# CAMB Student Newsletter

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## In this issue



## Letter from the Editors

Dear CAMB Students, Faculty, and Alumni,

We are excited to share with you the May 2024 installment of the CAMB student Newsletter!

In this month's issue, we offer some advice to the incoming 2024 matriculants on getting started in a PhD program and settling into Philadelphia. We also catch up with CAMB Cancer Biology alumnus Dr. Inyoung Lee for a discussion about his current job as a Licensing Officer at the Penn Center for Innovation. Finally, we surveyed the CAMB community for an open discussion about preparing for and moving on from preliminary exams, and how to avoid falling into a third year slump.

For additional articles, past publications, and to learn more about the CAMB Student Newsletter team, visit our blog at cambnewsletter.wix.com/blog or follow us on Twitter at **@CambNewsletter.** Current students interested in contributing to the CAMB Student Newsletter can reach out to jamesges@pennmedicine.upenn.edu and/or klabella@pennmedicine.upenn.edu.

Sincerely,
James Gesualdi, Kay Labella, and Ariana Majer
Editors-in-Chief

Special Interest

# Year Zero: Advice on Getting Started in Grad School

Kay Labella

*Peer Edited by James Gesualdi*

*As the spring turns to summer, CAMB welcomes its newest cohort of incoming students. While they haven't arrived on campus just yet, they'll spend the next few months preparing to set out on a lengthy, arduous, exciting journey. To give them a hand, current CAMBers chimed in with their best advice on housing, rotations, and anything else they might need to start grad school off strong.*

**On finding housing and roommates:**

Some students meet their future roommates during recruitment weekends. Others seek them out via Penn's Off-Campus housing site, the Annual Off-Campus Virtual Housing Fair, or the BGS Slack.

For the apartments themselves, it's helpful to ask yourself a few questions first. Are you looking for a more residential area, or is the heart of the city more your vibe? Do you want to live in a row home, a highrise, or something in between? What sort of transportation and local shops do you want access to? How close do you want to be to campus? Do you want to live alone, or share your space – and if so, with how many people?

After you've considered those factors, it may be helpful to visit Philly (if that's feasible) to get a feel for the neighborhoods around campus. Commonly, students live in the University City or Grad Hospital areas, but there's the whole of Philly to explore! If a visit isn't in the cards, or if you're looking for an extra hand in the process, you can reach out to a real estate agent to help you find apartments that suit your tastes; usually, their fee is paid by the leasing company when you sign, so you won't have to pay for their services! Websites like Apartments.com and the Penn Off-Campus Housing site are also great places to find recent listings. Most units will be up for rent anywhere between 1 to 3 months prior to a potential move in date, so if you're starting in August, May to July will be the prime time to search out your future home!

If you're looking to furnish your apartment on a budget, start with the essentials and go slow! Philly is full of students who will, at various points, be looking to get rid of all sorts of furniture. CAMB students will advertise items they're hoping to part with on the listserv as well as through Slack. Also, keep an eye on your favorite local seller app (like Facebook Marketplace) for whatever it is you need.

**On rotations:**

Take time before coming to Penn to research PIs you might be interested in working with, but also be receptive to new ideas. There will be a plethora of chalk talks and poster presentations in your first few weeks that might lead you to a rotation you might not have expected! Also take into consideration the lab environment as you make your list. Factors like the lab size and age, PI availability and involvement, and if you are working solo or with any senior lab personnel will have a significant impact on your graduate experience. As one student put it, "Everyone is different and you have to figure out what works best for you."

To get a healthy preview of the lab, reach out to both current students as well as those who rotated but didn't join. Current students can give you an overview of the environment and expectations. Learning why previous rotation students decided against joining – whether they simply liked a lab better, they felt they didn't mesh with the environment, other lab members, or the PI, or they had a genuinely negative experience – will help inform your decision to reach out to a PI to inquire about a potential rotation.

