

Prof. Glas' “Beyond the Program” Advice for Graduate Students

This document presents advice that I regularly share with NIU doctoral students. MA students may also benefit from some of this.

As you progress in your doctoral studies, it is important to grow your presence, network, and activities both within and beyond of NIU and your program. Below are my suggestions to do so. I also include some suggestions for funding opportunities.

Please consult with the Director of Graduate Studies and your supervisor about the themes and recommendations in this document.

Promote yourself:

- Have a website, at least once you’re presenting at conferences. People will want to learn about you. This allows you to control that narrative.
 - o Use WordPress, Squarespace, or any other free platform. Your page could be as little as a landing page with a brief statement of research interests and contact email (and, optionally, a photo). It could offer more, like a regularly updated CV, a research page, a teaching page, etc. If you include a CV, use the standard format you can see used by any number of advanced students or junior faculty.
 - o I recommend you update your page (and your CV) before attending a conference, and whenever you have new publications to highlight.
 - o See examples of websites and CVs from advanced PhD students and junior faculty.

Seek out opportunities for learning, training, and professional socialization:

- Pursue opportunities at NIU:
 - o Seek out and attend **research presentations** on campus. There are lots. These may be in-person or virtual. They may be within POLS or at other centers and departments. In particular, attend the Department of Political Science’s regular Graduate Colloquium series and the Global Politics Seminar Series, and the CSEAS Friday Lecture Series. When you attend, ask questions and speak with presenters and attendees.
 - o Seek out and attend **teaching training** initiatives. In particular, make use of NIU’s [Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning](#)’s (CITL) frequent in-person and online workshops and events. You may also wish to explore opportunities available via NIU’s [Division of Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) and [Department of Educational Technology, Research, and Assessment](#).
 - o Seek out **interdisciplinary opportunities** for events and funding via NIU’s many centers. Students and faculty in Department of Political Science have particularly strong connections with the [Center for Southeast Asian Studies](#) (CSEAS), the [Institute for the Study of Environment, Sustainability and Energy](#) (ENVS), and the [Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies](#) (NNGO). See also the [Asian American Resource Center](#), the [Center for Black Studies](#) (CBS), [Center for Burma Studies](#), [Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability](#) (NICCS), [Gender and Sexuality Resource Center](#) (GSRC), [Latino Resource Center](#), [Military and Veteran Services](#). Many centers offer graduate certificates and some offer either regular and irregular funding and research opportunities (see below).

- **Create your own opportunities.** Work with other graduate students in study, writing, and reading groups. This is especially useful when preparing for candidacy exams (please see my advice document). It is also important as you prepare for conferences and start writing your prospectus and dissertation. Always feel free to reach out to faculty to join events or provide feedback as well.
- **Augment your degree.** I advise students to explore [certificates](#) available in the course of your studies. See for example, the [Graduate Certificate in Southeast Asian Studies](#).
- **Pursue opportunities beyond NIU:**
 - **Visit major association (APSA, ISA, etc.) webpages and join the mailing lists** of these associations and relevant sections and groups. For example, APSA's African Politics Conference Group ([APCG](#)), Middle East and North Africa ([MENA](#)) group, and Interpretive Methodologies and Methods ([IMM](#)) group all have active websites and mailing lists that advertise events, funding, and other opportunities. In addition, you may wish to follow associations and groups, publishers and journals, and particular scholars on social media (i.e., BlueSky, LinkedIn, Twitter).
 - **Seek opportunities via major associations.** ISA, APSA, and other associations host free online events on research, teaching, and more (e.g., information sessions on association awards or student grants). See [ISA Connect](#), APSA's [Virtual Events](#), and APSA's [Teaching Workshops](#). There are many others.
 - **Seek opportunities via other groups and networks.** Many issue- and area-specific groups of associations host regular online events and offer various opportunities. For example, APSA's [APGC](#), [MENA group](#), and [the IMM](#) all host a regular online events and workshops. Many offer mentorship programs for students (e.g., the [IMM Spotlight Scholar Program](#)). Other scholarly networks also host events and workshops. See, for example, [DoingIPS](#) (via Queen Mary University London), [Interpretation Method and Critique Network](#) (via Australian National University), the [Ethnographic Café](#) (via a group of sociologists), and the [Critical and Interpretive Policy Network](#) (a policy-focused international network). There are many, many others, so seek them out.
 - **Tap into NIU's wide networks.** NIU students and faculty are involved in a number of wider networks, including but not limited to the Graduate Education and Training in Southeast Asian Studies ([GETSEA](#)) consortium, the Institute for Research and Policy Integration in Africa ([IRPIA](#)), the [Council on Thai Studies](#), the [Illinois Innovation Network](#), and the Mid-Midwest African Politics Working Group (speak to Prof. Porisky), all of which variably offer events and funding opportunities.
- **Take additional methods training:**
 - Consider the [Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research](#) (IQMR) hosted each summer at Syracuse University. “Open Pool” attendees do so without cost.
 - Consider the [Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research \(ICPSR\) Summer Program in Quantitative Methods](#) at the University of Michigan.
 - If attending conferences, consider methods-oriented pre-conference workshops and short courses. The QMMR section of APSA regularly hosts excellent short courses, for example. See the [APSA 2025](#) listing for examples. These vary year-on-year.
 - There are many other online and in-person programs, some more regularly held and some more costly than others (e.g., UChicago's “[Summer Institute in Social Research](#)

