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[Please give us feedback and comments about GEAR 1.](#)

If you need help or have questions about GEAR 1, contact the Graduate School at [gear@umn.edu](mailto:gear@umn.edu).

# Module 1: Welcome to the University

## 1.1 Welcome to GEAR 1

Hello! And welcome to the University of Minnesota's first year graduate education resource--GEAR 1.

You are here because of your accomplishments, intellect, and skills. You belong here.

This marks a new and very exciting phase of your life. Graduate education will most definitely be more challenging than your undergraduate years and previous academic pursuits. Much will be asked of you. You will face new and challenging academic expectations, which may make you feel like an imposter.

We understand.

We are here to tell you that all graduate students feel these challenges in varying degrees.

GEAR 1 addresses these challenges. We want you to begin your graduate education more confident, informed, and prepared, so you can find the support you're looking for throughout your first year, and connect with the University's diverse community of peers, faculty, and organizations.

Are you ready? Let's gear up.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 1.2 Navigation Tips

This slide contains no audio. A screen graphic called "Navigation Tips" shows the different attributes on a GEAR 1 slide.

## 1.3 Acknowledgment of University Land

The land we gather on today is the original homelands of the Dakota and Ojibwe Nations. We honor and respect the Indigenous peoples who were forcibly removed from, and who are still connected to this territory.

It is the University's responsibility as a land-grant institution to own our part in their continued displacement, incorporate Indigenous knowledge in our work, and establish meaningful, reciprocal partnerships with Indigenous communities.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 1.4 First Steps Checklist

Let's start with the basics so you arrive prepared.

## 1.5 Activate Your Internet ID and Email Address

Your Internet ID and email address give you access to your University accounts and calendar. Your University email account is the default form of communication, so it is important that you check it regularly.

Follow the instructions on the [Claim Account page](#) to activate your Internet ID. To access your email, go to [mail.umn.edu](#) and log in with your Internet ID and password.

Now is a good time to explore the [University's IT support](#) (technical and digital resources), as well as web and password security measures. Use the Resource Hub as your guide.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 1.6 Access MyU

MyU is where you take care of business. It's as simple as that. The dashboard of tabs on your [MyU](#) page helps you manage your personal information, both academic and financial. Not only do you register for classes and check your grades on MyU, you access your financial aid status, bill payment options, Canvas course sites, and sign up for our University-wide notification system.

Because MyU contains your personal information for your eyes only, you have to use your Internet ID and password to login.

We invite you to explore your MyU page and update your mailing address, emergency contacts, preferred name, and personal pronouns.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 1.7 Explore One Stop

[One Stop](#) is the website that provides expert advice and tutorials regarding registration, financial aid, billing, payment, student records, and veterans benefits. Need to know an important date or deadline? One Stop is where you'll find it.

So, what is the difference between One Stop and MyU? Here's a good way to remember:

- One Stop is the place to access University resources for everyone. No login necessary.
- MyU is the place for *your* University resources. So you'll need to log in.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 1.8 Get to Know International Student Scholar Services

### For UMTC International Students: Get to Know International Student and Scholar Services

For international students on the Twin Cities campus, the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS for short):

- helps you with your student visa documents,
- advises on your immigration status,
- gives academic and career support, and
- helps you get involved and connected on campus.

### Enroll in the International Student Preparation Course

Before you arrive to campus you must enroll in and complete the mandatory [International Student Preparation Course](#). The content and instructions here in GEAR 1 are meant to complement--but not replace--those in the International Student Preparation Course.

### For UMD International Students: Get to Know International Student Services

International students on the Duluth campus receive these services from the Duluth International Student Services Office. [Visit their website](#) to learn more about mandatory International Student Orientation.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## **1.9 Confirm Your Health Insurance**

The University requires students to have health insurance, to ensure that all students have access to medical care and can maintain good health, which is essential for academic success.

You must have health insurance before you register for courses. Health insurance plans and costs depend on your role at the University. Check with your graduate program if you have any questions.

The [Office of Student Health Benefits](#) provides student health insurance, which includes health care access from:

- [Boynton Health Service](#) on the Twin Cities campus and
- [UMD Health Services](#) on the Duluth campus

If you are an international student, registering for classes automatically enrolls you for health insurance. Make sure to contact the International Student Services on your campus if you have questions.

If you have health insurance from somewhere other than the University (through an employer or through family, for example), you can waive your student health benefits by filling out a [Health Coverage Declaration](#), located in the ‘Key Links’ section of your [MyU](#) page.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## **1.10 Learn How to Register for Courses**

Once you have: activated your Internet ID, email address, MyU account, and enrolled in health insurance, you have access to register for courses.

Course registration is done through your [MyU](#) page on the ‘Academics’ tab. Select the ‘Registration’ tab and click Register. Select the appropriate term, and add classes to your Shopping Cart. Confirm your class selections and click Finish Enrolling.

## **When Can I Register? How Do I Know Which Classes I Need?**

There are two ways to know your course registration dates.

- First: [One Stop](#) shows course registration dates under the ‘Academics’ dropdown menu. Make sure to note the registration dates for graduate students.
- Second: If you haven’t already, it’s a very good idea to review your graduate program’s registration instructions and degree requirements. Contact your program with questions about course registration dates, as well as specific course names and prerequisites.

## **Use Schedule Builder to Plan Your Academic Term**

Explore courses, and plan your potential calendar on the University’s [Schedule Builder](#) site. Creating a calendar in Schedule Builder doesn’t register you for classes, but you can use the ‘Send to Shopping Cart’ button to add the schedule you’ve built to your ‘Registration’ tab in MyU, and then complete enrollment.

## **What is a Hold?**

A hold may be placed on your student record for financial, disciplinary, or academic reasons. If you do have a hold on your record, you may not be able to register for classes until it is removed.

You can see information about holds on your record in [MyU](#). There, you can find the reason and impact of the hold, how to resolve it, and whom to contact if you have questions.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 1.11 Plan to Get a U Card

A U Card is your main form of identification at the University. It can give you access to:

- your University accounts
- library services
- campus buildings
- can act as a transit pass

Once you arrive, go to the U Card office on your campus. [Check the U Card website](#) to make sure you bring proper forms of ID. You can save time by going to the ‘My Info’ tab in your MyU and add the photo you’d like to see on your U Card. You can add a preferred name, too.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 1.12 University of Minnesota Campuses

The University of Minnesota system has five different campuses throughout the state of Minnesota:

- Crookston
- Morris
- Rochester
- Duluth
- Twin Cities

Of the five, graduate students are located on the Duluth, Rochester, and the Twin Cities campuses.

### University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD)

The University of Minnesota Duluth (commonly referred to as UMD) offers students access to the resources of the larger University system. Located on Lake Superior (one of the world’s largest freshwater lakes), Duluth is about 150 miles north of the Twin Cities campus.

### University of Minnesota Rochester (UMR)

The University of Minnesota Rochester (or UMR) offers graduate degrees in conjunction with the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and University of Minnesota Duluth. Home of the world-renowned Mayo Clinic, Rochester is about 90 miles south of the Twin Cities campus.

