

OEB Student Survival Guide

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Introduction

OEB

OEB is an inter-departmental graduate program at UMass, with more than 75 Faculty from the Departments of Biology, Environmental Conservation, Microbiology, Psychology, Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, Kinesiology, Mathematics & Statistics, Anthropology, Geosciences, and the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at UMass, as well Faculty from Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, Harvard Forest, Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center, the Massachusetts Division of Fish & Wildlife, the USGS, and the USDA.

OEB is a diverse and friendly community. In the words of some current students, the best things about OEB are:

“Friday afternoon seminars.”

“A lot of opportunities for intellectually stimulating discussion.”

“The community. Both the faculty and the students are very kind and helpful. Participating in events like the Friday seminar, GSSS, bbq's and non-holiday parties builds a sense of community. By helping each other through studying for orals, preparing talks (GSSS), core courses, stats, etc. we raise the quality and profile of OEB in the larger scientific community. The broad spectrum of OEB students and faculty prepare students for conversing with people from different fields (such as one might encounter on a job interview in a Biology Dept.). “

"It's a nice close-knit community even though everyone is spread out in different departments."

"Friendly atmosphere, very helpful faculty, student-led groups (e.g. SOURCE) and outreach."

"The friendly and collaboration-encouraging atmosphere"

"The sense of community. There are so many celebrations throughout the year which give us an opportunity to interact with faculty in an informal manner. Everyone is approachable and friendly."

"I love how collaborative and friendly this program is, particularly given how good the science is. The environment encourages broad thinking and challenges students to conduct the best science possible."

"I love that OEB is dedicated to providing a happy, healthy, and productive community experience for graduate students."

"The people. OEB is such a supportive community. Plus there's nothing better than a group of hilarious scientists studying evolution."

"OEB is a small enough group that everyone knows each other, and the faculty truly care about all the grad students. It has a great family feeling, and lets you make strong connections with other faculty and students."

UMass Amherst

UMass Amherst is a large public research university. Some of the best things about UMass Amherst are:

"Its interest in sustainability."

"Large university with a lot of resources; easy access to people and resources in the other five colleges."

"Its location - Pioneer Valley! The GEO (union). The free food days. The participation in the Five College system. The massive amounts of undergrads who want to help in a lab for free! There are a lot of annoying things about UMass, but there are some good things too. There are strong graduate programs

such as the creative writing, economics, all life-science programs, etc. Every once in awhile we can benefit from seeing high profile speakers.”

“It's big, so there are a lot of opportunities and technologies that I didn't have access to as an undergrad at a small college. I also like how UMass cooperates with the Five Colleges.”

“Great undergrads - very willing to learn, excellent facilities, has a graduate student union (GEO).”

“The Biology Dept. faculty.”

“Durfee Conservatory. Check it out!”

“There are lots of opportunities, both personal and professional. From exercise options, to clubs, to collaborations across campus, there are lots of things to get involved with.”

The Pioneer Valley

The Pioneer Valley is a collection of towns and small cities interspersed with farmland and wilderness in the beautiful Connecticut River Valley. Some of the best things about the Pioneer Valley are:

“Good access to nature.”

“Great food: farmer's markets, restaurants, farm stands, local organic vegetables, meats, and cheeses. Great hikes/outdoor activities: many wonderful trails easily accessible and some a short drive away. Swim, canoe, rock climb, bike, etc. Mostly good politics and liberal mindset. Museums: Smith's, MassMoCA, Mellville others. Safety - I often don't lock my car in Northampton (don't steal my iPod after reading this, thanks). Short drives to big cities: NYC, Boston, New Haven has some cool things (art museum, food, Ikea). Good, make that great, coffee.”

“It's beautiful and there's a lot of cultural diversity. People are generally friendly.”

“Lots of green space, liberal, fairly close to major cities (Hartford 1hr; Boston 2hrs; NYC 4hrs), good transport network (UMass students get it free during term time).”

“Its casual pace of living, its beautiful scenery, the fact that you are free of the hassles of big cities while still able to enjoy convenience. Great local breweries, food and music venues. Its liberal atmosphere.”

“Spring: Maple syrup milkshakes at a sugar shack. Summer: Tubing on the Deerfield River. Fall: Hiking in the fall colors, delicious apples. Winter: Cross-country skiing in Vermont (it's not far away).”

“The diversity of available activities. My apartment is less than a ten minute drive from campus and there are hiking trails out my back door, local coffee shops down the street, and lots of great restaurants nearby.”

“This is a wonderfully progressive area. Plentiful local produce, an eye towards educational opportunity for all, and an openness to diversity make this a unique place to live.”

“The nature. And the liberals. Restaurants are good too.”

“The kale! No...the fact that you can leave your house and be hiking somewhere beautiful in ~15 minutes. It's a really great area to get outside and enjoy, even though the weather might not always cooperate.”

Arriving at UMass

What we wish we'd known...

“The more you are a team player, the more other people help you. You will find a time when you need help whether it's with data collection, signing a form while you're in the field, statistics, mock orals, reviewing your grant application. Help other people. Go to GSSS; it's not mandatory, who cares, just go. Budget time for things like GSSS, OEB seminar, TLDG, etc. every week. If an hour is crucial to your own work, make it up at another time. You can't do a PhD alone and if you think you can, well you're wrong.”

