

GRADUATE STUDENT ORIENTATION TO ORGANISMIC AND EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY (SURVIVAL GUIDE)

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Arriving at UMass

UCARD - your access to everything on campus

What is a UCard?

- A UCard is your official UMass student identification Card
- www.umass.edu/ucard/

How to obtain a UCard.

- To get a UCard you need to go to the UCard office located in Whitmore, Room 168
- Before you go make sure you have activated your OIT account. You can't get a UCard without an active OIT account to verify you as a student
- There is no charge for your first card but there is a replacement fee if you lose it (\$25)

What is the UCard used for?

- Access to the 5 college Library system
- Serves as a PVTA bus pass
- Access to on campus, recreational facilities
- Student Discount at local businesses

Technology Resources

- OIT (Office of information technologies) is responsible for computer and telephone services on campus
- In order to access these services, you need to have an OIT account.
 - Either before you arrive on campus or after you arrive you need to activate your OIT using the NetID you received when you were accepted to the graduate school.
 - Activating your OIT account will also activate your UMass email account (i.e. yourNetID@nsm.umass.edu)
- Services provided by OIT
 - Wireless Web access on campus
 - Login with your NetID and your OIT password
 - UMail (The UMass email system)
 - Storage is limited to 30 MB but you can request more space from OIT if necessary
 - Attachment size is limited to 5 MB
 - Decide early if you want a bio account instead of/in addition to “@cns” email. This is especially useful for students with advisors in the Biology Department.
 - IMAP Access is available so that access your Umail account with an external Email program such as Mozilla Thunderbird, MS Outlook, Apple Mail, Eudora, etc.
 - There is also a LDAP Directory service that will allow you to look up any UMass email address from within your email program
 - For Help on setting up IMAP access and the LDAP directory on your computer visit:
<http://oit.umass.edu/umail/software/index.html>
 - UDrive
 - Online file storage service to store and share files
 - 250 MB available space
 - <http://udrive.oit.umass.edu>
 - SPIRE
 - **SPIRE is your personal student center**
 - Search the course catalog and register for classes
 - View your current course schedule
 - View your final exam schedule

- View holds on your account
- View and Request Transcripts
- Check your Bursar account and make a payment
- View Financial Aid
- Change / Edit Personal Contact Information
- SPARK
 - Web based learning management system for courses
 - Many professors and instructors will use Spark to post course information such as lecture material, syllabus, grades, etc.
 - <https://spark.oit.umass.edu>

MARLIN

- For those students in Morrill, there is an additional server named Marlin that is in place specifically for the Morrill science Center Complex. If you are not based in Morrill but spend considerable time there (TAing, computing before seminar, etc) you should also consider getting a Marlin account so that you can access the Internet.
 - Internet Name server
 - Internet access within Morrill is limited to those users that have registered their computers with Marlin server
 - To get your computer on the Marlin nameserver you need to contact George Drake (George@bio.umass.edu) and provide him with the following information: Computer make, model, computer name, user name and room number, Operating system, the MAC address for your Ethernet connection and your wireless network adapters.
 - Squirrel mail
 - Squirrel mail is available for those people would like an email address with the @bio.umass.edu extension.
 - UMail can be set to automatically forward all messages to your squirrel mail account
 - POP3 and IMAP access is available with Squirrel so that you can use an external email program such as Apple Mail, MS Outlook, Mozilla Thunderbird, Eudora.
 - When you sign up for a Marlin account you should be provided with a sheet of instructions on how to setup your email program. If you don't receive this contact George Drake

Library Resources

Libraries of the 5 College System

- Amherst College (Keefe Science Library, Robert Frost Library)
- Hampshire College (Harold F. Johnson Library)
- Mount Holyoke (Williston & Miles-Smith Library)
- Smith College (Neilson Library, Young Science Library)
- UMass Amherst
 - Integrated Sciences and engineering Library
 - Primary resource for Biology and Natural resources reference material, generally closes at 9:00
 - W.E.B. De Bois Library
 - UMass main campus library, open 24hrs