[Methods](#)” or the (very costly) “[Summer School in Social Research Methods \(3SRM\)](#)” at Radboud University). You can seek more out. Your supervisor or other faculty may be able to recommend other opportunities.

Seek out opportunities to present your work and build your scholarly networks:

- **Present your research at conferences.**
 - o Talk with your supervisor or other faculty about when, what, and where to present. Conferences have specific deadlines and requirements to apply (i.e., by submitting a proposal to present a paper, poster, or a pre-formed panel comprised of papers, a chair, and a discussant). Conference requirements vary, as do acceptance rates from as high as 90% to as low as 25%. Regardless of requirements and rates, a polished proposal is important. Consult conference association webpages for details and speak to faculty for suggestions.
 - o When you do present, ensure you offer a polished and formal presentation and polished paper (polished, not perfect). Practice your presentation in advance, ideally through a departmental workshop and/or student group (see below). Get feedback on your paper and on your presentation early from your student colleagues, faculty, and/or wider network.
 - o As you develop a research agenda, consider proposing pre-formed panels with other students and faculty from your growing networks (i.e. arranging a chair, discussant(s), and 5-6 paper presenters around a singular theme). Increasingly, this is becoming a norm at major conferences.
- **Attend a conference even if not presenting:**
 - o Generally speaking, and largely for monetary reasons, I do *not* recommend you attend major conferences unless you are there presenting your own research and research related to your PhD project. The notable exception is if a conference is nearby (e.g., ISA 2025 was in Chicago and ISA Midwest is in Chicago each year). Attending even when not presenting can be a great opportunity to experience and learn how conferences work and feel. For smaller local conferences – e.g. COTS Conference or any number of regional workshops – attend whenever you deem it useful, as the costs will be relatively low.
- **Network when you attend conferences:**
 - o While a polished presentation and paper are essential, networking – i.e., formally or informally meeting and talking with other professors and students – is often the most important part of attending conferences. This is a means to develop your research agenda, build a peer group, make possible opportunities for collaborative research, and get your name out there for the job market.
 - o How do you network?
 - **Meetings:** Email professors and other graduate students in advance and ask to meet. This is a disciplinary norm, though not everyone will be able or interested in meeting (for many reasons that have nothing to do with you as a student or person). I recommend sending an email about one or two months in advance of a conference, as people’s schedules may fill up quickly. Request perhaps 20-60 minutes of time for a chat and a coffee. Make clear why you want to meet – i.e., you value their research, and you want to know more

about their work, etc. I recommend having a website when you reach out to people, so people can learn a bit more about who you are as they consider the request. The norm for a meeting location is one of the conference hotel lobbies or meeting areas, or a nearby coffeeshop. In prepping for a meeting, I recommend you plan a quick ‘elevator pitch’ about your own research (or research interests) and plan some questions or particular themes you’d like to talk about. Consider having business cards that includes your name and email – an increasingly antiqued, but still common practice. You should follow up any meeting with a thank you email after the conference – also a good way to keep in touch.

- **Go to lots of panels:** Attend panels, roundtables, and presentations based on interesting themes, methods, and/or the people involved. When there, ask questions. Talk with people in the audience and on the panel, as appropriate and able. Attend as many panels as you can, given your other commitments, including meeting with professors (above) and taking some breaks (below). You need not fill the entirety of every day with events, but a conference should be a very busy few days to do it right.
- **Attend other events:** This may include pre-conference workshops or short courses, which generally occur the day before the conference’s regular program (e.g., [APSA 2025](#)). This should include attended section and group receptions or business meetings. Receptions are social events, often with free food and drink, that involve members of the section and others. Business meetings are smaller events, generally involving the members of executive of a section to discuss of activities and present awards. Both can be a good space to meet scholars in an area you’re working in. You may also visit exhibit halls and publisher events. Consult conference programs for activities beyond the usual panel and roundtables. All of these may present opportunities to meet people and learn about new opportunities.
- Have some fun at conferences and keep busy. Attend lots of panels and meetings, and network and socialize. But also take breaks and try to enjoy the change in routine. I *strongly* recommend you leave the conference and do something(s) unrelated while away: e.g., take a walk to explore a new city, have a drink or a meal out, visit a gallery, a museum or park, go for a hike, take in a sporting event, see some music, etc.
- **Attend conferences once on the job market:**
 - If you are approaching or on the academic job market, you should present your dissertation research at (major) conference(s) and you should actively engage in the networking described above.
 - You may also wish to take part in pre-interview [sessions via APSA](#). Other conferences may have similar initiatives.
 - You should speak to your supervisor and other faculty about how best to make use of your time at conferences while on the job market.

