the environment collegial or competitive? Do lab members help each other with problems or challenges, or does everyone work in isolation?

Most of all, keep yourself in mind when hearing the answers to these questions. There are no right or wrong answers. Each lab is different and appeals to a different personality. One student may not mind that his advisor devotes significant time to clinical work and serves on key administrative committees, leaving little lab time, while another student would find this situation unacceptable. While I find that a friendly and collegial lab environment is critical, others may be most challenged by competition from across the bench.

Remember that rotations are the time to find out what lab environment you would best fit. Just be an informed consumer while shopping for your new lab home.

1997-1998 GSA COMMITTEE REPS.

MA/Ph.D. Committee:

Catharine Johnson
cejohns@welchlink

Graduate Board:

Lesley Brown
blesley@welchlink
John Neely (alt.)
jneely@welchlink

Graduation:

Eric Sobie
esobie@bme.jhu.edu

Medical School Council:

Lesley Brown
blesley@welchlink
Nancy Jensen
njensen@welchlink

Parking:

Holly Berkovits
holly@groucho.med.jhmi.edu

Security:

Tracey Michele Gant
tmgant@welchlink

University Health Services:

Donna Jaworsky
djaworsk@welchlink

1997-1998 GSA DEPARTMENTAL REPS.

Name	Department	Email/phone
Jason Hoffert	Biol. Chem.	jasonh@welchlink
Catharine Johnson	Biol. Chem./BCMB	cejohns@welchlink
John Neely	Biol. Chem./CMM	jneely@welchlink
Lesley Brown	Biophysics/BCMB	blesley@welchlink
Charles Dann	Biophysics/BCMB	cdann@welchlink
Angela Brown	BME	abrown@bme.jhu.edu
Ryon Frisch	BME	ryonf@bme.jhu.edu
Eric Sobie	BME	esobie@bme.jhu.edu
Tracey Gant	Cell Biology/BCMB	tmgant@welchlink
Debbie Kuehn	Cell Biology/BCMB	dkuehn@welchlink
Carolyn Sevier	Cell Biology/BCMB	csevier@welchlink
Shahana Sarkar	History of Medicine	ssarkar@welchlink
Eileen Emison	Human Genetics	eemison@welchlink
Nancy Jensen	Human Genetics	njensen@welchlink
Marie Mancini	Immunology	mmancini@welchlink
Ted Pierson	Immunology	tpierson@welchlink
Nick Goffeney	IPMB	nick@groucho.med.jhmi.edu
Matt Wallenfang	MBG/BCMB	mwallenf@welchlink
Carlos Aizenman	Neuroscience	aizenman@welchlink
Donna Jaworsky	Neuroscience	djaworsk@welchlink
Jenny Mellquist	Pathology	jlm@welchlink
Alan Meeker	Pharmacology/BCMB	ameeker@welchlink
Rachel Dumont	Physiology	rdumont@welchlink

fragile X

Hopkins Based
Alternative Rock

at **JAXX**

Friday

August 29, 1997

10pm

"5 Bands for 4 Bucks"
\$1 off admission with this
ad

Directions: 95S to 495W into VA
to Exit 5 - Braddock Rd., WEST
make a left onto Rolling Rd. (2-3
lights) go straight 6 lights to the
"Mattress and Carpetland Shopping
Center" on the left just beyond
Old Keene Mill Rd.
JAXX entrance is right next to the
Pizza place
6335 Rolling Rd, Springfield VA

September Dates

September 19

Fletcher's

September 28

Catonsville High School
"Concert in the Woods"

**Thanks to everyone who has
supported us !**

fragile X



for more information email:
crankin@welchlink.welch.jhu.edu
or visit our website:
<http://www.welch.jhu.edu/~crankin/fragilex.html>

con't from p. 1, *Life and Times*

interesting. One worked designing robots for eight years. Another spent a year at UCSF. And yet another had already received an M.D. in China. But there was one denominator we all had in common: we loved science. Whether we were from Korea, China, New York, Massachusetts, Colorado, or California, that was the basic thread that brought us together to Hopkins.