“Certain Fellowships are not GEO-eligible positions, so you don't qualify for some benefits (Dental, Vision, etc.) while you hold one. We're working on this though.”

“How much sleep I would lose; the cost of living in the area.”

“I wish I had understood more fully what it meant to be in an inter-departmental program. It was more difficult to connect with other students that were all housed in the Biology Department, when I was housed in Fish & Wildlife halfway across campus.”

“This is actually pretty tough because when I visited the hosting committee and other students really laid out what being in OEB was like. Also, the mentoring program was pretty helpful as my mentor gave me lots of general advice about living near UMass and getting set-up with healthcare etc.”

“Everyone is willing to help and answer questions. Don't be too shy to ask - it's very likely that another graduate student or faculty member has encountered any problem you come across and can offer you advice.”

“You will survive quals.”

“I wish I had known how much time would be taken up by classes, meetings, teaching, and other commitments. I found it very hard to organize my time well in my first few years. That might always happen, but the better you can be at time management (especially early on), the more productive you'll be.”

UCard

One of your first stops on campus after you arrive should be the UCard Office (room 168 Whitmore Administration Building). Regular hours are 8:30am – 5:00pm Monday to Friday and they offer extended hours at the beginning of the Fall and Spring semesters (check their website: www.umass.edu/ucard).

The UCard is your official UMass Amherst campus picture identification card. It functions as an on-campus debit card (you can use it to pay for printer use at the library), a 5-College library card, a PVRTA bus pass, a UMass recreational facilities access card (if you buy a gym membership), and as a key for some buildings (door access for some buildings needs to be set up separately through Physical Plant via Departmental request).

To get your UCard, you must be an active student and have a record in SPIRE and in the UCARD system before you visit the UCard Office. Students must be term-activated and must have registered for classes for credit.

The cost of your first UCard is wrapped into the entering fees that new graduate students pay (you won't be charged any money at the UCard Office), but it costs \$25 to replace a lost or stolen UCard and \$10 to replace a damaged UCard.

At the UCard Office, you will present current picture ID to UCard staff (driver's license or passport) and they will take your picture. UCards must be picked up in person and will probably be ready a few minutes after your photo has been taken.

Technology Resources

Office of Information Technologies (OIT: www.oit.umass.edu) is responsible for computer and telephone services on campus.

To access these services, you must have an OIT account.

- Activate your OIT account 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@xxxxx.umass.edu)

OIT provides secure Wi-Fi on campus (log in with your NetID and 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
- IMAP access is available so that you can access your UMail account with an external email program like Mozilla Thunderbird, MS Outlook, Apple Mail, Eudora, etc.
- There is also an LDAP directory service that will allow you to look up any UMass email address from within your email program

UDrive: online file storage service to store and share files

- 250 MB available space
- <http://udrive.oit.umass.edu>

SPIRE: your online personal student center

- Search the course catalog and register for classes
- View your current course schedule
- View holds on your account
- Sign up for emergency alerts

- View and request transcripts
- Check your Bursar Account and make a payment
- View Financial Aid
- Change/edit personal contact information

Moodle: web-based learning management system for courses

- Many professors and instructors will use Moodle to post course information such as lecture material, syllabus, grades, etc. and to host online learning activities
- As a TA, you can use Moodle to communicate with your students - papers and assignments can be submitted and returned through Moodle, etc.
- <https://moodle.umass.edu/>

Marlin

- For students working in Morrill, there is an additional server named Marlin that is in place specifically for the Morrill Science Center Complex.
- To get your computer on the Marlin server, you need to contact George Drake (George@bio.umass.edu) and provide him with the following information:
 - computer make and model
 - computer name
 - user name
 - room number
 - operating system
 - MAC address for your Ethernet connection & your wireless network adapters
- Squirrel Mail
 - Squirrel Mail is available for anyone who would like an email address with the @bio.umass.edu extension

Library and Library Account Resources

5-College Libraries:

- Amherst College: Keefe Science Library, Robert Frost Library
- Hampshire College: Harold F. Johnson Library
- Mount Holyoke College: Williston & Miles-Smith Library
- Smith College: Neilson Library, Young Science Library
- UMass Amherst: Science and Engineering Library (primary resource for Biology and natural resources reference material) and W.E.B. Du Bois Library (UMass main campus library, open 24hrs)

- Science librarians are available for consultations - they can be a great resource for helping you with streamlined literature searches and efficient citation management. They know all sorts of tricks and resources.

You can even borrow DVDs from the 5-College Libraries!

Library Account Resources

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

- Interlibrary Loan (ILL) & Document Delivery
 - If you are unable to find an item in the 5-College system, you can request it through ILL (this is a great service – it’s usually pretty quick too!)
 - The requested item will be sent to your location – if it’s a book, the physical copy will often be sent, but for journal articles, it might be scanned and emailed to you as a PDF
- RefWorks
 - RefWorks is software for managing your citations that can be used both on- and off-campus to store and organize your citations from journals, books, databases, and websites
 - RefWorks is a subscription based service available for free while you are a student at UMass Amherst
 - To set up a RefWorks account, visit:
<https://www.refworks.com/Refworks/login.asp>
 - Many people use EndNote, which is commercial software with similar functionality, but is available for an initial purchase price, but then does not expire
 - Of course, there are open-source reference managers out there that are free to you forever (i.e. Mendeley, Zotero)
- Library Databases
 - Web of Science, etc.