Library Account Resources

<http://www.library.umass.edu/about/myaccounts.html>

- Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery (ILL)
 - You can make a request through ILL when you are unable to find an item in the 5 college system
 - The requested item will be sent to your location (most items are available to be scanned and sent as a PDF)
- RefWorks
 - Refworks is software for managing your citations that can be used both on campus and off campus to store and organize your citations from journal, books, databases, and websites.
 - Refworks is subscription based service available for free while you are a student
 - To set up a Refworks account visit <https://www.refworks.com/Refworks/login.asp>
 - An alternative to Refworks is EndNote which is commercial software with similar functionality but is available for an initial purchase price but then does not expire.
- Library Databases
 - Web of Science

Textbooks

- In addition to online sellers, textbook and other course material can be purchased locally from the following locations
 - Amherst Bookstore
 - 8 Main St, Amherst, MA 01002-2328
 - <http://www.amherstbooks.com>
 - UMass Textbook Annex (look at the map, easy to get lost)
 - 360 Campus Center Way
 - <http://www.umass.bkstr.com/>
 - UMass Extension Bookstore
 - <http://umassexextensionbookstore.com/catalog/>

University Fees: love 'em or hate 'em, you still gotta pay 'em

The graduate employment organization (GEO) is the graduate student union on campus and has negotiated several reductions in fees for the graduate student who are members of GEO. In order to qualify to be a member of GEO you need at least 10hrs / week per semester in teaching or research assistantships. However, although many fees are waived for GEO eligible students, not all are covered.

Fee for GEO eligible students

- A. Entering Graduate Student Fee
- A. Registration Fees (http://www.umass.edu/bursar/fee_schedule.htm)
 - a. Based on number of enrolled credits
 - 1. Continuation Fee = If you are taking no classes and wish to stay enrolled you can register for the continuation fee, Class number #57092, under the "Graduate School" department (GRADSCH 999)
- B. Health Center Fees
 - 1. University Health Center Fees
 - 2. Student Health Insurance Plan (optional)

Important:

1. If you register for less than 9 credits or for the continuation fee and you wish to remain a full time student you need to have Penny send an email to the grad school at the beginning of each semester saying that you are a full time student in the department. This memo is important if you wish to be considered for student loans
2. To fulfill OEB and university residency requirements you need to be enrolled full time (9 credits) for at least 2 consecutive semesters. Before you register for the continuation fee or fewer credits, make sure you have met this requirement.
3. Also, if you taking more that 5 credits you will be automatically enrolled in the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP). However, if you are enrolled for the continuation fee or less than 5 credits you need to enroll in the SHIP by going to University health Services to sign a form and pay a fee at the beginning of each semester.

Graduate Employment Organization (GEO)

If you have any kind of assistantship while at the university such as a teaching assistantship (TA), research assistantship (RA), intern, working fellow, etc, you can become a member of the GEO and be eligible for GEO benefits. UMass Amherst students have been unionized in 1990 since GEO was formed as a unit of the United Auto Workers (UAW) local 2322, based in Holyoke. The main goal of Geo is to negotiate a contract with the University administration that includes fair wages and benefits for its graduate student members.

Benefits of GEO

- Tuition and Fee waivers
- Discounted Health Insurance
- Dental and Vision Plans
- Help in resolving workplace conflicts

Tuition and Fee Waivers

If you work at least 20 hours per week during either semester, you can qualify for the tuition waiver through GEO. This can be a single 20-hour assistantship in a single semester or one 10-hour assistantship in each semester. If you only work on 10- hour appointment during a single semester then you will only qualify for the waiver for a single semester.

Workplace conflicts

If you feel that your contract is being violated in any way you can contact the OEB Steward or the Geo office directly to speak with the staff about your options

How to get involved in GEO

- Check out the website at <http://www.geo.uaw.org/>
- Visit the GEO office in room 201 in the Student Union. The staff there can answer your questions
- Read the GEO emails that you receive to stay on top of what is going on
- Attend the membership meetings. These meetings are available to all GEO members
- Become the next OEB GEO Steward

Health Insurance

GEO dues cover 95% of the premium for those students who enroll in the Student health Insurance Plan (SHIP). This is approximately \$75 per semester. This also includes the University Health Center Fee (Currently \$5657/ semester) for those student that are enrolled in more than 5 credits

Dental and Vision Plans

These plans are administered through the Union. You must sign up for these plans every year, by early October. The effective date for the dental and vision plans are typically November 1st of each year.