Over the course of a rotation, clear communication is key to set up healthy boundaries and ensure all your work gets done without excessive stress. Make sure your PI and/or postdoc is aware of your class schedule, especially upcoming exams or presentations that you'll need to dedicate significant time to, so that you can plan experiments around it. Ask and understand up front what the expectations are for time spent in the lab, how often you'll meet with your PI, and if you'll need to present.

The goal of a rotation is to determine if a lab can be home for the next five or so years. Don't worry about producing a full paper's worth of data. Be present and engaged, but focus on the fit and not the feats.

**On questions to ask before deciding on a rotation:**

As you're planning your rotation, consider what you value most in a mentor and a lab environment. Try and envision what you are hoping for in your graduate school experience. Make time to seek answers from your fellow students and PIs whose labs you're interested in. The column to the right lists a few things to reflect on before and during a rotation to get you started.

**On starting a life in a new city while managing the expectations of your rotation and classes:**

Give yourself time, and give yourself a break. Grad school is a big adjustment, and it might be a little challenging for a bit with all the changes going on. If you're able to, move to the area a little bit before classes start so you can get settled into a routine. That means finding where the grocery store and pharmacy are, getting on a regular sleep schedule, getting set up with any doctors or dentists, and anything else you need to maintain a healthy and happy life.

**Questions for other students:**

- How is the mentorship style?
- Is it easy to schedule a meeting with the PI?
- What are the typical "working hours" of the lab?
- Does the PI encourage grad students to present at conferences?
- Does the PI encourage students to apply for fellowships?
- Are you happy with your project?
- What is your relationship like with your PI?
- Would you recommend this lab as a thesis lab? Why?
- What advice would you give to someone entering the lab?
- How does the PI handle setbacks or difficulties with your project?
- How does the PI respond to and resolve disagreements and conflict in the lab?
- Are there ways you feel your PI could improve as a mentor? If so, how?

**Questions for the PI:**

- Are students partnered with a more senior person in the lab?
- Does the PI see themself staying at Penn for the next 5 or so years?
- How many thesis students will the PI accept?
- Are there students who have previously graduated from the lab? What are they doing now?
- Are there certain career paths that the lab might prepare someone for better than other career paths?
- Is the PI supportive of career paths outside of academia?

**Questions to ask yourself:**

- What kind of work-life balance do you want to keep?
- How often are you willing to stay late in lab?
- Would you be willing to come in on the weekends frequently if that is an expected part of a lab's culture?
- What other parts of your life are you balancing with graduate school?
- Do you prefer a smaller or larger lab environment?

If, like your author, it's been a while since you took any classes, don't just dive in headfirst and expect to remember every single biochemical pathway you studied in undergrad. Take some time to refresh your memory via YouTube or relevant journal articles. Find lectures to connect those topics to work being done in your field – and enjoy the free food, while you're at it! And don't feel shy about leaning on your cohort! They're your team, and you will all be able to help one another, whether it's buckling down to study, reminding each other to take a break, or commiserating about a late-running experiment.

While you should, of course, be attentive in class and strive to bring your best, absolve yourself of the expectation of perfection. Each class contains a plethora of pertinent and useful information, and shouldn't be treated flippantly, but your ability as a grad student and worth as a scientist doesn't hinge on the grades you're awarded at the end of each semester.

**On making friends:**

Making friends as an adult, especially an adult in grad school, is hard. We're all living a life in close proximity to each other with what ought to be a similar interest in the biomedical sciences, but many of us are also at vastly different points in our lives. Some folks are coming straight from undergrad, while others have taken one or two or five years off to work or get a master's or other degree or certification. Luckily, CAMB and all of its subprograms put on regular events to help bring people together, and student groups can add to that social calendar. Keep an eye on your email for anything that might pique your interest. Take some time to peruse the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GAPSA) newsletter each week for their offerings like discounted theater tickets at the Kimmel Center and other budget-friendly events and activities both on campus and around town.

Don't forget to check in on life outside of the Penn campus, too! Philly is absolutely full of amazing events, recreational sports leagues, dance studios, gardens, hobbyist conventions, game nights, and much more where people can gather, chat, and make friends. Putting yourself out there is hard, but you never know who you might meet!

