



Community for Advancing Discovery Research in Education

Advice from CADRE Fellows Alumni

Fellowship Opportunities

- “Take advantage of all the webinars and colleagues that you can. You never know how a resource could be useful later down the road.”
- “Listen to everything in your meetings and give every task your full attention. The Fellowship is an awesome opportunity to learn as well as make relevant contacts for your future. The more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. It is absolutely worth it.”
- “What you gain from the fellowship will be determined by the energy and enthusiasm you invest into the experience. If you are a graduate student, take detailed notes because much of what you learn may not be immediately applicable but will certainly be useful down the road.”
- “There are multiple pathways for education researchers; it’s worth considering them all. This is a really good time to think about what your future should look like.”
- “Relate your activities in CADRE to your current work and interests. If you are not sure how to do this, discuss it with CADRE staff.”
- “Make every effort to attend every webinar and complete every activity with concentrated intention because it is all beneficial if you remember it and absorb it well!”
- “Do your homework! The assignments deepen the experience and further connect you with your fellow Fellows.”
- “Take full advantage of the network that the Fellowship provides. Use it to inform and promote your research.”
- “Make the most out of networking and building relationships with the other fellows. They are the colleagues you will be seeing for years to come, and to build those relationships now is a great use of the fellowship. This truly is a great opportunity to be a part of a supportive community.”

Career Pathways

- “Keep an open mind and consider both academic and non-academic career paths. Inform yourself about the possibilities for professional growth and possible drawbacks in each path.”
- “Academia is not the only path—there are plenty of great non-profit organizations/curriculum development projects/etc. that need great researchers and are willing to grant early researchers a great deal of responsibility in a way that (to my knowledge) isn’t necessarily possible in academia. Definitely consider them as a career path.”
- “Begin considering alternatives to an academic career. If you think that academia is not going to work out or you would rather work in another sector, begin making connections outside academia. Look to see if you can intern somewhere or get a part time job. Many non-academic

positions are looking for on-the-job experience that you might not be getting from your academic program. Plus there is lingo in the non-academic sectors you'll want to pick up.”

- “If going into academia, write. Write. Write. It helps on multiple fronts. Apart from increasing your likelihood to publish, it helps with understanding the work you are doing and helps clarify future career steps.”
- “Be flexible, be confident, and follow the things you are really interested in.”
- “Our professional journeys are often more akin to meandering paths than linear pathways. There are many ways to engage in meaningful work within STEM education. Prioritize that work that energizes and invigorates you, rather than a certain pathway.”
- “The comparison game is poisonous. I see so many people fixating on what others are feeling inadequate about what they have accomplished at X point in their careers. As best you can, focus on your goals and priorities and not what others are doing, have done, or are going to do.”

Doctoral Programs and Dissertations

- “Schedule a good writing time that works for you. Start with one hour every day and increase that amount as you make progress on your dissertation. Use this time every week. Protect and value this time.”
- “If you are a teaching assistant, go to ‘how-to-teach’ seminars. They will help you become more comfortable with your teaching and you will probably learn new teaching techniques.”
- “Take a grant writing course. It will be very beneficial, especially if you are planning on working in academia.”
- “Remember, only you expect perfection.”
- “Use your DR K-12 project to develop some specific competencies or gain experiences that you would really like or need to have in order to end up with a well-rounded, comprehensive graduate training experience in your academic program. Examples include designing curriculum or some other intervention or research instrument, spending time in the field as part of data collection, coordinating research activities, or applying certain analytic methods or tools. This does not mean completely taking over a particular aspect of the project, but rather, intentionally rebalancing your duties or dividing the labor on the team in order to allocate relatively more time-on-task to it, thus becoming more deeply engaged with a part of the project that appeals as naturally more interesting, valuable, or fulfilling to you over a period of time.”

Networking

- “Go to conferences if at all possible. You probably are already, but take advantage of them—they really are a good way to meet other people working in the discipline and to hear about the current work of the field.”
- “It is worthwhile to seek out researchers in different areas and specialties of STEM education research from yours because down the road you may need a new perspective on your work or need to collaborate in a new area.”