- **Major conferences to consider:**¹
 - International Studies Association (ISA) Annual Convention
 - American Political Science Association (APSA) Annual Meeting
 - Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Conference
 - Western Political Science Association (WPSA) Annual Meeting
- **Regional Conferences to consider:**
 - ISA Midwest (always in Chicago)
 - ISA Northeast
 - ISA Asia Pacific
 - ISA Global South Caucus of International Studies (ISA-GSCIS)
 - Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Annual Conference
- **Additional Opportunities:**
 - NIU's [Southeast Asia Student Conference](#) and [History Conference](#)
 - Mid-Midwest African Politics Working Group
 - Speak with your IR faculty to arrange informal workshops on conference papers, dissertation chapters, etc. We will welcome this and be happy to help organize.

Find financial support and seek out awards:

- Funding is always a challenge, and it is becoming increasingly so. You should speak to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) for information on funding and award opportunities, which may vary year-on-year. Additionally, you need to seek out other opportunities.
- **Seek out funding opportunities at NIU:**
 - **Departmental:** The Department of Political Science offers competitive [awards and funding](#). The Department and School of Graduate Studies offer support for [conference travel](#). Speak to the DGS for information, which may change year-on-year.
 - **Center funding:** Seek out variable funding and awards available via NIU's many centers (see list and links above). In particular, those working on Southeast Asia should apply for awards, funding, and study via the [CSEAS](#) and [Council on Thai Studies \(COTS\)](#). Both host under-utilized funded awards and may offer funding for [language study](#) that can be used to supplement research travel. [ENVS](#) also offers various awards and funding opportunities. There are opportunities via other centers and departments. Seek them out.
 - **Language and area-specialization funding:** I recommend that interested IR students consider a specialization in Southeast Asia, given NIU's reputation and CSEAS's [Foreign Language and Area Studies \(FLAS\) program and awards](#). FLAS is an excellent opportunity to build a robust scholarly profile in an area of NIU's expertise (and gain language training and research support). Additional specific funding is available via institutions related to NIU's CSEAS. This includes Thai-related research via the COTS (above) and [Center for Khmer Studies](#) or Indonesian or Islam-related studies via Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia's [Center for Muslim Politics and World Society \(COMPOSE\) fellowships](#). NIU students are regularly competitive for these and other opportunities. Speak to Prof. Glas on this.

¹ These conference lists are not exhaustive. There are other conferences you may wish to consider.

- **Other:** Review NIU's Sponsored Projects' database for funding opportunities within and beyond NIU (<https://www.niu.edu/spa/>). I also recommend students consider the [Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois Program \(DFI\) Fellowship](#) program, if applicable.
- **Seek out funding opportunities beyond NIU:**
 - **Conference travel funds:** Many conferences offer travel grants to attend, including [APSA](#), [ISA](#), [WPSA](#), and more. Seek them out and apply early.
 - **Association scholarships and grants:** Many associations and their individual sections and groups also offer varied funding opportunities for research and other activities. See, for example, AAS's [Grants programs](#), APSA's [Centennial Center](#), APSA's Women, Gender, and Politics Research [Grants program](#), MPSA's [Scholarships and Grants programs](#), and more.
 - **Completion grants:** A few major associations offer competitive dissertation research and completion grants (e.g., [ISA Dissertation Completion Fellowship](#) and [APSA Dissertation Research Improvement Grant](#)). Some small associations offer small grants in support of doctoral research as well (e.g. the [NACBS Pre-Dissertation awards](#)). There are many specialized and small awards, so seek them out.
 - **Association paper awards:** Many association sections and groups offer -- funded and unfunded -- graduate paper awards. Even unfunded, these look great on a CV. Review APSA's [awards list for examples](#), and check in with other associations and conferences. For example, see the [Alker Best Student Paper](#) award from APSA's IMM. These kinds of awards are often under-utilized, and self-nominations are usually welcome.
 - **Other funding bodies:** Students ought to consider various funding bodies as appropriate to citizenship and stage of career. Talk with the DGS, faculty, and staff in the Graduate School. I recommend students also actively seek out opportunities. E.g., check on [Fulbright](#) programs, the [Henry Luce Foundation](#), the [US Institute for Peace](#), the [Smith Richardson Foundation](#), [Boren Awards](#), and more. US citizens may wish to consider funding or internship opportunities via the [State Department](#). Students from elsewhere may seek out similar national scholarships, awards, and opportunities. I recommend all students search widely and actively. Please request the "Graduate Student Research Funding Opportunities" file from IR faculty for a list of additional opportunities we have come across.