Text Books

In addition to online sellers, textbooks and other course materials can be purchased locally from the following locations:

- Amherst Bookstore
 - 8 Main St., Amherst, MA 01002-2328
 - <http://www.amherstbooks.com>
- UMass Textbook Annex (easy to get lost on your way there – look at the map!)

- 360 Campus Center Way
- <http://www.umass.bkstr.com/>
- UMass Extension Bookstore
 - <http://umassexensionbookstore.com/catalog>

Graduate Employee Organization (GEO)

If you have any kind of assistantship while at the University, such as a teaching assistantship (TA), research assistantship (RA), internship, working fellowship, etc., you can become a member of GEO. GEO has negotiated several reductions in fees for its members. In order to qualify to be a GEO member, you must work at least 10 hours each week during both the Fall and Spring semesters as a teaching or research assistant (or 20 hours per week during either the Fall or Spring semester). Although many fees are waived for GEO-eligible students, not all are covered.

GEO was formed as a unit of the United Auto Workers local 2322, based in Holyoke, in 1990. GEO's main goal is to negotiate a contract with the University Administration that includes fair wages and benefits for its members.

Benefits of GEO

- Tuition and curriculum fee waivers
- Parking pass discount.
- Wellness credit (i.e. reimbursement towards gym memberships, fitness classes, etc.).
- Childcare credit.
- Discounted health insurance
- Dental and vision plans
- Help in resolving workplace conflicts

Tuition & Curriculum Fee Waivers

- If you work at least 20 hours per week during either semester, you can qualify for tuition and curriculum fee waivers 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 one 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 GEO Steward (currently Andrew Smith) or the GEO office directly to speak with the staff about your options.

Getting Involved in GEO

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

University Fees

For GEO-eligible students:

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

Important:

- 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 Graduate School at the beginning of each semester saying that you are a full-time student in the program. This memo is important if you wish to be considered for student loans or if you are an international student with full-time student status as a visa requirement.
- 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 that you have met this requirement.
- If you are taking more than 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.

- In the summer, if you are getting paid through the university but are not enrolled as a student (this applies to most OEB grad students), a mandatory percentage of your paycheck will be taken out for federal medicare and retirement withholdings. During the year, we are enrolled as students and thus exempt from this otherwise mandatory paycheck withholding. Be prepared that a small percentage of each summer paycheck will go towards this, and thus your summer paychecks will be slightly lower than your paychecks during the year (even if you are paid at the same hourly rate). Here are the percentages that are withheld:
 - FICA (Medicare) withholdings 1.45 % of gross pay
 - OBRA - Alternative Retirement 7.50 % of gross pay

Health Insurance

GEO membership entitles you to exemption of 95% of the premium for those students who enroll in the SHIP, leaving each to student enrolled in 5 or more credits per semester to pay approximately \$75 per semester. 95% of the Student Health Fee (currently \$327 per semester) is also covered – the total cost of health coverage for a graduate student who is part of GEO is currently \$170.44 per year.

Dental & Vision Benefits

These plans are administered through GEO. You must sign up for them 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 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 Programs Office. The purpose of this office is to help with everything from immigration documents, cultural advising, and coordination with other departments on campus, to helping you file your taxes. The office is located in room 467 of the Hills South Building, or you can visit their website: <http://www.umass.edu/ipo>.

There are several organizations on campus for international students and their spouses.

Some advice from previous students:

“Get travel insurance when coming to the US. Those of us from developing countries cannot imagine how expensive health care is here, so, in case of an emergency, travel insurance is much cheaper.”

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

Parking on Campus

You can purchase a yearly parking permit from Parking Services:

<http://parking.umass.edu/>. To park in numbered lots on campus between 7am and 5pm, a valid parking permit for that lot must be properly displayed on your vehicle. Violations of this will result in a parking ticket.

Parking permits go quickly, and many of the most convenient lots will be all full by the time you arrive in the fall (because students can reserve for the following year as early as May). As soon as you know that you will need a parking permit (i.e. you plan to drive to campus regularly), and you know what building your office is in, you should go onto the UMass Parking website and reserve the closest lot you can. Chances are you will be far away at first, but you can put yourself on a waiting list for the closer lots at any point, so when something opens up you can claim that spot.

Don't forget to use your GEO discount – it lowers the parking pass cost substantially.

Metered parking is also available at locations around campus. Most of the metered spots on campus allow you to pay from your cell phone using your OIT account (username and password). You can upload money into the account, and then just type in a meter number and lot number to pay from your phone so you don't have to keep running outside to refill a meter.

Some thoughts on parking from previous students:

“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.”

Getting Settled

Housing

OEB students live all across the Pioneer Valley. Most current students live in Amherst or Northampton, with others calling Ashfield, Conway, Deerfield, Granby, Leverett, and Sunderland home. Your choice of where to live will affect your options for getting to campus: buses are available from Amherst, Northampton, Sunderland, and Belchertown, but bus service does not extend to all places that OEB students live.