- “Engage in multiple professional learning communities, CADRE being one such community. You never know exactly how your career path will unfold, and what skills, tools, and connections you will need. Being a part of several groups and thus keeping your finger on the pulse of several sub-fields in your discipline allows you to remain flexible and open to new opportunities for professional growth, which is a must in the increasingly ‘freelance’ economy, including in the STEM fields.”
- “Networking can be challenging but is essential – do not hesitate to put yourself out there (with the caveat that you also don’t want to overcommit yourself). Opportunities often come from the people you know.”
- “This is a great opportunity to network with folks outside of your direct field - think about ways you might be able to collaborate across disciplines.”
- “Reach out to interesting people in the field to learn about their work- don’t be shy!”
- “Become an expert in some technical skill. This will help you develop collaboration because you’ll have something to offer.”
- “Make conference friends – those people you look forward to seeing each time you go to a conference. The CADRE program is a great opportunity for that. Not only will develop opportunities for collaboration, but you’ll have someone to go to dinner (or the bar) with after the conference lets out.”
- “Make sure to connect with the Fellows in your specialty area at conferences.”
- “Build your community. My work is far better when I have support from more senior mentors and feedback from critical friends. Know who those people are you can work with and go to for advice, feedback, and encouragement.”

Research and Scholarship

- “Start thinking (and working) as soon as possible on publishing out of your dissertation to get a jump start on the publishing expectations for faculty. Lean on your mentor to help you with this; he or she is the most support you will have.”
- “There are so many options for sharing your research findings that go beyond the 100-page report! Think creatively about how you can share your work so it will reach the audiences that need it most.”
- “Think of your research as a two-way street with practice. Engage with practitioners when determining your research agendas and topics. Do research that the practitioner community will find useful.”
- “Be sure to record everything you read in a centralized bibliography – pick software and use it consistently.”
- “When in doubt about your writing, just get something down on paper - often getting thoughts down is enough to stimulate more thoughts. Also, it is easier to edit (what will never be perfect at the start anyway) than stare at a blank screen.”
- “Ask questions and participate in areas that are not your current field of focus; again, this could be vital to developing a broader scope of your work.”

- “When working in the STEM fields, remember everything is interdisciplinary. It is easy to focus too deeply on your own research area. Attend seminars/colloquiums outside your main research area. You’d be surprised at how much you can learn. In the work we do, it is not uncommon for the next big idea for your project to come from outside your field. Adapting techniques other fields will keep you at the forefront of research and is part of the fun!”
- “Go deep in the literature. Get to know an area (or two) really well. Designing good studies is simply a matter of knowing what has been done before and what still needs doing. Knowing a second area of the literature will help you think creatively about your primary research area.”
- “Take the opportunity to think about research and/or development ideas beyond the scope of your own work because the CADRE group is great for cross-fertilization of ideas.”
- “Define your R&D focus...and stick to it! Publish! Build your network of other early career and experienced researchers.”
- “Get on a NSF panel review as soon as possible because that experience will help you with writing your own proposals more than anything else.”
- “Do not take rejection personally. If your paper does not get accepted for a journal publication or a conference, find another journal or conference. But never take rejection personally.”
- “Be patient with the process. Good, thoughtful research takes time and dedication; it requires numerous rounds of iteration. This work is not about ‘getting it right’ but about really knowing and representing your data accurately and meaningfully. The best you can, don’t become discouraged by the – often lengthy - process of research and dissemination, but embrace the process and give it the time and attention it deserves. When you do ‘mess up’ or get off track or get rejected from a journal, try not to interpret this as evidence that you are not ‘good’ at this work, but see it as a necessary and meaningful part of the process.”
- “Enjoy yourself. This seems simple, but it needs to be said. We will spend a significant amount of time working toward getting grants and other funding, running the project, writing up the data for publication, and attending to revisions. Before you’re done with one project you will be working on another. Frequently many more. It is a never-ending cycle. Don’t forget to set aside time to remember what you enjoy about what you’re doing.”