### University of Minnesota Twin Cities (UMTC)

The University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus (UMTC) is the University’s largest and central campus. The ‘twins’ of the Twin Cities are Minneapolis and St. Paul. Each city has its own campus. Minneapolis is the largest of all the campuses. The Mississippi River (the largest river in North America) divides the Minneapolis campus into the East Bank and the West Bank.

Just a five mile ride from the Minneapolis campus, the St. Paul campus is home to many of the University’s agricultural research fields.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 1.13 University Structure and Roles

The University of Minnesota is a collection of different colleges (some of which are called schools) that consist of smaller units called departments. Each department is associated with at least one, and often many, graduate programs (or majors).

Each graduate program has a faculty member who serves as its Director of Graduate Studies (a DGS, for short), and is staffed by a Graduate Program Coordinator (a GPC, for short). Both are important resources for you regarding advice on the academics and processes related to your graduate studies.

Get to know where you are located within the University!

- Which college is your program associated with?
- Which department?
- Who is your Graduate Program Coordinator?

Who is your Director of Graduate Studies?

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 1.14 Diversity as a Graduate School Objective

Our objectives relate to all areas of graduate education, and help define our priorities. We invite you to think of these objectives as your own, as the Graduate School works to advance them.

Diversity: Increase the diversity of students receiving graduate degrees and postdoctoral training.

Diversity in all forms leads to the evolution of scholarship and knowledge. The Graduate School promotes a vibrant student body and a welcoming campus climate in order to accelerate the diversity of thought, varied career paths, and cross-disciplinary dialogue that contribute to a quality education and the strength of our discoveries. greater success.

[Browse all Graduate School objectives.](#)

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 1.15 Campus Diversity

We all share responsibility for equity and diversity--it's everybody's everyday work. We value having a diversity of views and experiences that enrich campus life and the academic experience. Equity and diversity are fundamental to everything we do at the University of Minnesota.

[The Office of Equity and Diversity](#) (or OED) is a centrally-supported unit at the University that represents a number of important offices on the Twin Cities campus. We invite you to explore their programs and initiatives:

- [Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action](#)
- [The Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence](#)
- [The Women's Center](#)
- [The Gender and Sexuality Center for Queer and Trans Life](#)
- [Office of Conflict Resolution](#)
- [The Disability Resource Center](#)
- [Business & Community Economic Development](#)

## **UMD Campus Diversity**

On the Duluth campus, the [Office of Diversity & Inclusion](#) collaborates with students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community partners to implement programs and services that support the University's commitment to inclusivity, equity and social justice.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## **1.16 Ensuring a Safe Campus for All--Preventing and Reporting Sexual Misconduct**

Sexual misconduct has become the focus of a critical national conversation. Higher education is not immune to this problem. All faculty and staff members [take an online training](#) that helps identify and prevent instances of sexual misconduct. Our current public health awareness campaign, [It Ends Here](#), is aimed at promoting bystander intervention.

Our entire community is engaged to end sexual misconduct. We ask you to join us.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## **1.17 Public and Campus Safety Resources**

The [Department of Public Safety](#) provides the University community with the highest possible level of safety and security. With professionals in law enforcement, emergency response, and security, Public Safety works in partnership with University students, staff, and faculty to create a culture of safety on campus.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## **1.18 Campus Accessibility**

We envision an equitable and inclusive learning environment in which disability is understood to be an aspect of diversity and individuals with disabilities are an integral part of the University community. Accessibility means making transportation, buildings, classrooms, and technological projects usable by people of all abilities. Equitable access is both essential to the University of Minnesota's pursuit of excellence and inclusion, and required by law.

The **Disability Resource Centers** on all campuses work in partnership with University staff, faculty, and guests with a range of disabilities related to mental health, chronic health and medical conditions, and temporary injuries, among other disabilities.

- [UMD Disability Resources](#)
- [UMR Disability Resources](#)
- [UMTC Disability Resource Center](#)

The DRC works for you to advance equal opportunities for learning, working, and participating in campus life.

Graduate students are often in both a student and an employee role. The DRC can provide assistance through both our student and employee units. Accommodations may relate to campus housing, adjustments to work or lab space and schedules, course load adjustment, and assistantships.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

# Module 2: Minnesota Life

## 2.1 Your New Commute

Each day, you are one of over 100,000 students, faculty, staff, and visitors whose destination is a University of Minnesota campus. How does everyone get to campus?

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 2.2 Public Transit

Public transit is the most widely used way to get to campus--either buses or light rail trains.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### UMN: Campus Connectors and Campus Circulators

You'll probably notice big maroon and gold buses around the Twin Cities campus. [Campus Connectors and Campus Circulators](#), which are buses that link you to each major part of the Twin Cities campus. Campus connectors provide direct bus service to and from the St. Paul campus, the East Bank, and the West Bank. Campus Circulators provide bus service to specific areas on each campus. Connectors and Circulators run frequently and are free for you to use. Locate your closest transit stop, and explore maps and schedules with the [Gopher Trip app](#).

### Twin Cities Metro Transit Buses and Light Rail

In the Twin Cities, Metro Transit buses and light rail provide more than thirty direct routes to campus. They also have an easy-to-use app which shows transit stops, schedules, and fares.

The Metro Green Line Light Rail, which connects downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul, has three stops on campus: on the West Bank, East Bank, and in Stadium Village. A [Campus Zone Pass](#) allows you to ride between the three Minneapolis campus light rail stops for free.

The Metro Blue Line Light Rail isn't too far from campus either. It connects downtown Minneapolis with both the Mall of America and the airport.

[Explore the Metro Transit website](#) to download the app, plan trips, search bus routes, and also find park and ride locations.

Plan on taking city transit often? [Order a U Pass!](#) You get unlimited bus and train rides in the Twin Cities metro for a discounted student rate

### Paratransit Services

[University Paratransit Service](#) provides free curb-to-curb service on the Twin Cities campus for any University member with short or long-term disabilities. You can make a reservation online or call the University Paratransit appointment line.

### UMD: Duluth Public Transit

In Duluth, you can ride to and from campus or anywhere in the Twin Ports on a DTA (or Duluth Transit Authority). Free and unlimited bus rides on the DTA are supported by your transportation fee. Your U Card works as a DTA bus pass. [Explore the DTA website](#) for bus stops and schedules.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 2.3 Walking

Around 1/5 of students commute to campus by walking. And, while on any campus, walking is the easiest and most convenient way to get around.

### Gopher Way

In the Twin Cities, you can use a series of campus tunnels and skyways called the [Gopher Way](#). It comes in handy during the cold winter months. Follow the signs around campus or find your route on the Gopher Way map.

### Safe Walk Service

The Twin Cities campus provides [campus security escorts](#) to make sure your campus walk is safe. Call 612-624-WALK to get an escort.

### UMD

Nearly all of Duluth's classroom buildings are connected by a series of concourses. Duluth's [Safewalk Escort service](#) is available on campus as well.

We encourage you to use these services especially when walking alone or at night. Always err on the side of safety!

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 2.4 Biking

The Twin Cities and Duluth pride themselves on being some of the most bikeable cities in the United States. You can find bike lanes and secure bike parking in most areas of each campus.