- Individual Dental and vision coverage is free for individuals
- Family vision coverage is free but there is a \$100 premium for family dental coverage

Acupuncture

Believe it or not, the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) covers acupuncture. There are two acupuncturists that work in the Specialty Clinic of Health Services. Appointments with them are free and unlimited if you have the SHIP.

International Students

For international students in OEB, one of the best resources at UMass is the international student office. This purposed of this office is to help with everything from immigration documents, cultural advising, and coordination with other departments on campus to helping you with your taxes. The office is located at in Rm 467 of the Hills South building or you can visit their website at <http://www.ipo.umass.edu/index.cfm>. There are several organizations on campus for international students and their spouses. Look under People in the UMass website.

“Get a travel insurance when coming to U.S. Those of us from developing countries cannot nearly imagine how expensive healthcare is here, so in case of an emergency, a travel insurance is much cheaper. The UMass insurance won’t start until a few months after the academic year starts.”

“Stay in touch with the International Programs Office (IPO), take the international student orientation, and read every single handout they give you there.”

Parking

“I arrived in July and needed to park on campus for the rest of the Summer, so I had to buy a special Summer permit, which was almost as much as the GEO-discounted price of a permit for the entire academic year.”

“The parking lots that were available for the academic year generally seem to be a bit of a walk from buildings where classes happen and offices or labs are located. Good if you like a little walk every day, not always so convenient.”

“Metered parking is available, but you have to be careful to keep the meter fed or you will get a ticket. Parking in a permitted parking lot without the right permit is a recipe for a nice big ticket, too.”

“If you come in for a medical appointment at University Health Services, there is a designated parking lot you can use. Just take a ticket and turn it in for a token after your appointment.”

OEB/ Research

People to know in OEB

OEB is a mixture of faculty from across several different departments in the 5 college system. There are close to 80 faculty associated with OEB and even though you may not interact with many OEB faculty, there are a few key people you should definitely be aware of. These people include:

- **OEB Director: Betsy Dumont (Biology)**
 - Oversees the administrative aspects of OEB, including organizing program reviews, funding and dealing with university administration.
- **Graduate Programs Director: Beth Jakob (Psychology)**
 - The GDP responsible for overseeing the academic side of OEB. Our connection to the grad school and oversees everything from graduate reviews to comprehensive exams to defenses.
- **Admissions Chair:**
 - Oversees the admission process to OEB. If you are reading this, well then, check that hurdle off your list.
- **Darwin Fellow: Laura Ross (OEB)**
 - In addition to running the new student seminar and GSSS, the Darwin Fellow is a great resource for any questions related to graduate life that you can't ask your advisor.
- **Program Manager: Penny Jaques (OEB)**
 - Technically, Penny is in charge of maintaining student files and managing the administrative aspects of OEB. However, ask anyone associated with OEB and they will tell you that OEB would not function as well as it does without Penny. She is a wealth of information about the program, the grad school and the university so she can help with many of the questions you have as you try to navigate through your years in OEB.

Seminars

OEB seminars occur every Friday at 4:00pm in OEB Seminar Room (Morrill 319, next to the OEB office). There are several benefits to attending the OEB seminar, including:

- 1) Weekly opportunity to see other OEB members
- 2) Attendance is expected of all student, especially first year students (register for class OEB 891C)
- 3) Every OEB student should host seminar speaker during their career, it's a great networking opportunity and ensures interesting speakers.
- 4) Chance to catch up with other OEB students and plan Friday evening "activities"

Other departmental seminars OEB member may be interested in:

- 1) Microbiology
 - http://www.bio.umass.edu/micro/seminars_dept.html
- 2) Plant, Soil and Insect Sciences
 - <http://www.umass.edu/psis/seminar/seminar.html>
- 3) Natural Resources Conservation
 - <http://nrc.umass.edu/nrc>

Speaker Lunches

In addition to the seminar at 4:00pm, each seminar speaker is scheduled to have lunch with OEB graduate students every Friday from noon until 1:30. This is a great opportunity to talk to the speaker one on one without other faculty around. Plus, lunch is at the University club and it is paid for by OEB.