Food

Groceries

Big Y and Stop ‘n’ Shop are the two main grocery chains in the area. Hadley also boasts Trader Joe’s and Whole Foods. Of course, one does not necessarily need to rely on a traditional grocery store when living in the Pioneer Valley, with its wealth of local foods. Atkins Farms (Amherst), Maple Farm Foods (Hadley), and River Valley Market (Northampton) are great grocery stores with lots of local and healthy options. One could eat quite well from the farmer’s markets, farm stands, and various CSA options available also. In Amherst, there is a large, vibrant Saturday market and at least one weekday market during the growing season. Northampton also has a Saturday plus a Tuesday market. You can generally find locally-grown fruits & veggies, eggs, dairy products, honey, maple syrup, and meat products at most of the local farmer’s markets. In case you haven’t heard of it yet, CSA stands for community-supported agriculture. You sign up to receive a “share” of the harvest each week and your financial commitment at the beginning of the season provides security to small-scale farmers.

Restaurants & Bars

There is a lot of good eating and drinking to do in the Pioneer Valley. Amanouz (Northampton – budget friendly Middle Eastern cuisine) is a fave, as is Miss Saigon (Amherst – budget friendly Vietnamese cuisine), but there are many many, many more restaurants in the area to explore. There are fun breweries in both Amherst (Amherst Brewing Company) and Northampton (Northampton Brewery), plus a number of smaller craft breweries in the area (Paper City Brewery, People’s Pint, Berkshire Brewing Company). Ask your more senior OEBers for recommendations - we’ve got tons!

Ice Cream

Around here, ice cream is a beautiful thing. Excellent ice cream can be found at Bart’s in Amherst, Flayvors of Cook Farm in Hadley, Harrell’s in Northampton, and Mt. Tom’s in Easthampton, to name a few.

Transportation

Biking

The Norwottuck Rail Trail is a nice, paved multi-use recreational path that runs all the way from Northampton to Belchertown.

Buses

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA) operates buses which can take you pretty much wherever you want to go. During the school year, you can ride for free with your UCard, but some bus routes aren’t free during the summer.

Driving

Cumberland Farms usually has the best gas prices.

Recreation

Outdoors

There are tons of conservation areas that are perfect for a light hike or a trail run. There are also bigger hikes available in the area, like Mt. Greylock in North Adams. New Hampshire, with its White Mountains, is also only a few hours away by car.

Indoor Athletics

The Central Rock Gym (<http://www.centralrockgym.com/hadley.php>) is very popular.

UMass gym memberships include access to fitness classes (<http://www.umass.edu/campusrec/facilities/memberservices/eligibilityfees/index.html>).

Planet Fitness (Hadley) offers a cheaper gym option (<http://www.planetfitness.com/gyms/MA/Hadley>).

*Don't forget to cash in on the GEO Wellness Reimbursement!

Cinemas

Amherst Cinema (<http://amherstcinema.org/>) features independent films and classic repertory films, as well as some Academy Award Winners & Nominees. The Cinemark Theater at Hampshire Mall (Hadley) shows new releases. They even have a monthly Science on Screen series, where movies are shown along with a presentation by a local, relevant professor discussing their expert opinion on the science of the film.

Popcorn Noir (Easthampton) is a private members-only cinema (membership is \$10/year - <http://www.easthamptonpopcorn.com/p/membership.html>).

Cinemark at Hampshire Mall in Hadley is the place to go to see the latest releases on the big screen.

Museums

Amherst College's Beneski Natural History Museum (Amherst) is beautiful and has free admission. Well worth a visit!

Smith College's Museum of Art (Northampton) – free admission between 4pm and 8pm on the second Friday of each month!

Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art (Amherst) – do you remember reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*? Admission for students is \$6.

Yiddish Book Center (Amherst) – based at Hampshire College

Bookstores

Montague Bookmill (“books you don't need in a place you can't find”)
Raven Used Books (Northampton)

Festivals

Mutton & Mead Medieval Festival (Montague)
Green River Festival (Greenfield)
Highland Festival (Northampton)
Wilco's Solid Sound Festival (North Adams)
The Big E: Eastern States Exposition (Springfield)
Northampton Jazz Festival (Northampton)
3-County Fair (Northampton)

Doctors & Dentists

Doctors

Most students and their families use University Health Services (UHS: <http://www.umass.edu/uhs/>). Care is generally free (if you pay the student health fee) and they provide a range of services including X-rays, 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 co-pay 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, The Valley Dentists, or Triangle Family Dental and have been happy with these services.

*White fillings are NOT covered by the UMass plan, and are expensive.

Mechanics

There are a lot of options in Northampton and along route 9 plus several in Amherst and elsewhere, ranging from Dealer-authorized to independent establishments.

Academics

People to know in OEB

- Graduate Program Leader: Jeff Podos (Biology)
 - The GPD is responsible for overseeing the academic side of OEB, serving as our connection to the Graduate School, and overseeing

everything from annual graduate reviews to preliminary comprehensive exams, to defenses.

- Admissions Chair: Paul Sievert (Environmental Conservation)
 - Oversees the admission process to OEB.
- Darwin Postdoctoral Fellow : Priya Roy Chowdhury (OEB)
 - The Darwin Fellow is a postdoctoral position that includes research, teaching, and mentorship. In addition to running the 1st-year Proseminar course and GSSS, the Darwin Fellow is a great resource for any questions related to graduate student life that you'd rather not ask your advisor – they are here to be a mentor to you!
- Program Coordinator: Maggie DeGregorio:
 - Maggie is in charge of maintaining student files and managing the administrative aspects of OEB.