UMN's [Parking and Transportation Services](#) and UMD's [Bike-to-Campus Program](#) websites provide you with resources for bike repair, bike helmet safety, and rules of the road.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 2.5 Ride Sharing, Car Sharing, and Parking

Ride sharing and car sharing are becoming increasingly convenient, and a smart alternative to driving (and owning) a vehicle.

To connect with others and reduce traffic congestion, the University offers carpool options and incentives with [Gopher RideShare](#).

Consider using [HOURCAR](#), the car sharing provider on the Twin Cities campus. And on the Duluth campus, check out [Bulldog CarShare](#).

### UMTC Campus Parking

Here's our advice for [driving to and parking on campus](#): plan ahead. Parking on or near campus can be frustrating.

There are two types of parking on the Twin Cities campus: public and contract.

- Public parking consists of parking ramps, lots, garages, and meters, and is available to everyone.
  - Do you need parking for the whole day? Then look for public parking lots. Public parking lots are the #1 (and most affordable) choice for parking if you don't have a contract.

- Do you need parking, but for less than an hour? Parking meters are an option. Rates, payment methods, and maximum parking times are posted on each meter.
- Contract parking gives you parking access 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But, because campus parking is limited, you have to sign up for an online lottery. Explore the Public Transportation Service's website for lottery information and contract costs.

## UMD Campus Parking

For [Duluth parking options](#), make sure to explore the four different parking permits for students, as well as the UMD parking map and the [ParkDuluth app](#).

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 2.6 Driving in Minnesota

Do you plan to drive a vehicle in Minnesota, but don't have a state-issued driver's license? Minnesota state law allows you to apply for one, no matter your home state or country. If you choose to drive, your vehicle must have insurance. Use the Resource Hub to explore driver's license and car insurance information.

If your home country is outside the U.S., think about getting an [International Driving Permit](#) before you arrive. It is valid for your first 60 days in the U.S. Check if your home country issues an International Driving Permit, which is a translation of your driver's license from your home country.

[The Minnesota Driver and Vehicle Services](#) (DVS) issues driver's licenses and ID cards. You'll need to study and pass a series of tests to get your driver's license, so it's a good idea to look at those requirements and find a testing location.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 2.7 Your New Home

Finding a place to live in a new city can be stressful. We've equipped you with on and off-campus housing and rental suggestions to help you with your search.

## 2.8 On-Campus Living

- UMTC offers [on-campus housing options](#) for graduate students, including two [family student housing](#) properties for students with children.
- UMD does not provide on-campus housing for graduate students.

The majority of graduate students live off-campus. On-campus housing is limited and isn't guaranteed for graduate students, but you can sign up to be put on a waiting list.

## 2.9 Off-Campus Living

Begin your housing search as early as you can by exploring city maps and [University off-campus housing website](#). [Explore the Resource Hub for more information on city and neighborhood guides](#).

Renting and leases can be complicated, and some landlords don't always have your best interest in mind. [University Student Legal Service](#) offers resources and will help answer your housing questions, and make sure you know your rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

## 2.10 Minnesota Weather

It's true. Minnesota has cold and snowy winters. What doesn't make the headlines, though, is our four distinct seasons. Winter, spring, summer, and fall each have their own charming characteristics, and offer a little something for everyone.

Having four distinct seasons can mean changes in your physical and mental health. How you feel mentally and physically, the types of clothing you need, and how you navigate your city and campus often change throughout the year, depending on the season.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 2.11 Winter Weather Tips

Minnesotans love the winter--but winter weather has its challenges.

We want you to safely get around your campus and your city. You can always go the [Safe Campus website](#) for links to comprehensive resources, but here are some of our tips:

- Staying hydrated is the most crucial thing to remember in cold weather. Drink a lot of water in the winter.
- When you must be outside during extremely cold weather, keep it brief and wear warm, layered clothing.
- Know the wind chill, which is how cold it actually feels outside. Wind chill equals air temperature plus wind speed.
- Know if a snow emergency is declared. A city declares a snow emergency after significant snowfall, so snow plows can clear the streets. If parked in certain areas, you need to move your vehicle during a snow emergency. If you don't move your vehicle, you risk getting towed.
- Be extra careful as you walk and bike, and avoid slips and falls.
- Track buses using the [Gopher Trip](#) or [Metro Transit app](#) so you know when the next bus will arrive.
- Try not to walk alone.
- Make sure your phone is charged in case you need to make an emergency call.
- Use the [Gopher Chauffeur](#) service or [Safe Walk](#) program for a safe escort home.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 2.12 Get to Know Minnesota Culture

We might be partial, but Minnesota really is a great place to live. As a state, Minnesota ranks high in quality of education, health care, arts and entertainment. Grad school will demand a lot of your time and attention, but we encourage you to explore the state--the Twin Cities, Rochester, Duluth, and greater Minnesota, too. Whether this is your first experience in Minnesota, or if you've lived here for a while, we invite you to learn more about its history and be an active part of its present.

[Explore the Twin Cities Multicultural and Religious Directory.](#)

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 2.13 What is “Minnesota Nice”?

Minnesotans are generally very friendly and polite - but often that's as far as it goes. Many Minnesotans have lived here for generations and have well-established social and family ties. They can be insular and, while friendly, not entirely welcoming. This can lead to feelings of isolation and disconnection for people who are new to town.

Because Minnesotans tend to avoid conflict, it can be difficult to know what they're really thinking. Many transplants find this aversion to confrontation extremely frustrating, which can make it hard to have spirited conversations about difference, and give or receive honest feedback that can lead to positive change.

So, how do you handle all this Minnesota Niceness? You don't have to (nor should you) change who you are in order to get along in Minnesota. But, we can offer some advice.

- Challenge others respectfully.
- Be proactive about meeting new people, socializing, and proposing fun activities.
- Practice humility. Minnesotans are distrustful of anyone who boasts too much.
- Help Minnesotans engage in constructive conflict by providing safe conversations to disagree.
- Be assertive and demonstrate how it's possible to be direct without being rude.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## Module 3: Funding and Tuition

### 3.1 Tuition, Fees, and Cost of Attendance

Paying for graduate school likely marks a significant shift in your financial life. Before you begin to budget and plan, it's good to know how much your graduate education will actually cost.

#### Tuition

[Tuition](#) is the price for your degree at the University. Your tuition depends on:

- which degree and program you will pursue
- your enrollment level (part time, full time)
- your residency status (in state (or resident), out-of-state (or nonresident), or international)
- if you reside in a state or province with a reciprocity agreement (Reciprocity is a tuition rate that is lower than nonresident tuition rates and, in some cases, comparable to resident rates.)

#### Student Fees

[Student fees](#) are separate from your tuition, and often are not covered by a financial aid package. Fees are charged to support student organizations and activities, and to fund services that enhance the University community. As an enrolled student, you can expect:

- fees specific to your college
- individual course fees
- a student services fee
- a health insurance fee
- service and usage fees

#### Cost of Attendance

[Cost of attendance](#) combines tuition with estimates for everything else that comes along with graduate education, such as:

- books and supplies
- fees
- housing
- transportation costs

Your Cost of Attendance helps you consider your overall budget, and can be your guide when making financial decisions.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 3.2 Types of Financial Aid: Loans, Fellowships, and Graduate Assistantships

### Loans

One of the primary forms of funding for graduate education is through federal and private educational loan programs.