Publications

One way to get ahead in grad school is to start publishing early and to publish often. Some of the benefits of early publications include:

- Helping you get grants to fund your research
- Name recognition at meetings
- Relieve some of the stress when you are trying to finish your thesis/degree.
- Greater mastery of your field

Even if you do not know what you are going to working on yet, you can still benefit by publishing early.

- Talk to your advisor about doing a possible review paper in the field of your intended dissertation.
- Short projects leading to early publications can also be good, but be very wary of taking on side projects (or at least selective).

Travel and Research Grants:

When it comes to grants, start applying as soon as you get settled at school. Here is a partial list of some of the agencies and societies that OEB students have applied to for funding in the past. There are also many grants from societies, so find out what your societies offer, or become a member of a relevant society that offers a grant that you would like to apply for. Talk to people in your field about specific funding options, especially for small research grants.

- NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (Predoc)
 - Available to 1st and 2nd year students who are U.S. citizens
 - Due Early November every year
 - All eligible students should apply, it provides 4 years of funding and a small amount of travel money.
- NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant (DDIG)
 - Provides significant research funds for students in 3rd or 4th year of PhD (~\$15000). Open to all students (including international). Very competitive.
 - This is a great way to practice grant writing, it is a miniature version of an NSF proposal. There is often a useful grant writing course offered through Entomology to guide DDIG writing.
- Sigma Xi Grants in Aid of Research (GIAR)
 - Up to \$1000, Due March 15th and October 15th each year
 - Do not need to be a Sigma Xi Student
- UMass Natural History Collections Grant
 - Geared towards collections based research
 - Up to \$4000, Due Mid March or Early April
- UMass Grad School Travel Grant
 - Specifically for travel to present at a meeting
 - Up to \$400, Beth Jakob will send out an email announcing this so keep your eyes peeled
- OEB Grad student Fund
 - OEB allocates \$400 per student /per year for research and/ or travel expenses. So save your receipts and then turn them in to Pat Kane in the OEB office
- Other Funding Opportunities
 - SICB –GIAR and GSTG
 - Society of Systematic Biology
 - American Ornithologists Union
 -

Remember this is just a partial list. Keep your eyes out for more.

Preliminary Comprehensive Exam

All doctoral students must pass a preliminary exam.

I read all the readings my committee assigned and had a study group with students of my cohort also preparing for their comps. I started studying one month before (intensively). I'd recommend picking committee members from professors from whom you've taken a class.

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)

If you are going to be conducting any kind of research on vertebrate animals, then you must have an approved animal use protocol on file in the Animal care office. The office is located in the Research administration building x5-0669.

<http://www.umass.edu/research/aco/>

- Before you begin writing a new protocol, check with your advisor. There may already be a protocol on file but you need to make sure that it has been updated to include you as a researcher and that you have a copy.
- If there is not a current protocol on file, then work with your advisor to complete one before any animal research is conducted.
- The institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) require that anyone who is listed on an approved protocol and who is going to have contact with animals undergo appropriate training, including graduate students, undergraduates, and potential field and laboratory technicians
- The protocol approval and training process can be lengthy so it is best to begin it as soon as possible once you know you are going to be working with vertebrate animals.

Computer Software

There are several possible avenues to get the software you need while you are a student here at UMass, much of it for free. For software you purchase, you can also receive a student discount by being a UMass student. You can also visit the OIT software page for more information (<http://oit.umass.edu/software/index.html>).

1) **Where: OIT Website** (oit.umass.edu/software/download/index.html)

What: OIT host a variety of programs that are available free for download for Windows, Macs and Linux machines. This includes, antivirus software, internet browsers, FTP/SSH clients, calendar programs, and misc other utilities

2) **Where: Microsoft and Adobe Select** (oit.umass.edu/software/index.html)

What: These programs, which you can follow the links from the OIT website offer programs from Adobe and Microsoft at a fraction of the retail price if you need software that is not already available in your lab.

3) **Where: MSDN-AA** (oit.umass.edu/software/index.html)

What: This is a joint program between UMass and the Microsoft developers network (MSDN) to offer Microsoft software for free to university members as long as it is for personal use. Not everything is available (No MS Office) but if you need a different operating system, visual basic or other MS software, this is best deal out there since it is free.