OEB Seminars & Speaker Lunches

Seminars

OEB seminars occur every Friday at 4pm in room 222 Morrill 2. There are several reasons to attend the OEB seminars including:

- Weekly opportunity to learn about some cutting-edge science
- Weekly opportunity to see other members of OEB
- Attendance is expected of all students, especially first-years (registering for the OEB seminar for two semesters is an OEB requirement)
- Refreshments before AND after the talk!

OEB students can nominate speakers for the seminar series. Hosting a speaker is a great networking opportunity and ensures an interesting line-up.

Because the talks fall on Friday afternoons, there is often a group of OEB students who go to dinner together and socialize after the talks. This is a great way to get to know other OEB students, so stick around after seminar!

Speaker Lunches

In addition to the seminar at 4:00pm, each seminar speaker is scheduled to have lunch with OEB graduate students on Fridays from noon until 1:30pm. This is a great opportunity to talk to the speaker one-on-one. Plus, these lunches happen at the University Club (yum yum!) and are paid for by OEB.

Other departmental seminars OEB members may be interested in:

- Microbiology: <http://www.micro.umass.edu/seminars/>
- Molecular and Cellular Biology: <http://www.bio.umass.edu/mcb/seminar.html>
- Plant Biology: <http://www.bio.umass.edu/plantbio/seminars.htm>
- Environmental Conservation: <http://eco.umass.edu/about-us/seminar-series/>
- Neuroscience and Behavior: <http://www.umass.edu/neuro/>

Publications

One way to get ahead in graduate 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 degree
- Greater mastery of your field

Even if you do not know what you are going to work on yet for your thesis or dissertation, you can still benefit by publishing early.

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

Travel & Research Grants

When it comes to grants, start applying as soon as you get settled at UMass. 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 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 and have not already completed an M.S. or M.A. degree
 - Due in early November each year

- All eligible students should apply; they provide 3 years of funding
- NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grants (DDIG)
 - DDIGs provide significant research funds (~\$15,000) for PhD students in the 3rd or 4th year of their degree programs.
 - Open to all students (including international students).
 - Very competitive
 - Applying for a DDIG is a great way to practice grant-writing. They are like miniature versions of an NSF proposal. There is often a useful grant-writing course (formerly offered through Entomology) to guide DDIG writing. Ask Dr. Lynn Adler or Dr. Ben Normark for more information about this course.
- 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 member of Sigma Xi to apply
- UMass Natural History Collections Grants
 - Awards range from \$300 to \$4000
 - Geared towards collections-based research
 - In 2013, proposals were due March 1st and grants were awarded April 1st
- OEB Research Grants
 - Awards of up to \$1000 for summer research
 - 2013 deadline was March 20th
- UMass Graduate School Travel Grants
 - Specifically for travel to present at a meeting
 - Awards of up to \$400. The GPD (Jeff Podos) will send out an email announcing this, so keep your eyes peeled.
- OEB Graduate Student Fund
 - OEB allocates some money for each student to use for conference travel or for research each year.
 - For the 2014 fiscal year, you are eligible for \$500 if you are presenting your research at a conference or \$350 if you are not presenting at the conference or are using the money for research.
 - You must complete an OEB Travel Information Form (see Penny for this) and submit it to Penny prior to your departure.
- 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.

The Graduate School also offers a neat service called GrantSearch for Grad Students that can help you find grant opportunities:
<http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/funding-support/grantsearch-grad-students>.

They are happy to meet with you in person to help you find the most relevant grants out there - they can alert you to funding opportunities you weren't previously aware of.

Preliminary Comprehensive Exams

All doctoral students must pass a preliminary comprehensive exam. For OEB students, there are four sections: general Biology, Ecology, Evolution, and Statistics. If you are a joint student with a second program, you may have an additional section on your exam (e.g. Entomology). It is an oral exam.

Students are advised to form study groups with other members of their cohort and it is suggested that you select committee members for your exam that you have taken a class with.

There is a collection of previous prelims questions available on the OEB website (http://www.bio.umass.edu/oeb/sites/oeb/files/file-attachments/OEB_Prelim_Exam_Reference.pdf). Thank you to those who have passed their prelims and contributed to this great resource!

Lab Safety & Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)

Lab Safety

Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) requires that everyone working in a lab at UMass receive basic lab & fire safety training soon after they arrive. Visit the EH&S website to learn more: <http://www.ehs.umass.edu/>.

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 (phone: x5-0669, website: <http://www.umass.edu/research/animal-use>).

- 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 you must have a copy of it.

- If there is no current protocol on file, work with your advisor to complete one before any animal research is conducted.
- IACUC requires that anyone who is listed on an approved protocol and who is going to have contact with animals must 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 as soon as possible once you know you will be working with vertebrate animals.

Computer Software

There are several possible avenues to get the software you need (often for free) while you are a student at UMass. For software you must purchase, you can often receive a student discount. Visit the OIT software page for more information (<http://www.oit.umass.edu/software>).

OIT hosts 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 miscellaneous other utilities.

You can get select Microsoft and Adobe programs at a fraction of the retail price if you follow the links from the OIT website.

There is a joint program between UMass and the Microsoft Developers Network 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 the best deal out there (it's free!).

The Biology Computer Resource Center (BCRC) is in Morrill, room 367. The BCRC is a computer lab run by the Biology Department that has several computers and a variety of software is 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 poster for a conference you are attending. If you have a Bio account, you can also print 500 free pages in the BCRC per semester.