**Anything else?**

Don't forget to breathe and celebrate. You made it into grad school! Remember to take breaks, give yourself some grace, and have fun :)

**Resources for Students:**

- Penn's Off-Campus Housing: https://offcampushousing.upenn.edu/
- Graduate Student Center: https://gsc.upenn.edu/
- Graduate and Professional Student Association: https://www.gapsa.upenn.edu/
- Biomedical Graduate Student Association: https://www.med.upenn.edu/bgsa/
- Wellness @ Penn: https://wellness.upenn.edu/
- Penn recreation: https://recreation.upenn.edu/index.aspx
- Off-campus virtual housing fair: https://upenn.vfairs.com
- GET-UP: https://getup-uaw.org/



# Alumni Spotlight
# Dr. Inyoung Lee

Ariana Majer
*Peer Edited by Nivitha Murali*

*Dr. Inyoung Lee*

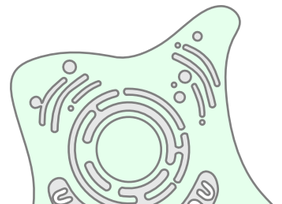
*Navigating the job market while finishing up your thesis can be difficult, especially if you are interested in opportunities outside of academia. The decision to leave the ivory tower can feel overwhelming, and getting your foot in the door elsewhere can be challenging. If you are considering alternative career paths, you probably have questions about how to find a job and how to effectively market the skills you learned during your PhD.*

*In this article, we hope to provide answers to some of those questions. We had the pleasure of speaking with CAMB alumnus Dr. Inyoung Lee about his current position as a Licensing Officer at the Penn Center for Innovation. Dr. Lee graduated from CAMB Cancer Biology in spring 2023 after completing his doctoral work in the lab of Dr. Todd Ridky. Dr. Lee began working for the Penn Center for Innovation shortly after graduation, and he was kind enough to discuss the ins and outs of life after his PhD and provide some insight into the job search process and leaving academia.*

**What does your position entail, and what is your day-to-day like?**

At the Penn Center for Innovation, what we do is take basic sciences or any research that arises from the university, and when a researcher discloses their idea, we look at whether it's patentable and whether there's any commercial potential to it. Once we figure that out, the organization helps with the patenting and then also helps with finding commercial partners that could move the project forward.

As a licensing officer, I work with the researchers—it could be postdocs, students, faculty—primarily from the school of medicine… My job is multifaceted. I have to work with patent attorneys, I work with the marketing team, I work with the actual scientists in evaluating the science [to determine whether their idea can be patented and could result in a real product]. So my day-to-day looks different every day. Some days I'll be working with the scientists and looking at whether there's real science there that can be translated into a product, and then other days I'll be working with the contracts team to see how we could work with the product and either do licensing, startups, look for other commercial partners who would fund that study, etc. Or I could also look at the legal side of things. Patenting is very complicated. Oftentimes, I have to facilitate the conversation between attorneys and scientists so that nothing is being lost in translation. I also work directly with companies. I talk to the business personnel, the CEOs, or other investment groups like venture capital to decide whether they want to take on the technology and develop it further.



**When in your PhD did you start looking for jobs?**

I started my last year, and in terms of finding a job I knew that I wanted to move away from the bench and start looking at other non-academic opportunities but also wanted to be adjacent to science, so I guess my trajectory started to take place about a year out [from defending]. With the job market right now, I think it is probably a lot safer to start looking about a year in advance, especially if you are looking for a non-academic/ non-postdoc jobs.

**How was your experience job searching while preparing to defend and then finishing up your thesis project?**

It was stressful. I think you need to make that conscious decision to carve some time out to do your job searching. Especially now if you are looking into biotech or pharma. They have cut a lot of jobs lately, so there isn't a huge availability, so I think you should probably start your search earlier and have dedicated time for doing that because otherwise it's very stressful if you're 3-4 months out from defending and you're kind of scrambling.