If you are a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, your FAFSA results determine available federal and private loans. If you are an international student and are looking for information about private loans, make sure to explore the Resource Hub for more information.

A loan is a very useful way to help pay for graduate school. But there are long-term risks. Over time, you will have to pay back the amount of the loan, plus interest. Browse the Resource Hub for more information on student loans.

### Fellowships and Scholarships

Unlike loans, fellowships and scholarships are types of funding that you don't have to pay back. Other funding sources you don't have to pay back--sometimes referred to as *gift aid*--are grants, tuition benefits and waivers, and money received from private donors.

Fellowships often come from your college, department, or program--and may be included with your acceptance to the University.

### Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistants are graduate students who are also employed by the University to teach or conduct research. With an assistantship, you receive tuition benefits and an hourly wage.

Graduate assistants offer advantages to students and the University by:

- meeting critical teaching and research needs,
- providing financial assistance to graduate students while they pursue their degree,
- providing teaching and research experience for graduate students.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 3.3 How Do I Keep Track of My Financial Aid?

As you get a sense of your financial picture, you may still have a lot of questions.

### One Stop

Start with [One Stop](#). One Stop helps you estimate your costs and gives the most current information on:

- fees you're responsible for paying
- billing due dates, how to pay your bill, and payment plan options
- financial aid award timelines
- how to budget and spend during school
- academic deadlines for each semester

## MyU

[MyU](#) is your personal financial portal that shows how much you owe and when it is due. Use your Internet ID and password to log into MyU. From there, click on the ‘My Finances’ tab to show your Billing & Payment history and Financial Aid amounts.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### 3.4 Financial Aid Questions to Ask

Once you have explored One Stop and your MyU account, try to answer the following hypothetical questions:

- When do I have to pay for tuition?
- When can I expect my financial aid money?
- Is anything due before the first day of class?
- Can I pay in chunks or installations?
- A bill on MyU doesn’t seem right. Whom can I talk to?
- What fees do I have to pay?

Which of these questions can you answer on your own? Which of them are you still unsure of? Although GEAR 1 may not be able to answer each one of these questions, we want to guide you to the right answers.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### 3.5 Funding Affects Loan Eligibility

Say you have been awarded loans that cover your cost of attendance for the upcoming school year. After accepting your loans, you learn that you have:

- received funding from a fellowship or grant
- received an assistantship

How does this affect your financial aid package?

Money from scholarships, fellowships, and assistantships are part of your financial aid package. As a result, this funding reduces the amount of loans you are eligible for. Why? Because federal regulations do not allow loans to be awarded over your cost of attendance. This is called an over-award, and if an over-award occurs, loans must be reduced.

If you accepted all the loans you were offered, and aid fellowships or assistantships are added to your financial aid package after your loans have disbursed, you will be billed back through your student account for the amount of loan money you are no longer eligible for. **YOU WILL OWE THE UNIVERSITY MONEY.** This process of getting “billed back” can create difficulties because you may have already spent the refund you received when your loans initially disbursed.

And, since you may be getting paid every two weeks for a fellowship or assistantship, the funds replacing loan money may not come in fast enough to pay your bill by the due date. This can cause late fees, holds on your account, and can even cancel your registration for an upcoming term.

Be sure to contact One Stop immediately if you have questions about why your loans were reduced, and how to pay your bill. And to prevent this from happening in the first place, report all gift aid as soon as you learn you will be receiving this funding.

## **Who Can I Talk To?**

Do you have unanswered questions about your financial aid situation? [Start by contacting One Stop](#). One Stop can answer some questions, and can also direct other questions to the financial aid staff who can review and/or adjust your financial aid package. One Stop can also provide financial aid counseling.

Departmental staff or your Graduate Program Coordinator can answer questions about the type and amount of gift aid you have been awarded. Don't hesitate to ask for their help! Don't be afraid to speak your mind and ask the questions you may think are simple.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## **3.6 Budgeting**

For most graduate students, student loan debt is a fact of life. Keep two key concepts in mind:

- Never borrow more than you need.
- Be sure to search for fellowships and scholarships.

*Our advice is very simple: live frugally like a student now, so that you won't have to in the future.*

Making informed and sustainable financial decisions throughout graduate school will help your overall mental and emotional health. We encourage you to explore the Research Hub for University-wide resources, and seek guidance from mentors, family, and friends.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## **3.7 Fellowships, Scholarships, and Grants**

[Fellowships, scholarships, and grants](#) offer new and currently enrolled students the opportunity to fund their academic and research endeavors without the work requirements of an assistantship, or the obligation of repaying student loans.

These types of funding can last from a semester to a few years, and can be funded from corporations and nonprofits, foreign countries, the University, or your own college, department, or program. The world of funding is vast, and can feel complicated. But it doesn't have to. Let's look at productive ways to start your search.

As you search, keep these questions in mind:

- Which fellowships am I eligible for?
- What are the fellowship's financial benefits, commitments, and expectations?
- How do I apply, and what are the application instructions?
- When is the application deadline?

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## **3.8 Where Do I Look for Funding During My First Year?**

### **Does Your Program, Department, or College Offer Funding?**

If you haven't done so already, start your funding search here. There may be specific funding available only to students in your college, department, or program. Begin by reading your program acceptance material for funding information, as well as your college and department websites.

## **University-wide Funding**

The *Graduate School Fellowships Office* administers University-wide fellowships. It is never too early to explore the Fellowships Dates & Deadlines calendar for available options and requirements.

### **How Can My Advisor Help?**

You don't have to search for funding alone. Your advisor will likely be aware of resources, and can guide you toward options within your program, department, and/or college. Together you can create concrete timelines and clarify expectations for future funding opportunities.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### **3.9 What is a Graduate Assistant?**

A graduate assistant is a graduate student who is also employed by the University to teach or conduct research. Assistantships not only help your professional development, but they also help pay your tuition.

There are two main types of graduate assistants: teaching assistants (or TAs) and research assistants (or RAs).

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### **3.10 How Do I Find an Assistantship?**

You have several ways to find a graduate assistantship at the University:

- Does your department offer you an assistantship as part of your admission and acceptance to a graduate degree program?
- Check departmental newsletters, bulletin boards, and emails for internally posted positions.
- Visit the student job search page to search and apply for openings. Search often!
- Network within departments and with your professors and fellow graduate students.
- Make sure to visit the [Graduate Assistant Employment Program website](#). They can help you with your search, and provide information on tuition benefits (how much you get paid), as well as eligibility and registration requirements.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### **3.11 Teaching Assistants**

As a teaching assistant (or TA), you work as a faculty instructor, and handle many tasks that a professor does. TAs come in a few varieties depending on your field. TAs:

- teach semester-long undergraduate classes and workshops
- lead laboratory sections
- create and assign a syllabus
- grade reports, papers, and exams
- hold office hours for your students

Will teaching at a university level be a brand new experience for you? Are you a nonnative English speaker? Are you unfamiliar with classroom expectations in the United States? You are not alone. Let's look for help.

