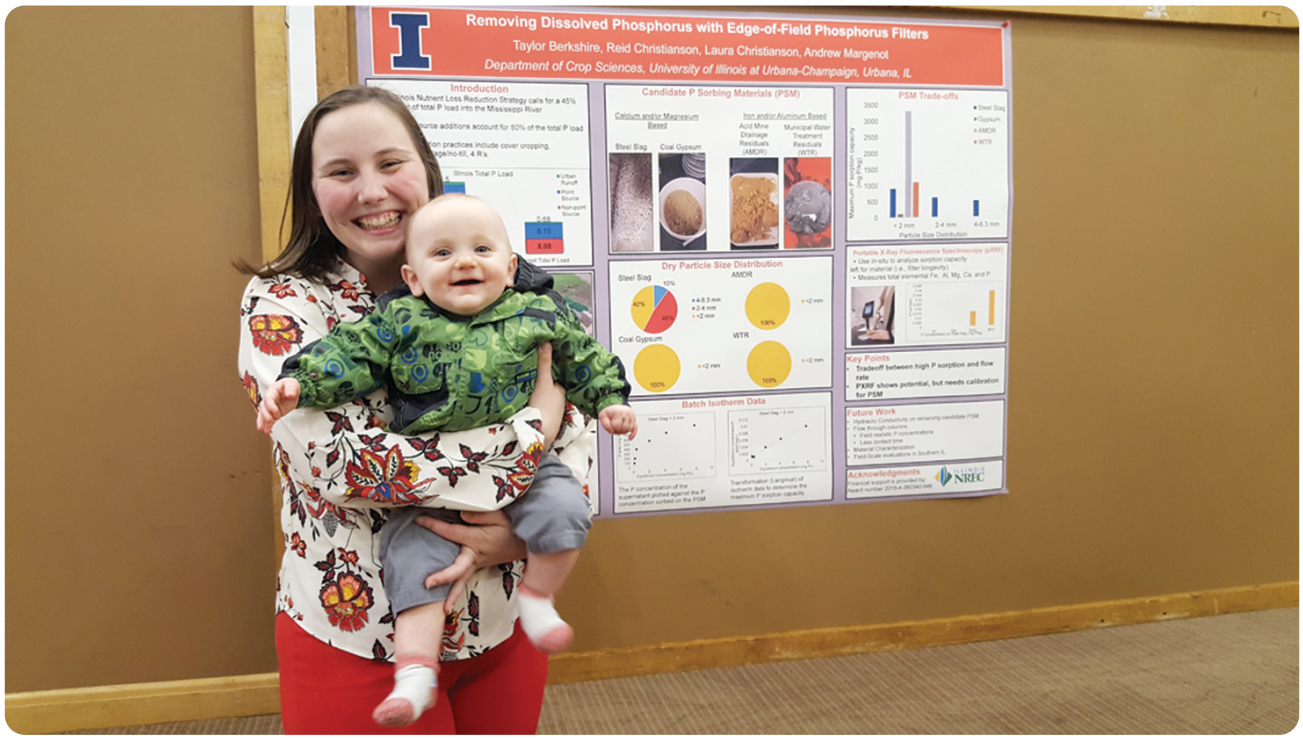
Science Societies

Parenting in graduate school

By Taylor Berkshire

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Graduate student Taylor Berkshire with her son after presenting her research at a workshop to stakeholders and other researchers.

Being a parent in grad school is unique. Often it can feel as though you don't fit in with other parents, but you also don't fit in with other graduate students. I'm here to tell you that is okay and to embrace it. There is no “one size fits all” when it comes to parenting in grad school, but I would like to try and give you encouragement and some tips that I have found to be helpful.

If you are a colleague without kids, you may think this doesn't pertain to you at all, but I would disagree. You play an integral role in helping parents in graduate school feel included and welcome in the academic environment. This can look like letting them discuss home life, inviting them to gatherings, holding events or poster sessions during work hours, or avoiding late hours when it can be difficult to coordinate daycare pickup or hire a babysitter. Another way you can help is by supporting their participation at the Annual Meeting, which can be difficult to attend or to fully engage in when you are a parent in graduate school. One way the Societies have begun to show support to parent scientists is through the caregiver travel award, sponsored by the Agronomic Science Foundation, which awards $500 to five recipients to allow for a caregiver to accompany and assist with child-watching duties throughout the meeting. You can apply at **www.agronomy.org/awards/view/216** until 9 June 2020.

Find a Community, Recognize Your Strength

As with graduate school in general, the environment you are in is ever important. Whether you are searching for a program or have already begun your degree, seek out supportive and encouraging advisers and colleagues. It may take a while to find those who will surround you, push you along on the hard days, and cheer you on through the victories, both academic and parental. Look into resources offered in your school or city to assist with childcare, activities, or groups targeted at parents in university. Find a community outside of the academic world that can help you when you need an hour

on the weekends or someone to watch your child(ren) on a long field day.

Many academics may advise compartmentalizing your life and leaving home at home, but I disagree. Being a parent has developed a skillset in you that others may not possess such as patience, tidiness, adaptability, and intentionality—the most important lesson that I have learned. Time is a precious resource and even more so as a parent. You learn to get all of your work done in fewer hours, so that you can devote your time at home with your child(ren). This is a strength you possess, and it makes you more driven, more present, and adds to the success you will achieve in life.

Overcoming Guilt

Guilt is an emotion that never goes away when attempting to balance being a parent and a graduate student. Often you may feel as if you aren't “enough” in both realms, but you are. When you read this, you may think, “if you only knew my situation, you would see that I'm not,’ but I'm calling that out. Challenge those feelings and replace them with positivity. You are succeeding and pushing forward. The speed does not matter. You are continuing to help little human(s) grow and learn as well as run experiments, research, and publish. You are a vital asset to the world as a whole.

During this challenging time of isolation due to COVD-19, lab closures, and loss of outside childcare, you are likely experiencing heavy thoughts and emotions as well as lowered productivity. Breathe, and let it be. It is out of your control and every single person, parent or not, has most likely experienced challenges that slow their progress, so just enjoy the time you have to spend with your children and be proud of anything you accomplish in between. I know I certainly am.

My hope is that you feel encouraged and reminded that you are so powerful and can conquer what sometimes seems impossible. Please reach out if you have any questions or want solidarity in the adventure of parenting in grad school. Keep

crushing it!

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