SOURCE

SOURCE is an OEB student-initiated group that gets together to improve their skills with the open-source statistical package R. Look for an email at the start of each semester regarding scheduling and planning for R.

Outreach

OEB Science Cafe

The primary goal of the Science Cafe is “to engage the broader community in science discourse outside University walls, with a target audience of adult, non-scientific community members (kids enjoy our Cafes as well though!). We run our events throughout the year, typically hosting once a month. All events are free, open, and targeted to the public. Events typically run 1 to 1.5 hours with a featured speaker, Q & A, and quiz bowls with prizes.” Visit the OEB Science Cafe website here: <http://oebsciencecafe.org/>.

Fernald Club

The Fernald Club is one of the oldest graduate Entomology clubs in the US and offers fantastic insect (and other arthropod) displays of both live and pinned specimens on the 2nd floor of Fernald Hall at UMass Amherst. In addition to these displays, the Fernald Club also hosts other events throughout the academic year.

* Additional Outreach Programs are currently being put together by the OEB Outreach Committee. We are hoping to create partnerships with local public schools, as well as implementing a biology tutoring program for undergrads. Stay tuned for these opportunities!

Teaching Resources

The Center for Teaching and Faculty Development at UMass offers interesting workshops for graduate students as well as a teaching documentation program. Check out the Center’s website here: <http://www.umass.edu/ctfd/>.

Life After OEB

Academia

If you plan to stay in Academia, the next step after your PhD is a postdoctoral fellowship. Many postdocs are funded through a research grant to a professor. Begin your search for a postdoc a year or so before you anticipate graduating. 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 conferences, or email them. Some may have money and be

looking for postdocs (this is the ideal situation), or they might 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 to do your own research and possibly teach. Proposals for NSF and NIH postdocs are due in the early fall, as are many of the other competitive postdoc applications (Darwin Fellow-type positions).

Other career options

There are many other career options, including teaching at smaller colleges, government positions, science writing, consulting, industry, or teaching at the K-12 level. 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.

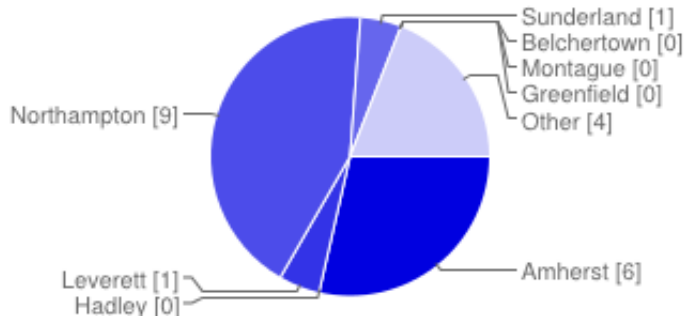
UMass also has an Office of Professional Development with all sorts of resources and opportunities for learning about non-academia careers. You can have a consultation with a staff member to help you figure out what direction you want your career to go in, and how to get there.

2013 OEB Student Survey Results

Organized by Laura Doubleday

Summary

Where did you live during the 2012 – 2013 academic year?

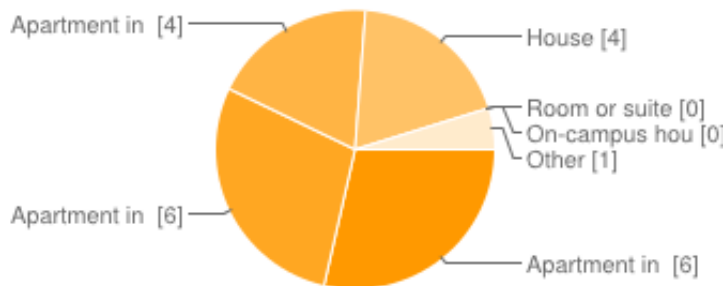


Amherst	6	29%
Hadley	0	0%
Leverett	1	5%
Northampton	9	43%
Sunderland	1	5%
Belchertown	0	0%
Montague	0	0%
Greenfield	0	0%
Other	4	19%

If you selected "Other" for the question above, where did you live during the 2012 – 2013 academic year?

Ashfield Granby Deerfield Conway

What type of housing did you live in during the 2012 – 2013 academic year?

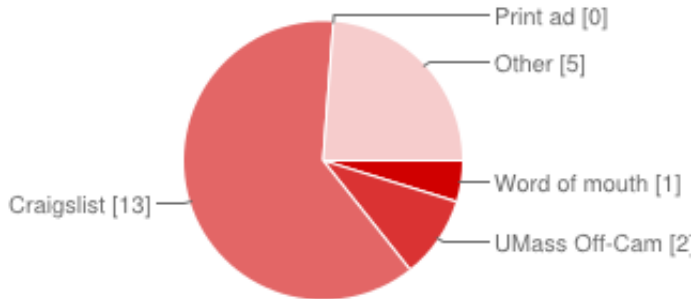


Apartment in a house	6	29%
Apartment in a small apartment building	6	29%
Apartment in a complex	4	19%
House	4	19%
Room or suite in a private home	0	0%
On-campus housing	0	0%

If you selected "Other" for the question above, what type of housing did you live in during the 2012 – 2013 academic year?

townhouse

How did you find your housing for the 2012 – 2013 academic year?