Teaching is communicating. The University provides training resources (both online and in person) that will help you develop teaching skills and oral communication techniques. Explore the University's [Center for](#)

[Educational Innovation \(CEI\) website](#). CEI provides workshops, events, and consultations that can help answer your questions and concerns about teaching.

The International Teaching Assistant Program offers training and support to nonnative English speakers, and helps fulfill the University's spoken English proficiency requirement for TA eligibility.

Make sure to explore TA options and resources within your college, department, and program. It's good to do this as early as you can.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### 3.12 Tips for Teaching Assistants

Here are some common questions to help you communicate with your own department or program as you search for a teaching assistantship.

- How and when are TAs assigned?
- Is there a standard way that TAs work and communicate with instructors?
- Do TAs help each other out?
- What are the students like?
- What if a student has an accessibility request I don't know how to address?
- How do I handle academic and workplace misconduct?

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### 3.13 Research Assistants

The University is a vast research institution. As a graduate student research assistant, you are its core.

A research assistant (or RA) is a graduate student who is employed by the University to pursue research and training in their course of study. Descriptions, timelines, and qualifications of an RA are dependent on the specific field of research.

Make sure to explore RA options within your college, department, and program. It's good to find an RA supervisor (a faculty member to work with) as early as you can.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### 3.14 Tips for Research Assistantships

Here are some common questions to help you communicate with your own department or program as you search for research assistantships.

- How and when are RAs assigned?
- What is the scope of the research project, and what is the role of the RA?
- Is there a standard way that RAs communicate with instructors and supervisors?
- Is there proper access to labs, storage, and materials?
- Do RAs help each other out?
- Are there safety and procedural trainings?

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## **3.15 Graduate Assistant Payment and Taxes**

So, you got an assistantship. Congrats!

Make sure you confirm your employment with your department and complete the required paperwork. Graduate assistant salaries are subject to state and federal income taxes, which means you need to submit an I-9 form to University Payroll Services. Update your personal information and direct deposit preferences in MyU.

### **What is an Appointment Percentage?**

An appointment percentage is the amount of time you work toward your graduate assistantship, and is based on a forty-hour work week. University policy states that graduate assistants can only work 20 hours per week. That means the maximum appointment percentage for a graduate assistant is 50 percent.

### **Tuition Benefits**

The money you earn from graduate assistantships goes towards your tuition, which means you won't need to rely as much on student loans. To be eligible for graduate assistant tuition benefits, you must work at least 98 hours during the semester payroll dates, and you must be registered for the minimum number of credits.

To calculate tuition benefits, you multiply your appointment percentage times two. So, if you're appointment percentage is 25 percent (meaning you work ten hours per week as an assistant), multiply that by two, and your tuition benefit is 50 percent (which means half of your tuition is covered during your time as an assistant).

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## **3.16 Graduate Assistant Policies and Best Practices**

You have many new responsibilities (and accountabilities) as a graduate assistant, and you should be excited to develop new skills, communication methods, and relationships. It's also very important for you to learn best practices to address and report difficult and toxic behavior. Your safety and well-being, as well as your students' and colleagues', may depend on how you deal with tough situations.

### **Reporting Title IX Violations**

[Title IX](#) is the federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and gender. As a University employee, it is your duty to report Title IX violations that students and colleagues may disclose to you as outlined in the University's mission to prevent and address sexual misconduct.

We encourage you to use the [Resource Hub](#) for more University Title IX information.

Graduate assistants are required to participate in the University's Sexual Misconduct Prevention Training. Preventing sexual misconduct - sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, and relationship violence - is everyone's shared responsibility.

### **Accessibility and Serving Students with Disabilities**

As a graduate student, there are two ways in which you may utilize the Disability Resource Center. The first is if you have a disability yourself and need academic or work accommodations. The second is if you are a graduate assistant, you may have students with disabilities in your courses or labs.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### **3.17 Graduate Assistant Work Rules**

The amount of hours you are expected to work per week depends on the assistantship, but it's good to remember to stick to the hours you get paid for! The culture in your particular work environment might expect you to work longer than is required of you, but it is important you don't. If you feel you are working beyond what is required of you, talk with your department supervisor. This is not only University policy, but for your own academic well-being and mental health.

If you are an international student with an F-1 or J-1 visa, Federal law prohibits the University from employing you more than 20 hours per week during scheduled class periods and finals weeks.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### **3.18 Health Benefit Plan Options**

The Office of Student Health Benefits offers two different plans: the [Student Health Benefit Plan](#), and the [Graduate Assistant Health Plan](#).

#### **Student Health Benefit Plan**

##### **Eligibility**

Students enrolled in a degree program and registered for at least six credits, and all international students are eligible for the Student Health Benefit Plan.

##### **Enrollment**

If you meet the eligibility requirements, you are automatically enrolled for the Student Health Benefit Plan. If you already have health insurance from outside of the University, you need to show proof to the Office of Student Health Benefits to waive your enrollment in the Student Health Benefit Plan.

If you are an international student, you are required to have health benefits from the University, and should not purchase any other health insurance.

#### **Graduate Assistant Benefit Plan**

##### **Eligibility**

Students holding an assistantship at 25% (10 hours per week) or more are eligible for the Graduate Assistant Benefit Plan. Students holding a fellowship are also eligible.

##### **Enrollment**

Enrollment in the Graduate Assistant Health Plan is voluntary. If you are eligible and want to enroll, you need to fill out an enrollment request form.

Go to the Office of Student Health Benefits website to find the enrollment form and a summary of coverage, dates, and other details.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## **Module 4: Being a Graduate Student**

## 4.1 The Role of a Graduate Student

What does it mean to be a graduate student? What questions do you have about graduate student life and what is expected of you?

It's a good thing to have a lot of questions! In fact, it's okay not to know which questions to ask! And, remember: You are here for a reason. You were accepted to graduate school because of your intellect and talent.

You belong here.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.2 How are Grad and Undergrad Different?

You may have a hunch that grad school is going to be quite a bit different than undergrad, but in what ways?

### Your Calendar

Graduate education is generally much less rigidly scheduled than undergraduate education. As a graduate student you will spend significant time involved in independent research, data analysis, and writing. Your calendar may feel wide open but in fact you will be expected to accomplish a great deal. If you don't use your time wisely and impose your own structure and deadlines, you will find it difficult to meet expectations. Stress will set in.

Early in your first year, it's important to take one day at a time. Be conscious of how long it takes to get your work done. Think about realistic ways to organize your calendar in advance. Be honest with yourself. Be open to changing your study habits and routines.

### Your Milestones

During your undergraduate years, you probably studied a broad range of topics. Professors defined milestones like specific reading lists and projects, and you received letter grades based on how well you understood them. And you did very well!

As a graduate student, you work towards being an expert in a highly focused area. Your progress won't simply be measured by a letter grade, but by how well you develop and execute your own goals. Graduate education combines developing personal milestones while achieving program requirements.