**What were your considerations in looking for jobs? How did you find out about your current position at the Penn Center for Innovation?**

So I found out about my job by looking on the Penn website. There's a Workday job list, so I just combed through that. But the factors that I considered were I knew that I didn't want to be at the bench but I knew that I still wanted to be adjacent to science and also help with moving the science forward—taking the basic sciences forward and making it translational. I was really focused on a job that could do that, and then this job popped up on the Workday job list and I just decided that it was perfect so I decided to apply for it. I think I got lucky, to be honest.

**Do you have any advice for current students considering a similar career path?**

Getting the foot in the door is probably the hardest when you are doing a business development–related job or biotech or pharma, so I wish I had done more. If there are internship opportunities, looking at those internship opportunities prior to graduating—like doing it 4th or 5th year while doing your thesis—I think that would be a good idea to just start getting your foot in the door because I've been looking for jobs like mine and a lot of the job descriptions were 3–5 years of experience and not many grad students have that, obviously, so I think that whatever opportunity you get try to take it, especially if you are trying to go into business development. And in terms of internships, I wish I had done that.

**What did you do to prepare for job interviews in general, and specifically the interview for Penn Center for Innovation?**

Basically, I just searched on Google the top common interview questions and then I started playing around with those. A lot of your interview answers should be story-oriented, so if it's a question like 'tell me about a hard time' or 'tell me about a difficult situation,' those you have to have a good story describing the situation, how you overcame that situation, and then what you learned from it. So having multiple stories that you can use to answer different questions would be my best advice. And be pretty flexible with the stories you have. The same story can be used for multiple answers. So as long as you have a nice toolbox of stories you can kind of deploy them depending on the questions, and you don't always have to answer the same question with the same answer.

**What things did you learn during your PhD that are helpful in your current role?**

I think often when we do a PhD we just think, 'Oh, we're just learning how to do science,' like the hard skills of doing experiments, planning experiments, doing flow cytometry, doing bioinformatics, etc. Those are all very important skills, obviously, but I think often we don't realize how many soft skills we develop as we do our PhD. We develop how to do project management, we learn how to present, we learn how to write clearly, we learn how to ask the right questions. These are all very important skills that we don't often market to future employers, so I think that making sure to recognize what soft skills you developed during your PhD and knowing how to put that down on a resume is very important. Doing a PhD is not just learning how to gavage a mouse. It's learning how to tackle a difficult question using different methods, so really gas yourself up in that regard.

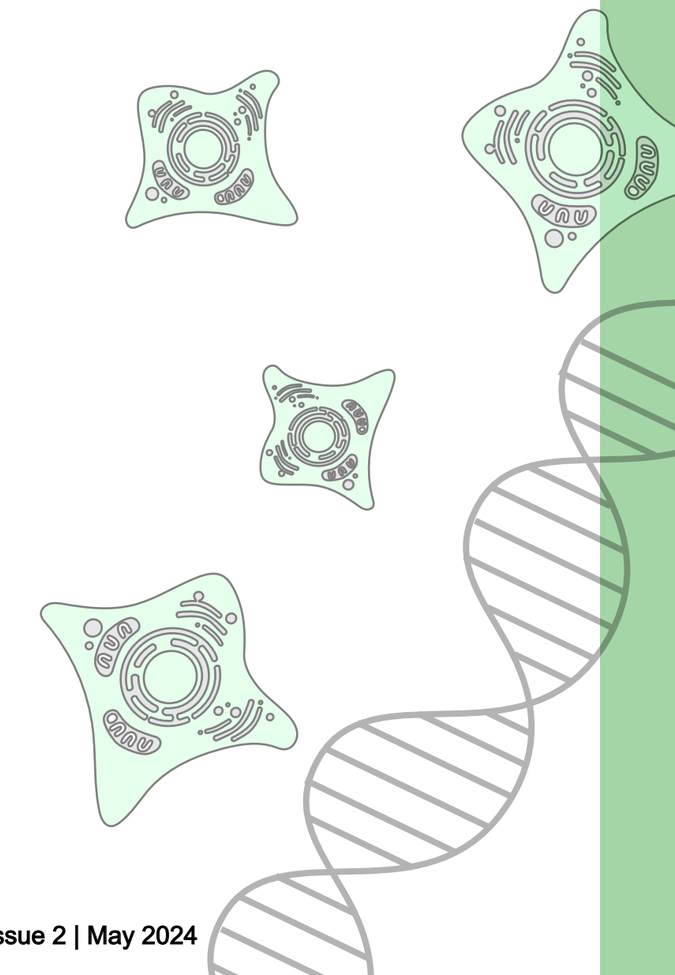
**How was your transition from graduate school to a role outside of academia? Do you have any regrets about leaving research?**