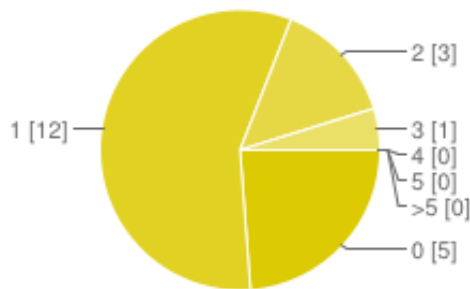


Word of mouth	1	5%
UMass Off-Campus Housing website	2	10%
Craigslist	13	62%
Print ad	0	0%
Other	5	24%

If you selected "Other" for the question above, how did you find your housing for the 2012 – 2013 academic year?

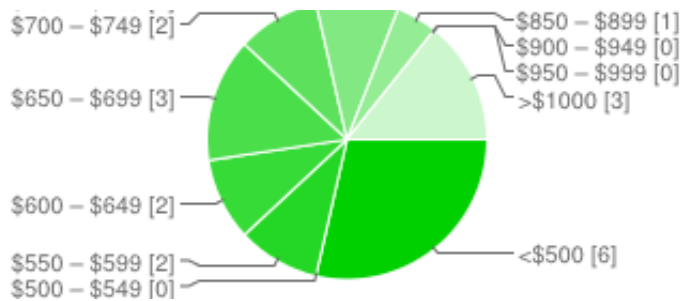
rent.com Rental company in Northampton sabbaticalhomes.com Realtor
rentnoho.com

How many other people did you live with during the 2012 – 2013 academic year?



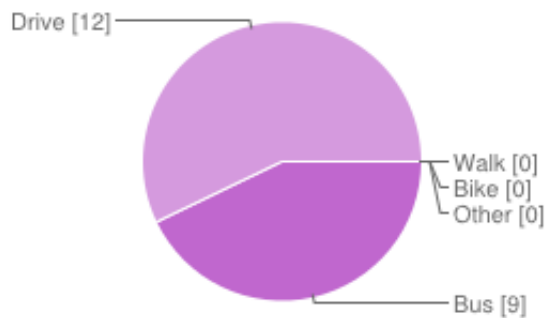
0	5	24%
1	12	57%
2	3	14%
3	1	5%
4	0	0%
5	0	0%
>5	0	0%

How much did you pay in rent each month during the 2012 – 2013 academic year?



\$500 - \$549	0	0%
\$550 - \$599	2	10%
\$600 - \$649	2	10%
\$650 - \$699	3	14%
\$700 - \$749	2	10%
\$750 - \$799	0	0%
\$800 - \$849	2	10%
\$850 - \$899	1	5%
\$900 - \$949	0	0%
\$950 - \$999	0	0%
>\$1000	3	14%

How did you usually get to campus during the 2012 – 2013 academic year?



Walk	0	0%
Bike	0	0%
Bus	9	43%
Drive	12	57%
Other	0	0%

If you selected "Other" for the question above, how did you usually get to campus during the 2012 – 2013 academic year?

What's your favourite thing about OEB?

Cohort, professors OEB seminars Other students grad students are all very friendly which makes it feel like a big family. research interests among faculties are related/overlapped to a extent that you can understand quite a bit of what they're doing without the feeling like everyone is doing the same thing. Supportive environment The community. Both the faculty and the students are very kind and helpful. Participating in events like the Friday seminar, GSSS, bbq's and non-holiday parties builds a sense of community. By helping each other through studying for orals, preparing talks (GSSS), core courses, stats, etc we raise the quality and profile of OEB in the larger scientific community. The broad spectrum of OEB students and faculty prepare students for conversing with people from different fields (such as one might encounter on a job interview in a biology dept.). Friday afternoon seminars. The sense of community. There are so many celebrations throughout the year which give us an opportunity to interact with faculty in an informal manner. Everyone is approachable and friendly. The people and the sense of a tight community of people. I love how collaborative

I love that OEB is dedicated to providing a happy, healthy, and productive community experience for graduate students. a lot of opportunities for intellectually stimulating discussion OEB is a small enough group that everyone knows each other, and the faculty truly care about all the grad students. It has a great family feeling, and lets you make strong connections with other faculty and students. There's a lot of effort put into building a community. I've really appreciated that, both socially and academically. We have classy people and there's a culture of being friendly, respectful, and encouraging. Not all graduate programs have that. The friendly and collaboration-encouraging atmosphere It's a nice close-knit community even though everyone is spread out in different departments. the OEB community quality of students; The people. We are a great group and new students are accepted in many ways based on how they fit in the group. The faculty are here because they choose to be and the success of OEB us based largely on they interest and commitment. The people. OEB is such a supportive community. Plus there's nothing better than a group of hilarious scientists studying evolution. Friendly atmosphere, very helpful faculty, student lead groups e.g. (SOURCE) and outreach.

What's your favourite thing about UMass?

