WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

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Q. What, in your opinion, was the most pivotal moment (either a roadblock or an enabler) between your dissertation and today?

A. Roadblocks are part of every academic journey, and it depends on how you perceive them. For me, one of the major psychological roadblocks was deciding what type of school I wanted to join and the locations I was, or was not, open to. That's where your advisor and committee play a very important role. When a few early offers came up, I felt it was the right time to say yes, but it was my conversations with my advisor, Dr. Yalcin, that helped me visualize the path ahead and take a leap of faith.

My advice: during the job market, and as you work on your dissertation, stay in close contact with your advisor. They'll guide you through the process and help you overcome mental and physical blockades.

The biggest change moving from PhD student to assistant professor was sudden independence and responsibility, realizing that, in many cases, no one is going to tell you the "next step." In the first semester I often wondered, "Who should I ask now?" It's good to get used to that independence because your institution expects it, but keep your connection with your advisor as you make the transition. Even now, when I encounter moments of uncertainty, I call my advisor.

Q. Is there a specific skill you developed during your PhD days that has most benefited you in your current role now as a professor?

A. I would say three things. Number one, of course, on the most on the technical side, the method. I developed my methodological skills early, then went deeper into qualitative methods and behavioral experiments. Those helped me a lot technically. The second, somewhat unexpected, was [taking a] theater course. That class put me in a very comfortable position for presenting and teaching. I've seen a clear improvement in teaching evaluations, especially on clarity of communication. Opportunities aren't always just about methods or papers, there's more to it. Finally, service. I took on service

responsibilities early. At an R2 school, research and teaching matter, but service matters too. Getting that flavor during my PhD helped me hit the ground running.

Q. Is there any skill that you had to develop when you started your new official professional role that you'd wished you'd worked on earlier?

A. Looking back, I wish I had engaged more deeply with AI during my PhD years. To be fair, it really surged just as I was graduating. I'm not talking about AI for my research; I mean incorporating AI into courses. There's a learning curve. What's the best way to include it? Is it assignments using ChatGPT? An AI policy? If I were a PhD student now, I'd start earlier. As a faculty member, I'm learning it on the job.

Q. I'd love to know about a project you're working on right now that you're really excited about.

A. I was excited to join CSULB because of its association with the Port of Long Beach and how it aligns with my logistics research. I'm applying a flows lens to understand port disruptions, including additional flows I identified in my dissertation, such as capital equipment flow. Recent issues, such as the 60-to-70 containers that fell at the Port of Long Beach, show there's real potential for impact. I'm working on maritime supply chains, implementing SCFLOWS, focusing on disruptions and how to overcome them, and bringing in perspectives like human flows and theory.

Q. I want you to put yourself back in your PhD days. What helped you most at the time with establishing that kind of work/life balance and routines of self-care?

A. That was a struggle for me initially. I definitely would recommend to the PhD students, keep that balance, no matter what. Health comes first. Learn the power of "no," used reasonably and with logic. If something will stretch you to the core with low ROI, discuss it with your advisor and consider saying no.

And, have a timeline. Some weeks, I was fully immersed, then a couple of days, I completely unplugged. I didn't set daily stop times. Research can run late, all hours of the night. But every two to three weeks, I took a day or two fully off. Unplugged. I got comfortable being bored; that boredom was productive because ideas emerge then. Over the summers, I'd unplug at the beach. Also, exercise at least 30 minutes a day (jogging,

cardio, swimming) because we sit a lot, and your heart needs [a certain number of minutes] of weekly cardio.

Q. What separates a good dissertation from a great dissertation?

A. "A done dissertation is a good dissertation" is true to a point. A great dissertation carries your passion and creates value in the field. If you face criticism and still complete the project, and the community later accepts what they once criticized, that's impact.

Great dissertations often take on novel, unique, non-trendy topics. Good dissertations capitalize on current trends; great ones set new trends. If your dissertation starts a new stream of research, if it's a game changer, that's great.

Q. Lightning Round. Favorite book, article, or podcast that you'd recommend to car PhD students?

A. I would recommend *The Goal* [Goldratt]. It really helped me. I still have it on my shelf. And I love it because it relates to how you have to maintain that balance between your work and your life.

Q. Can you describe your favorite method/analytical approach and why it speaks to you?

A. I'm in love with qualitative [research]. I enjoy talking to people, and I believe that by talking to people, you get to learn a lot. And some of the intricacies, some of those minor things that might not be caught through the surveys or the quantitative research. That's where qualitative comes in, because the ability to delve deeper into the phenomenon is made possible through qualitative research. So I think that depth is what continues to inspire me and draw me to qualitative work.

Q. You're allowed to go back in time and give one piece of advice to your past self as you start your PhD program. What is it?

A. I wish I was bolder, [meaning that I pushed myself] to take more seminars, perhaps in other disciplines. As a student, you live in a silo, but as faculty, you quickly realize that

you’re in a broader academic community with management, strategy, etc. You’ll want to collaborate and wish you knew more about their areas. I’ve noticed that colleagues who understand both my discipline and theirs tend to be more confident.

Don’t shy away from these opportunities. If you can, take seminars in psychology, or something unconventional. There was one Marketing student during my PhD days who took classes in the school of music. Their research eventually had a music component. I wish I had learned more across disciplines. Supply chain both influences and is influenced by many fields.

Q. Anything else to add?

A. I would just say one of the best things about URI was the close collaboration between the faculty and the students. That really matters so much. And I loved it. And the independence to pursue your interests, within reason, because you receive guidance and support throughout, which provides a platform to explore and build upon your passion. And that's, I think, the strength of the PhD program at URI. And I'm genuinely grateful to earn my PhD from URI.