### Your Relationships and Communication with Faculty

In graduate school, faculty will expect you to function more as an intellectual colleague. You will likely work closely with professors, and they will expect you to contribute your thoughts and ideas during classes, seminars, meetings, workshops, and lab times.

This new student-faculty dynamic may feel intimidating. That's why developing new communication habits is one of the most important aspects of your first year. Take the time now to ask your faculty members questions, and be honest about your concerns.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.3 Clarifying Expectations

- Mapping Your Academic Progress
- Avoiding Plagiarism

- Making Your Individual Development Plan
- The Role of Your Advisor

## 4.4 Mapping Your Academic Progress

Along with your program and department, use the [\*Graduate Student Services and Progress \(or GSSP\)\*](#) office to begin mapping your academic progress and expectations. The GSSP office serves as the primary contact point for graduate students after admission and initial registration, and can assist you with many aspects of your entire graduate school career:

- Inquiries regarding graduate policy and graduate degree progress
- Understanding your graduate degree completion deadlines and requirements
- Graduate examination committee policy, submission, and approval questions
- Doctoral preliminary and final examination scheduling procedures and requirements
- Thesis and dissertation submission procedures
- Submitting degree progress and completion forms for graduate degrees

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.5 Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism means using or paraphrasing someone else's words, ideas, or data in your own work without documenting its original source. Plagiarism is a serious offense: It is scholastic dishonesty, and a form of cheating.

But what if you don't know if you are plagiarizing? It happens! Perhaps someone else's original thoughts, or the words you are translating start to feel like your own.

Here's our simple advice: if you think you might be plagiarizing, ask someone. Get help from your program faculty and advisor so they can understand where you got your information. Look for one-on-one consultations at the Center for Writing. They can help you with not only making sure you properly source your work, but by giving expert writing advice when you need it most.

As a graduate assistant you may encounter plagiarized work from one of your students. What if you are unsure if it really is plagiarism? Use our simple advice here: ask someone. Not all cases of plagiarism are the same. Consult with your faculty if you are unsure, so you take the proper steps to investigate and report scholastic dishonesty.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.6 Making Your Individual Development Plan

An [\*Individual Development Plan\*](#), or IDP, is your graduate school plan of action. It is where your calendar, your program milestones, and your resources come together.

The purpose of an IDP is to put in writing your academic, professional, and career goals (both short and long term), to honestly assess your skills, strengths and weaknesses, and to make a step by step timeline to achieve these goals.

## 4.7 Individual Development Plan (Student Perspective)

This slide contains a short video of a student describing an Individual Development Plan.

*[Graduate Student Pang Chaxiong]*

To me, the greatest thing about an Individual Development Plan (an IDP) is the process of developing one.

To develop my IDP, I had to really visualize my year, goal by goal--outlining the steps and identifying the resources and supports I have to accomplish them.

Undergoing this process helped me turn something so abstract and overwhelming, like completing a Ph.D. into something concrete, tangible, and actionable.

I made my first IDP my first semester of graduate school because I was overwhelmed, and I continued to revamp it every year thereafter.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.8 The Role of the Advisor

### What is an Advisor?

As a graduate student, you are paired with a faculty advisor, who will help you navigate through your graduate career. Your program may assign you an advisor before you begin your first year.

### What Does My Advisor do for Me?

Your advisor is your academic point person and advocate: together, you work to chart requirements and milestones. Your advisor will point you toward useful information, policies, and offer their expertise related to your field. A great way to strengthen a connection with your advisor is to collaborate on constructing your Individual Development Plan.

Every advisor-student relationship is different. It's very important that you work to understand one another, and acknowledge each other's personalities. Be honest with them, set professional boundaries, and don't be afraid to ask for clarification about their expectations or to describe yourself and what you need.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.9 What are Advising Philosophies?

Many advisors have written statements of their advising philosophy that describe their advising methods. Ask your advisor if they have one, and if you can discuss it with them during your first meeting. How does your personality and needs fit with your advisor's philosophy?

In a short video, a faculty advisor offers first-hand advice.

*[Faculty Advisor Bonnie Keeler]*

The key to a successful relationship with your advisor (really anyone you work with) is to develop a shared sense of accountability and trust. This takes work, but it is an investment that will pay off.

Don't wait for your advisor to initiate a conversation about expectations - take responsibility for getting your relationship off on the right track.

During your first month at the U, carve out time to talk to your advisor about work styles, expectations, and how to make the most of your time as a grad student.

Here are some questions you should ask your advisor:

- What are your expectations of me as your advisee? What can I expect of you as an advisor?

- How do you best like to communicate (via email, meetings, phone?)
- What is a reasonable frequency for us to meet?
- What can I do to make the most out of our advising relationship?
- How will I know if I'm off track?
- What should I know about your work load, or work style, that will help me understand your perspectives or constraints as a faculty member?

As a faculty advisor, I really appreciate it when students initiate conversations about expectations.

Open, transparent and honest conversations early and often will create a shared sense of responsibility and trust that will pay off in the long term, for both you and your advisor.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.10 Advising (Student Perspective)

In a short video, a graduate student talks about ways to engage with your advisor.

*[Graduate student Mounica Kota]*

You need to be open and honest about your needs. However, admitting to weaknesses or gaps in knowledge is really challenging in grad school. Especially because you may not even know what your needs are yet.

So I navigate this by working with my advisor to set, and then attain realistic goals. Every semester, I make an Individual Development Plan--or an IDP--that lists my long and short term goals. I review this with my advisor, and then we come up with tangible steps that we come up with tangible steps that I work on towards these goals over the course of a semester. We then meet weekly, and discuss my progress on these actionable steps.

In doing so we can determine what my needs actually are, and how my advisor can best support me.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.11 What's the Difference Between an Advisor and a Mentor?

As we discussed in the previous section, your program pairs you with your advisor, and together you work towards your personal milestones and program requirements. Your advisor is usually connected to your program. It's an important, and required relationship.

If an advisor is a coach, think of a mentor as a role model.

No one assigns you a mentor, and they aren't necessarily connected to your program. A mentor can be a trusted colleague or faculty member who helps you with many aspects of your graduate and professional life, and often shares their knowledge and experience in less formal, and perhaps more personal, ways.

You may have more than one mentor, and they may come from a variety of backgrounds. We encourage you to seek out mentors for encouragement and to broaden your academic scope.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.12 Imposter Syndrome

Do you feel that people around you know so many things that you don't?

Do you fear that someone made a mistake accepting you into your program, and you're just waiting to be found out?

Do you live in fear that one day someone will discover that you're not as smart as other people think?

In a short video, a graduate student describes Imposter Syndrome.

*[Graduate Student Chris Larsson]*

Imposter syndrome--the feeling that you don't belong, or don't deserve, to be where you are--is something students experience to varying degrees when they enter graduate school. I'm here to tell you that you deserve to be here. Nobody made a mistake. You're a graduate student, watching this video, because of your achievements.

Don't let imposter syndrome stop you from seeking out opportunities--especially funding. Apply to every opportunity that's relevant to you. Getting funding and other research opportunities is crucial to your graduate career, and there's no way you'll receive them if you don't apply for them.