Oeb OEB! Seriously, while there are always issues with large schools/corporations, umass is still very good at supporting the students. Combined with the grad student union, we have excellent benefits, healthcare, and pay and problem resolution is usually quite simple. camaraderie; collaborative atmosphere large university with a lot of resources; easy access to people and resources in the other five colleges The town of Amherst and its neighboring areas It's large and full of opportunities. the location Its interest in sustainability. There are lots of opportunities, both personal and professional. From exercise options, to clubs, to collaborations across campus, there are lots of things to get involved with. It's location - pioneer valley! The GEO (union). The free food days. The participation in the five college system. The massive amounts of undergrads who want to help in a lab for free! There are a lot of annoying things about UMass, but there are some good things too. There are strong graduate programs such as the creative writing, economics, all life-science programs, etc. Every once in awhile we can benefit from seeing high profile speakers. It's big, so there are a lot of opportunities and technologies that I didn't have access to as an undergrad at a small college. I also like how UMass cooperates with the five-colleges. Durfee Conservatory. Check it out! Low cost healthcare the software available from OIT OEB program The Biology Dept. faculty. Great undergrads - very willing to learn, excellent facilities, has a graduate student union (GEO).

What's your favourite thing about living in the Pioneer Valley?

access to hiking and biking lots to do; good weather Spring: Maple syrup milkshakes at a sugar shack Summer: Tubing on the Deerfield River Fall: Hiking in the fall colors, delicious

country setting and the lively towns of Northampton and Amherst. The nature. And the liberals. Restaurants are good too. yummy seasonal vegetables there are hot days/weeks in the summer but usually don't last too long The kale! No...the fact that you can leave your house and be hiking somewhere beautiful in ~15 minutes. It's a really great area to get outside and enjoy, even though the weather might not always cooperate. By the way, it's spelled 'favorite'. (just kidding). Have access to the fresh food from the local farm; quiet, cheap live expense, close to nature and also to the big cities, like New York and Boston. The diversity of available activities. My apartment is less than a ten minute drive from campus and there are hiking trails out my back door, local coffee shops down the street, and lots of great restaurants nearby. Lots of green space, liberal, fairly close to major cities (Hartford 1hr; Boston 2hrs; NYC 4hrs), good transport network (UMass students get it free during term time). It's full of educated liberal people. It's beautiful and there's a lot of cultural diversity. People are generally friendly. Its casual pace of living, its beautiful scenery, the fact that you are free of the hassles of big cities while still able to enjoy convenience. Great local breweries, food and music venues. Its liberal atmosphere. Good access to nature This is a wonderfully progressive area. Plentiful local produce, an eye towards educational opportunity for all, and an openness to diversity make this an unique place to live. The food! Having so many farms around means lots of delicious local produce on your doorstep. The nature, restaurants, produce, and, people. Socially liberal culture in most places, and conserved land for hiking and biking. Great food: farmer's markets, restaurants, farm stands, local organic vegetables, meats, and cheeses. Great hikes/outdoor activities: many wonderful trails easily accessible and some a short drive away. Swim, canoe, rock climb, bike, etc. Mostly good politics and liberal mindset. Museums: Smith's, MassMoCA, Mellville others. Safety - I often don't lock my car in Northampton (don't steal my iPod after reading this, thanks). Short drives to big cities: NYC, Boston, new haven has some cool things (art museum, food, ikea). Good, make that great, coffee.

What do you most wish you had known when you were entering the OEB program?

To be more proactive in everything. Never assume anyone is watching out for you.... They are, but they can't always see what you need. You will survive quals. I wish I had understood more fully what it meant to be in an inter-departmental program. It was more difficult to connect with other students that were all housed in the biology department, when I was housed in fish & wildlife halfway across campus. Nothing particular comes to mind. Everyone is willing to help and answer questions. Don't be too shy to ask - it's very likely that another graduate student or faculty member has encountered any problem you come across and can offer you advice. I wish I had known about the biology-chemistry interface program. ? nothing is coming to mind, sorry! How much sleep I would lose; the cost of living in the area Actually, some logistics -- precisely how mandatory attendance is for which of the seminars and discussion groups (for weeks with very limited time), and some

guarantee of time frame for meeting requirements or meeting through a project deadline, I thought I was really behind schedule and then the graduate review group said I was surprisingly ahead. It'd be better to be able to gage that accurately on my own. Also, it might be nice to have some kind of casual online forum for OEB students, alumni, and faculty for advice and job networking. Certain Fellowships are not GEO-eligible positions, so you don't qualify for some benefits (Dental, Vision, etc.) while you hold one. We're working on this though! I think most things were covered in the handbook... amount of the student fees each semester (this might be known now for incoming students, but I entered a long time ago when it wasn't!) the morrill map really does not meant to be helpful, or readable at all... The more you are a team player, the more other people help you. You will find a time when you need help whether it's with data collection, signing a form while you're in the field, statistics, mock orals, reviewing your grant application. Help other people. Go to GSSS; it's not mandatory, who cares, just go. Budget time for things like GSSS, OEB seminar, TLDG, etc every week. If an hour is crucial to your own work, make it up at another time. You can't do a PhD alone and if you think you can, well you're wrong. I wish I knew how difficult grad school was really going to be. This is actually pretty tough because when I visited the hosting committee and other students really laid out what being in OEB was like. Also, the mentoring program was pretty helpful as my mentor gave me lots of general advice about living near UMass and getting set-up with healthcare etc. I wish I had known how much time would be taken up by classes, meetings, teaching, and other commitments. I found it very hard to organize my time well in my first few years. That might always happen, but the better you can be at time management (especially early on), the more productive you'll be. The list of recommendation restaurants

Number of daily responses

