

# How to Thrive Academically in the USA

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Welcoming LPDP Awardees in the United States

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# Katanya, tak kenal maka tak sayang...

## Rizki Nauli Siregar - Rizki atau Kiki

- Postdoctoral Researcher at the Chair of International Economic Policy at Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz
- Education:
  - PhD in Economics, University of California Davis, 2021
    - LPDP
    - UC Davis
  - MA in Economics, Boston University, 2011
    - USAID
  - BA in Economics, Universitas Indonesia, 2009

# Katanya, tak kenal maka tak sayang...

## Rizki Nauli Siregar - Rizki atau Kiki

### Positions as an educator:

- Current : Lecturer for BSc in Economics and Master in International Economics and Public Policy at the University of Mainz
- Spring 2019 : Lecturer for BSc in Economics at UC Davis
- 2016-2021 : Teaching assistant for BSc in Economics at UC Davis
- 2012-2014 : Lecturer for BSc in Economics at Universitas Indonesia

**CONGRATULATIONS!!!**

# Grad School in the US

# HOW GRAD SCHOOL IS JUST LIKE KINDERGARTEN

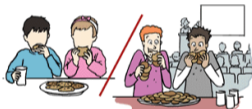
ALL DAY NAPPING IS ACCEPTABLE



THERE IS CONSTANT ADULT SUPERVISION



YOU GET COOKIES FOR LUNCH



MOST COMMON ACTIVITY:  
CUTTING AND PASTING



THERE ARE NO GRADES  
(YOU JUST HAVE TO PLAY WELL WITH OTHERS)



CRYING FOR YOUR MOMMY IS NORMAL



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## Some overarching features..

rigorous

competitive

“incubation”

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so, what are the implications?

- ⇒ Your professors, tutors, teaching assistants are really working on the frontier in their field.
- ⇒ Your peers are your asset. And so you are!
- ⇒ Breadth and depth: expect to be trained from all sides possible.
- ⇒ The common style is to “hatch” students.



## Master's

**“sprint”**

with some quick time-out during breaks

## PhD

**“marathon”**

with, typically, sprints in the beginning  
and in the end

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Nevertheless, it's a very *personal* journey.

so any practical tips?

# 1. Study.

- once school starts, it starts.
  - no such a thing as "minggu santai".
  - for those doing research-based master: make plan early, adjust accordingly along the way.
- find the best strategy that works for you, – be open to adjust often!
  - exercise or problem-sets heavy: practice-practice-practice
  - lots of reading and writing: active reading
  - need to familiarize with certain datasets or softwares?
- the Socratic method:
  - come prepared.
  - I know it's a lot of reading: at least the top 3 on the syllabus please, and the case studies.
  - synthesize and evaluate while you read: what, why, how, contribution/takeaway?

## 2. Study again.

- Study group
  - Try it out with several circles. Don't feel ashamed, or *ga enakan*, to choose which one you are more comfortable with.
  - What to do in study group: work on problem sets together, review materials, question each other, etc.
  - Most students benefit from having a *pacer*. So at least you can individually study, together.
- Office hours
  - Your professors and TAs are there to facilitate your learning as much as possible: kind of you are their customers.
  - It's amazing how many things you learn from questions raised in office hours.
  - There is no shame at all to go to office hours. It's quite the opposite actually.
- Do you have any special needs?
  - it's super routine for us! Communicate early and respectfully.

### 3. Be present

- Speak up
  - you are a valuable asset to the program, so yes, your opinion matters.
  - some classes give credits to participation.
  - ga usah merasa ga PD kalau bahasa inggrisnya belum medhog logat lokal 😊. – hey, we may still have that colonial bias?
  - be engaged, listen actively
- Networking!
  - one of the main values of your degree is the network you build through the program.

## 4. Nourish

- physically, mentally, spiritually
- when you feel/think that you cannot make progress
  - goal: **keep the machine warm**
  - kalau akarnya **bosen**: rehat yang stimulating, mis: jalan kaki, gambar, masak, dll.
  - kalau akarnya **overwhelmed**: coba metode kerja atau belajar yang berbeda, mis: doodling ide riset, post pemikiran di sosmed, ngobrol sama orang di luar lingkaran riset atau studi, dll.

## 5. Resources

There are plenty of resources on campus. Don't hesitate to use them.

Here are some examples.

- Physical healthcare
  - Go to the doctors if you don't feel well.
  - Some health insurances cover a lot! For example: physical therapy, acupuncture, all kinds of vaccines, dentist, ophthalmologist, women health clinic, etc.
- Mental health and counseling services
  - It's just like maintaining your physical health.
  - Ga dosa kok, hehhe.. dan ga harus nangis-nangis bombay dulu baru konseling.
- Career services
  - from giving feedback to your CVs to connecting you to alumni who share your interests.
- Campus' gym, campus' softwares, campus' server, campus' library, the list goes on and on.



## 6. Reach out

- Mentors
  - Keep in touch with those that have supported you.
  - Reach out to upper cohorts.
  - Reach out to scholars, alumni, colleagues who inspire you or you share interest with.
- Peers and your campus' ecosystem
  - Thrive with your cohort; reach out to other scholars.
- Community beyond your department
  - Hobby-oriented community is the easiest usually.
  - Be surprised :)
- Fellow Indonesians
  - Making jokes in Bahasa Indonesia while eating Indonesian food: real and pure happiness!
- Your family, friends, and loved ones back home.
  - No. 1 supporters! ♡ ♡

## 7. The world does not stop.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, despite it may feel you are living in a bubble called "Grad School", you are not in a controlled lab.

So things may happen beyond your control.

Adjust. You are doing your best. Keep going.

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Adjust. You are doing your best. Keep going.

That said, let us hold our judgement and be supportive to each other.

last but not least:

It's a **privilege** to have the chance to study at the best education institutions in the world.

Ada banyak rekan-rekan kita yang bukan kalah pintar, atau berprestasi, justru bisa jadi lebih pintar, lebih berbakat, lebih rajin, dan bisa beri manfaat di luar dirinya yang sangat besar.

Tapi kenyataanya kita di sini. So better make the best out of it.

selamat berlayar! 😊

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## Some resources:

- The Hidden Curriculum: podcast about non-obvious aspects of academic life in economics. [on Spotify](#)
- Some lists of list of podcasts (hehhe): [link](#), [link](#)
- On Imposter Syndrom:
  - [from University of Washington](#)
  - [an article on Nature.com](#)
  - [from University of Michigan](#)
- How to read scientific or academic papers:
  - [from ScienceMag](#)
  - <https://web.stanford.edu/class/ee384m/Handouts/HowtoReadPaper.pdf>
  - [from an LSE's blog](#)