As graduate students, you already belong. You were admitted both on the merit of your past accomplishments and your vision for the future. You've been invited to become a part of a community of scholars, to contribute to them. You didn't get here based on luck.

Recognize your own expertise. Talk to your mentors and advisors. Go easy on yourself. Visualize graduation day. Visualize the scholar you hope to become.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.13 Stress Management

Stress is common and expected in graduate school. Stress is your body's response to any demand placed on it. And graduate school is filled with demands--from faculty and peers, friends and family, to work and finances.

Stress can be beneficial and motivate you to achieve goals. That's good stress!

Bad stress happens when we don't feel we have the skills, time, vocabulary, resources, or information necessary to overcome a difficult situation. Unlike the burst of energy we get from good stress, the result of bad stress is:

- difficulty concentrating
- high blood pressure
- muscle tension
- inability to sleep
- anxiety

The list goes on. Bad stress erodes confidence and makes us question our abilities.

- *Put your thoughts and feelings into words.*

One of the primary causes of bad stress is poor communication. If you don't understand the expectations of the faculty and staff with whom you work, how can you possibly meet their expectations? Similarly, if you don't communicate to faculty and staff what you expect of them, they are bound to disappoint you.

This results in confusion and venting. Therefore, if you make a habit of asking for expectations to be clarified, you will successfully avoid many of the sources of bad stress.

- *You're not perfect. (No one is.)*

Being an expert in your field requires trial and error. Don't let a single mistake speak too loudly about your abilities. Remind yourself that your intelligence and identity go beyond academic performance.

Overcoming perfectionism also means reaching out to others. Talking about your stress with colleagues, mentors, friends, and family can help you identify ways to deal with the stress. Keeping your stress to yourself will not help you overcome it.

- *Be kind to yourself.*

Managing stress is impossible without healthy sleep, diet, and exercise habits. Practice the self-care techniques that you may have established before you got to graduate school, and keep an open mind about learning new ones.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.14 Time Management

### **Make a monthly calendar that works for you.**

As a grad student, courses and faculty will impose far fewer deadlines than was true when you were an undergrad. That means you have to impose them. Be mindful of the University academic calendar, and plan far ahead for due dates for your major assignments and exams. And, we can't stress this enough: make time in your calendar for family, socializing, and hobbies.

### **Prioritize the time where you are most alert.**

Some days your waking hours will be filled, even before you begin assignments and readings. Use the days that are less filled to focus on school work. Are you most alert to read and write in the mornings or evenings? What's the best day of the week to carve out enough time to finish long assignments?

### **Learn and practice good reading and writing habits.**

Not everyone needs the same amount of time to finish readings and assignments. If English is not your first language, you may need additional time to translate readings and get writing support.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.15 Communicating with Peers

In addition to communicating effectively with faculty, it is also critical to interact with other graduate students, within and outside your discipline--especially those who are further along in their graduate programs. More advanced students can offer suggestions and resources to help you navigate your experience and to build community. You can also build your network through involvement in student groups, professional organizations, and University governance. These opportunities will allow you to gain new skills for professional development that will be helpful during your program and as you prepare for your career.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.16 Writing Support

### Center for Writing

Like everything else about your first year of graduate school, writing at the graduate level will feel new and difficult. Embrace the newness! And ... like everything else about your first year of graduate school, you're going to want to talk to someone about it. Our advice--begin using the [Center for Writing](#) as early as possible.

### Student Writing Support

One of the most important aspects of successful writing is feedback-- how another reader understands what you're writing about. The [Student Writing Support](#) office provides face-to-face consultations and feedback on ANY stage of the writing process--from making sense of your scribbled notes to revising your thesis or dissertation.

If you are a non-native English speaker or work in a very specific discipline, Student Writing Support provides a large staff with diverse language and writing backgrounds.

### Promote Student Writing Support as a Graduate Assistant

As a graduate assistant, you will likely have students who need writing support. Not only can you use Student Writing Support for your own work, you can also direct your students there as well. If you use it to help your own writing, you are more likely to promote it to those who need help.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.17 University of Minnesota Libraries

The [University Libraries](#) have the spaces, collections and research tools to help graduate students succeed.

We have a librarian for every department on campus. Meet with your subject librarian to learn more about our databases, collections and services for your research interests. Or contact them via e-mail, phone, or 24/7 chat.

You will be able to identify top article databases, search tools, journals, and authors in your field and create a system for staying updated on new publications.

Learn about citation tools to organize your PDFs, create in-text citations and easily create a bibliography.

- [UMD library services for graduate students](#)
- [UMTC library services for graduate students](#)

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 4.18 Building Community and Networking

Engagement--aligning your academic pursuit with the public good-- begins with building community and networking while you're here at the University.

In a short video, a graduate student talks more about community and networking.

*[Graduate Student Sarah Huebner]*

Graduate school is a transformative experience, not just professionally, but personally as well. The communities we form here will continue to provide support and resources throughout our lives.

Finding ways to network throughout the larger university community will also help you to evolve. By engaging with student government organizations or specific student groups related to your interests and identity, you will begin to see the intersections between your work and the broader world at multiple scales.

Attending programming events provides a break from studying, as well as lots of potential new friends from other departments.

Social support is one of the best ways to alleviate stress, so be sure to take the time to get involved and leave your own mark on the U of M!

### **Discover On-campus Groups and Resources**

[Gopherlink](#) is a very helpful hub that provides a way to explore student groups, events, and opportunities. University-wide groups in the list below can help you get the support and community you need.

- [Women's Center](#)
- [Organization for Graduate and Professional Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Graduate School Diversity Office](#)
- [Community of Scholars Program](#)
- [Veterans Service](#)
- [Student Parent Help Center](#)

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### **4.19 Student Groups and Organizations**

The best way to find community and network is to join a graduate student group or organization. What are your interests and motivations? Whether they are related to your field, your identity, or a hobby, participating in student groups and organizations can lead to amazing personal growth and enhance your professional skills. You'll likely meet friends and mentors who will help you along the way.

#### **Council of Graduate Students (COGS)**

The [Council of Graduate Students](#) (or COGS) represents all graduate students on the Twin Cities campus, and provide a formal avenue to express students' views to the University administration and the greater community. All graduate students are welcome to join COGS general assemblies and social events.

#### **Council of International Graduate Students (CIGS)**

The [Council for International Graduate Students](#) (or CIGS) provides a platform for international graduate students to meet each other, share their experiences with one another, and play a bigger role in international student advocacy.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### **4.20 Public Engagement**

What is an engaged campus? Public engagement is the partnership of University knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to:

- enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity
- enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning
- prepare engaged, educated citizens
- strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility

- address critical societal issues
- contribute to the public good

In a short video, a graduate student talk more about student engagement during their graduate school career.

*[Graduate Student Tyeastia Green]*

While it is important to engage within the university, it is equally important to utilize your passions to engage within the community.

I'm a MPA student, but I'm passionate about creative writing, music, and art. My former high school English teacher now teaches at Southwest High in Minneapolis, and asked if I would come in a mentor her students on creative writing--specifically poetry and screenwriting.