4) **Where: Biology Computer Resource Center** (Morrill RM. 367)

What: The BCRC is a computer lab run by the biology department that has several that has a variety of software available. If you need some software and can't find it elsewhere, check with the BCRC before you buy it. In, addition, there is also a poster printer available if you need to print a conference poster you are presenting. If you have a bio account, you can also print 500 free pages in the BCRC per semester.

Living in the Pioneer Valley

One of the best ways to find housing is through the University website <http://www.umoch.org/>. Housing options in Amherst and the surrounding area are not cheap, so some students prefer to live farther away. There is frequent bus service to the UMass campus from Amherst, Belchertown, North and South Amherst, parts of Hadley, Sunderland, and Northampton (usually free with UMass ID).

These are some of the town in the Pioneer valley that current or previous OEB student have chosen to live, how far it is to campus and some things that the student have to day about them

“Chicopee is affordable, and there is a larger mix of income types and opinions than what you find closer to Amherst.”

“Amherst: Variety of food, everything is close by and convenient. When the students are gone: heaven.”

Furniture

You can get used furniture through Craig’s list. There is also a used furniture store in South Amherst (The Trading Post, behind Moan and Dove) that has good deals. There is also a used furniture sale in the Amherst common in September every year that benefits the Survival center.

“Be wary of upholstered furniture purchased from yard sales, my used couch came with a family of mice.”

Childcare

UMass offers childcare through University Child Care (UCC). UCC provides full-day and flexible-schedule child care services for toddler and preschool age children (15 months through five years of age). The Center is open Monday through Friday, 8:15 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with a variety of drop-off and pick-up options. University Child Care operates year round and follows the University holiday schedule. This service is much more affordable than private options.

There is a LONG waiting list to get into childcare, sign up as soon as you or your partner become pregnant, or when you know you are coming to UMass. Seriously.

Banking:

Local banks include Bank of Western Massachusetts, Peoples Bank, Northampton Cooperative Bank, Florence Savings Bank, Easthampton Savings Bank, UMass Five College Federal Credit Union. The UMass campus has Bank of America ATMs, but they do not charge a fee to use if you have another bank (they are not allowed to). Florence Savings Bank has been recommend.

Retirement:

UMass does not provide any retirement funds to grad students, but you should be setting money aside in IRAs every year. The earlier you start the more interest you accrue.

Vehicle licensing and registration.

After moving to Massachusetts you have 1 month to register your vehicle at the RMV and get it inspected. Bring a copy of your lease for proof of residency to avoid hassles. The inspection station at the corner of Rt. 9 and Southeast street in Amherst is commonly used, but there are many locations (mostly mechanics, oil change spots). You will also need to get a Massachusetts drivers license.

Mechanics:

College Street Motors in Amherst. "The people are very nice and very efficient, but they are pretty expensive."

North Amherst Motors in North Amherst. 413-256-4562

Health care

Most students and their families use the University health care facilities. Care is generally free (if you pay the student health fee) and they provide pretty good service (this includes xrays, ultrasound, vaccines, OBGYN). The grad student health plan includes low cost prescription drugs at the UMass pharmacy. All health services are open year round, although summer hours are slightly reduced. There is a copay for vision services, \$35 - \$55.

Dental

GEO eligible students should sign up for the dental coverage, which is free or quite inexpensive. Many students go to First Advantage Dental or Triangle Family Dental and have been happy with these services. White fillings are NOT covered by the UMass plan, and are expensive. I am sure you wanted a mouth full of silver anyway.

Entertainment/Food

Durfee Conservatory (on the UMass campus)

A nice place to go for a quiet break or to sit and eat lunch. Beautiful greenhouses, feels like a tropical forest in there.

Farms and fresh food

One of the strengths of the pioneer valley is the profusion of locally grown produce, meat, and dairy products, many of them organic/sustainable. During the summer and fall there are farmer' markets in many of the local towns: Saturday morning in Amherst, Northampton, Greenfield; Thursday in Belchertown; Tuesday in Northampton. There are also numerous community supported agriculture (CSA) farms that allow you to buy a share in the farm and pick up produce each week during the summer or winter <http://www.farmfresh.org/food/csa.php?zip=01002>. There are waiting lists for many farms so sign up early. Meat shares are also available. You can also have your veggies delivered to your house <http://www.valleygreenfeast.com/>. U-pick options are available for strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, and apples from numerous farms.