But enough reminiscing. I'm sure the new students would like to know what there is to do around town. The best place to start is by grabbing a copy of the **City Paper** (a free publication that comes out every Wednesday in Baltimore). It will give information about music concerts, local events, movie times, dance clubs, and special happenings in Baltimore. Speaking of movies, the biggest movie theater in town probably is the **Senator** (5904 York Rd.) The seats are uncomfortable, but the screen is enormous. If you're without a car (like I was my first painful months in Baltimore) you can take the #8 bus and get off when you see Staples. The buses in Baltimore cost \$1.35 (the last time I checked) and require exact change. Don't even bother asking them to break a twenty. Trust me on that one. They're slow, but at least they're air-conditioned, which is quite handy during these summer months.

Closer to the Homewood campus is the **Baltimore Museum of Art**. I highly recommend paying it a visit. For one, it's free to Hopkins students. Plus, it's got some really interesting artworks. I especially like the Andy Warhol "painting" that lists urine as one of its ingredients. If you're feeling a little land-locked, you can head on over to the **Inner Harbor**. There you can stroll through the numerous shops and restaurants, catch an **Imax** movie, or visit the **National Aquarium** or **Science Museum**. If you just want to grab a beer, I'd recommend heading downstairs at the **Brewer's Art** (1106 N. Charles). It's dark, cozy, and their beer is potent (but that's another story!).

That should be enough to keep anyone occupied for a little time. Baltimore has a lot to offer, but one must make the effort to seek it out. As new students, you're here to learn. But don't forget you can have fun as well. So relax, explore, and enjoy. Welcome to Hopkins... we're glad you could join us for the adventure!

**The pen is mightier
than the pipet...**

Please send any poems, short stories, creative writing, or black and white art to the GSA Newsletter! Submissions for the next issue are due October 14th. Contact any editor for a copy of the 1997 Submission Guidelines.

con't from p. 1, *Mover's Guide*

transportation (both to Hopkins and to the supermarket) an issue or will you be needing a place to park? Answering these types of questions will quickly narrow down the places that you will want to look at.

4. Be aware of the different sources of housing info. These include The Baltimore Sun (remember that the Sunday Sun can be purchased on Saturday, giving you a head start on that perfect apartment - also, the Sun has its classifieds on the internet - www.sunspot.net), the City Paper, the Hopkins Gazette, Apartment Shoppers Guide, Apartments for Rent, the housing office in Reed Hall, and the boards around campus. Other internet resources to check out include <http://www.directweb.com/as> and <http://classifieds.yahoo.com/maryland/rentals> - this site includes a handy mapping feature, although its listings are not very extensive. When responding to ads, be sure to ask the landlord if they have or will have any other apartments available.

5. Take into account all aspects of finances. Utilities can make a huge difference in your monthly budget. Many apartment buildings include utilities in the rent. If you ask, most landlords will give you a rough idea of what utilities run in a given place. When looking at a place examine if windows and doors appear leaky. Also, remember when considering getting roommates that they will be splitting the cost of utilities as well. Other hidden costs to take into account include security deposits, parking/transportation passes, and pet fees.

6. Talk to other students. There are many more issues and situations to consider than I have included here, however if you talk to enough people, there is bound to be someone who's situation is similar to yours. Asking people who have lived in a place for a year is often the only way that you will be able to find out about such things as wacky neighbors or high crime or what it's like sharing a bathroom with two housemates.

Clearly these only touch on the many issues that you will encounter in your apartment search, and your situation will certainly be different from mine or anyone else's. However, by being aware of what's out there you can save yourself a lot of sweat and tears and perhaps even end up with a place that you're happy with. In future columns, I'll be spotlighting different areas to live, starting with Fell's Point/Canton/Butcher's Hill. If you live or have lived in this area and want to share pros and cons, please email me. Also, if you have a particular area you think should be covered in this column I am open to suggestions - send email to mwallenf@welchlink.

WRITERS WANTED

The GSA Newsletter is looking for writers to cover current events and happenings that would be of general interest to the Johns Hopkins graduate student community. This is REALLY your newsletter!

Send your submissions to the address below, or contact Ed Hsiao (ehsiao@welchlink) or Jutta Beneken (jbeneken@welchlink) for more information!

Ed Hsiao
GSA Newsletter Editor
PCTB 607
725 N. Wolfe St.
Baltimore, MD 21205
Phone: (410)614-0199
Fax: (410)955-0831
Email:
ehsiao@welchlink