As an introvert, it's unnerving to walk through hallways filled with students, but once I was in the classroom, my passion took over. Mentoring those students is an amazing experience. It broke my shell of shyness when I realized these kids look up to me. These kids inspire me.

I've used that experience in my graduate program. It keeps me centered, focused, and excited as a student--seeing things with fresh and creative eyes. As a TA I'm able to bring that experience of creative writing into the classroom to help students get out of their own way when writing literature reviews, and reflection narratives.

Bring all of you into your education experience. All of what makes you unique, and then go out into the community to utilize it.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## Module 5: Your Health and Wellness

### 5.1 On-Campus Health Resources

#### Boynton Health Services

[Boynton](#) offers health care services to UMTC students, faculty, and staff, and provides physicians, nurses, and healthcare specialists. Boynton offers:

comprehensive health care services, like pharmacies for prescription medications, urgent care, vision and dental care, immunizations and vaccinations, mental health care, and counseling services:

- Wellness programs for nutrition, stress management, addiction recovery, and sexual health
- [Gopher Quick Clinic](#), a clinic for your simpler medical concerns

Boynton requires patients to have health insurance, but accepts most insurance plans

Make sure to create your own [MyBoynton](#) patient profile to schedule appointments online and email with the Boynton health care team.

## **UMD Health Services**

[UMD Health Services](#) is the Duluth campus' health care service -- a comprehensive health and wellness facility designed to meet the healthcare needs of its students. UMD Health Services provides a wide variety of medical and counseling services, and health education programs.

### **5.2 Mental Health and Wellness**

Everyone experiences stressful events and mental health challenges. These challenges come in all shapes and sizes, and are often invisible to people around you. We encourage you to get help when you need it, and to support others around you.

In a short video Boynton Assistant Director Matt Hanson describes mental health resources.

Graduate school can be an incredibly exciting and enriching experience, as you prepare to take on new challenges and professional demands.

It can also be highly stressful, marked by feelings of loneliness, insecurity, and anxiety. Good mental health is a critical component of success at this (or any) level, and it can be hard to know who to turn to when feeling overwhelmed.

Fortunately, the University of Minnesota has extensive professional and confidential mental health services that students can access to address their concerns at low or no cost.

Details for all services can be found at [mentalhealth.umn.edu](http://mentalhealth.umn.edu), or by calling 612-301-4673 on evening and weekends.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### **5.3 Counseling Services**

If you're experiencing mental health issues, counseling services are available through [Boynton's Mental Health Clinic](#) and [Student Counseling Services](#) (SCS).

If you were receiving professional mental health assistance before attending the University, and want to continue to receive assistance, Boynton and Student Counseling Services can help you make a transition.

#### **Consultations and Support Groups**

Student Counseling Services facilitates many support groups that can help you connect with others, share your experiences, and learn about tools and strategies to cope with mental health issues.

If you're not sure who to talk to, or are overwhelmed by the thought of counseling or support groups, explore the [Let's Talk](#) program. Let's Talk provides informal drop-in consultations at locations around campus. Let's Talk is free and confidential, and you don't even need to make an appointment.

#### **Off-campus Mental Healthcare**

We realize you don't live your entire life on campus. It's important to know that you have access to off-campus mental health care options, and if they are covered through your health insurance.

[Use the Blue Cross Blue Shield Minnesota link](#) that allows you to easily search for doctors, healthcare providers, and the medical conditions they treat. You can search for locations throughout the state of Minnesota.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 5.4 Crisis Lines and Urgent Consultations

If you or someone you know is having a mental health crisis and/or is in immediate danger, get help immediately, and please call 9-1-1 on any available phone. Dangerous crisis situations include suicidal behaviors or threats, homicidal behavior or threats, irrational dangerous behavior, or excessive consumption of alcohol or drugs. If you are not sure whether the situation represents immediate danger, err on the side of caution and call 9-1-1.

If the mental health crisis you are experiencing is not dangerous, but you need to talk to someone right away, call or text the University's Crisis Line:

- Call 612-301-4673
- Text "UMN" to 61222

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 5.5 The Aurora Center

[The Aurora Center](#) provides free and confidential support for victims, survivors, and concerned persons affected by sexual violence, domestic violence, or stalking. An Aurora Center advocate is available 24 hours a day to join anyone in an emergency room who has experienced sexual assault.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 5.6 Physical Health and Wellness

In a short video, a graduate student discusses aspects of physical health and wellness

It is important to pay attention to your mental and physical health while completing your graduate studies at the University.

Personal health and wellbeing contribute greatly to the overall experience of a graduate student.

So, remember to maintain a healthy and balanced diet, exercise, rest, and socialize optimally so you can stay happy, focused, and productive in what may seem like a long journey in your graduate program.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## 5.7 Diet and Nutrition

What you eat and drink have a huge effect on your mental and physical well-being. As a student, it's easy to fall into poor eating and drinking habits. A busy schedule can mean regularly eating out, and eating on the run. Which means that nutrition affects your academic, personal life (and budget!) as well.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## Exercise and Recreation

What can be better for you than being physically fit? Is there a better break from studying and work than exercise? Along with diet and nutrition, exercise and recreation habits are integral to a healthy student life.

Explore Recreation and Wellness resources and facilities on every campus, including group fitness options, physical therapy, and sports clubs.

- [UMD Recreation Center](#)

- [UMR Health, Wellness and Recreation](#)
- [UMTC Recreation and Wellness](#)

## Sleep and Rest

You NEED downtime--breaks from study and work. Give your body a chance to recover from your daily physical and mental challenges. Prioritize healthy sleep and rest habits into your schedule.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## Module 6: Planning After Year 1

### 6.1 Continuing Your Individual Development Plan

As you look ahead to year two, begin drafting your Individual Development Plan (your IDP) so it includes opportunities like internships.

Utilize the informal interview to learn about different career paths. Informal interviews are short meetings with individuals in careers similar to what you would like to pursue.

Remember: people are often open and willing to talk with you and give advice!

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### 6.2 Applying for Fellowships and Grants

One source of funding for graduate students is fellowships and grants, either internal or external to the University. Fellowships and grants help support tuition and research expenses. If you haven't begun to look for fellowships and grants to support your graduate education, take time to do so, especially if you are pursuing a doctoral degree which requires multiple years of funding. Receiving fellowships and grants not only benefits you financially, but also professionally--the funding you receive in graduate school often leads to funding for your career. So, plan ahead! Know the eligibility criteria and application deadlines of fellowships and grants that interest you.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

### 6.3 Exploring Research Topics

For research Master's and doctoral students, it is never too early to be exploring and narrowing down a research topic. It is important to expand your academic and professional network by connecting with faculty, staff, and students who are interested in similar areas. Such connections can lead to funding resources and conferences where you can be current on your topic, interact with leading scholars in your own field, and eventually present your work.

[Explore the Resource Hub for more links and information.](#)

## Conclusion

Thank you!

Thank you. And once again, welcome to the University of Minnesota.

We hope that the resources in GEAR 1 have helped you today, and will continue to help you throughout your first year.

[Please give us feedback and comments about GEAR 1.](#)

If you need help or have questions about GEAR 1, contact the Graduate School at [gear@umn.edu](mailto:gear@umn.edu).