Some recommended farms:

Whately: Quont Quont Farm, U-Pick apples (a ton of varieties) that are awesome and work out to be like 50 cents a pound!

Pacesnik Farm: also in Whately, has amazing fresh eggs and she makes great pickles later on the summer. They have great everything actually, that's a good place. Norse Farm (again Whately) has U-pick blueberries and three varieties of raspberries. Golden raspberries are on of the best things I have ever had!

Farm stands: Farm stands dot the roads in summer. Not all of the produce sold at these stands is local, so ask if this is important to you.

Simple Gifts, the stand that is open at random times in North Amherst, is pretty good,

“My absolute favorite farm stand is J & J on Maple Rd. in North Amherst. “

Other entertainment:

Events: The Big E (Northeast fair, Springfield in September)

Parks: Skinner State Park (Mt. Holyoke), Dogpark/Frisbee golf course in Northampton near Smith College

Music venues: The Iron Horse in Northampton

Shelburne Falls (a lot of craft shops and the Bridge of Flowers in the summer)

Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, MA

Bookstores

The Montague Bookmill “books you don’t need in a place you can’t find” A used bookstore housed in an 1842 gristmill, set on the banks of the Sawmill River, a few miles north of Amherst. Also houses the Lady Killigrew Café. Down stairs is The Night Kitchen, an upscale restaurant. <http://www.montaguebookmill.com/>

Food stores.

Big Y and Stop and Shop are the major grocery stores. There are Trader Joes and Whole Foods in Hadley. There are also a few smaller stores that are locally owned, for example Atkins Farm in South Amherst, Maple Foods farm in Hadley, Co-ops in Northampton and Leverett. International stores include Mom’s house in Amherst (especially good for Chinese / Japanese items), along Rt. 9 in Hadley there are at least three: the Korean store, World Food market, and the International Food store.

Restaurants/ Bars

International students cannot purchase alcohol without a passport unless you get a Massachusetts drivers license OR a liquor ID. There is another type of non-driver identification card issued by Massachusetts, but it does not allow you to buy alcohol. So pay the extra fee for a liquor ID.

Recommended Restaurants:

Amherst: Pasta E Basta, Amherst Brewing Company, Chez Albert (expensive, special occasions), Baku’s African Restaurant, Antonio’s Pizza, Amherst Coffee, Bueno Y Sano

Hadley: Esselon Cafe

W. Springfield: Pintu’s – Indian restaurant, Tokyo Restaurant

North Amherst: House of Teriyaki (bring your own wine/beer)

Northampton: Amanouz, Thai Garden, Teapot, Paradiso

Ice Cream is really good in this area, especially Herrells in Northampton, Flayvors in Hadley, and Bart's in Amherst.

Advice for new students

Get your shots ahead of time or as soon as you get to UMass! I had to get hepatitis (which is 3 shots over 4-6 months), tetanus, and meningitis. They WILL put a hold on your account.

Getting that first paycheck generally takes awhile, especially if your advisor is not UMass faculty. Be prepared to not get paid until October (it will probably be sooner, but be prepared). Fees will also be due during this early period.

Life after OEB

Academia

If you plan to stay in academia the next step is a postdoctoral fellowship. Many postdocs are funded through a research grants to professors. Begin looking for a postdoc a year or so before your anticipated graduation. Keep an eye out for potential collaborators/ advisors at meetings and approach potential advisors that you are interested in working with. Set up meetings with potential advisors at meetings, or email them. Some may have money and be looking for postdocs (ideal), or may be willing to write a grant with you or find money in other ways. There are also postdoctoral fellowships that are awarded to individuals through an application process. These are highly competitive, but offer flexibility do to your own research and possibly teach. Proposals for NSF and NIH postdocs are due in the early fall, as are many of the competitive postdoc applications (Darwin Fellow type positions).

There are many other career options, including teaching at smaller colleges, government positions, science writing, consulting work, or jobs in industry. The Chronicle of Higher Education is one place to search <http://chronicle.com>. Most advisors in academia don't have any experience with alternative careers, so you should plan to make contact with people that have jobs in the field you are aspiring to and ask their advice.