



# VITAMIN PHD

A "SUPPLEMENT" TO DOCTORAL STUDY

## Introduction (Pre-Recorded)

1 minute

*Music, interwoven with voices of PhD students*

You're listening to Vitamin PhD, a supplement to your doctoral studies from Boston University. Our podcast delivers career narratives and skills know-how in two formats.. In Career Pathways episodes, we get your informational interview started, talking to people who have earned their doctorate and now work in a variety of career sectors. In our Navigating Challenges episodes, we explore issues that can present difficulties in graduate school and give you tips to help you succeed. Whether you tune in during your daily commute or while working on your research, we hope that Vitamin PhD can help you learn, laugh, and feel connected to our listening community.

*Music fades out*

## Interview/Dialogue

3:30

S: Hello everyone, I'm Sarah (and I'm Rachel). We are from Boston University and are recording LIVE from the Graduate Career Consortium Conference in New Orleans! Rachel, since we're doing today's show at a conference, let's use this opportunity to get a bit meta and talk about strategies for navigating conferences.

R: Yeah, and I think strategy is such a key word here. I remember when I attended my first conference as a PhD student, I really didn't have a strategy. I saw this huge conference program, and I wasn't sure what to prioritize. Do I go to the sessions that are most relevant to my research? Do I find the academic celebrities in my field and go to their sessions? And how do I do all of this for three days without feeling completely exhausted by the end?

S: A strategy that has worked well for me that I still use is setting goals for the conference. Depending on what stage you are in your training, those goals can take a variety of forms including the things you just said.

- There may also be PD opportunities for graduate students, we'll be highlighting some of these on our twitter page - @BUvitaminphd
- Ask for your advisor's input - they might be able to recommend sessions or introduce you to people to network with so you can plan ahead of time

R: You make a great point about identifying people ahead of time to network with, but of course there are many opportunities for spontaneous connections to happen at conferences as well. Oftentimes conferences host at least one mixer event for this very purpose where there's





generally food and alcohol and no formal structure for interactions. Given this combination of factors, I think these can be tricky spaces to navigate.

S: Yes, and while free food and drinks are very attractive perks, it's important to keep in mind your goals for the conference.

- Look for a group cluster that has an open spot for you to stand - I heard this described once as a cluster of people that looks like a croissant rather than a bagel!
- Introduce yourself with the basics - name, institution, what you are presenting at the meeting (if you are presenting)
- Though it's important to share about yourself, don't forget to ask questions
- If you get a business card, you can use it to take notes from the conversation when you walk away

R: One area I want to mention as we wrap up our conversation is the importance of reflection and follow up after a conference. It's easy to get caught up in our day-to-day responsibilities after heading home from a conference and forget about the learning and conversations that happened there, so I recommend carving out some time towards the end of the conference or during your trip home to make a list of action items. These items might include noting papers you want to read and ideas you want to consider further, as well as reaching out to people that you met at the conference.

S: And with that, we'd like to thank our audience here at the GCC Conference for joining us for our first episode of Vitamin PhD. This episode was a shorter in format because it was designed for this meeting, so visit us on Twitter at BUvitaminphd for more tips. Our next episode will feature an interview with Maren Wood, co-founder of Beyond the Professoriate. If you're interested in being featured on our show, visit us at our website ([bu.edu/vitaminphd](http://bu.edu/vitaminphd)) or send us an email at [gradpd@bu.edu](mailto:gradpd@bu.edu). See you next time!

Potential talking points for navigating conferences:

- Use the conference agenda to plan which sessions and posters you'd like to see
- Identify researchers that you would like to network with; send list to advisor to see if they can connect to in advance of the meeting
- Set goals - ask questions, meet new people, etc
- Note the references you need to read later
- Think before you drink

References:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2019/02/25/knowning-when-drink-alcohol-and-how-much-professional-events-opinion>





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