Definitely no regrets leaving research because I kind of knew that [I wanted to leave] towards the last few years of my PhD. The transition as a whole, I found it to be really fun actually just because I got to use my scientific knowledge in a completely different environment and I was still learning, I am still learning so much. I'm going to say that there are more things that I don't know than I do know in this field right now, but I think that going in with a learning attitude really helps. The transition in terms of the actual work was difficult because I don't know this field; I spent six years doing science and I know how to do that but now I'm in a totally different environment, but going in with a learning attitude I think really helped me because when there is something hard, when there is something that I don't know how to do, I took that as an opportunity to learn how to do that because that's going to be used in my career down the line. So I think just knowing that I'm learning something new helped me get through that difficult transition.

**Now that you've been on the other side of grad school for about a year now, do you have any words of wisdom for current graduate students?**

Doing a PhD is a major accomplishment. I feel like often times as grad students we are hard on ourselves, and I want current grad students to realize that this [the PhD] is hard and it's going to take a lot of your time and effort but there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

*If you're interested in a similar career path or have additional questions for Dr. Lee, feel free to connect with him via email at inylee@upenn.edu*



# Special Interest:
# Perspectives on Prelim-ing

James Gesualdi
*Peer Edited by Kay Labella*

*Every spring as a new cohort of CAMBers faces the daunting preliminary exam, senior students do their best to offer advice on proposals, presentations, and study strategies. This is an important part of graduate training for both parties, as second years develop their grant writing skills and older students get a chance to improve their mentoring ability.*

*But as any senior student could tell you, prelim exams bear down on you in a hurry and are in the past before you know it. After spending so many months getting ready for a scant two hour discussion, you can be left wondering about the overall purpose of the entire exercise. Or perhaps, the more haunting question, "What now?"*

*To put the prelim experience into perspective, we held an anonymous and informal discussion with qualified students of the CAMB community:*

**What was your experience with your prelim exam like? Would you say it generally went the way you expected it to?**

- It went easier than I expected.
- Overall the exam itself went well. My PI was not the most supportive during the process, and I think that generated a lot of extra stress in the months leading up to my exam. However, my examiners were generally kind and forgiving, and I did feel like things went a little better than anticipated.
- I was fortunate to have a lot of support from my lab (i.e. they urged me to practice multiple times in lab meeting, or my PI read any documents I sent his way). I think this support made all the difference in encouraging me to think out the different motivations, expectations, and pitfalls of each experiment. As a result, I was not stressed about passing at all going into the exam, which led to a really fun and relaxed conversation during the actual defense. From what I noticed, it seemed like the students that struggled either didn't ask their lab/peers for help or their lab failed them in not offering to help/effectively helping.
- Overall it was about what I expected. The committee asked reasonable questions and I think were truly interested in helping me make sure that I understood my project and goals. I think a big thing that students should accept is that you can't possibly know everything, especially only after a year in a specific field. With that in mind, I think it is okay to tell your committee that you don't know something.
- The prep and built up was way more intense than the actual event.
- Yes, with the exception that I got lucky and my exam committee was straightforward.
- Broadly, my prelim didn't go the way I expected, but also wasn't a disaster by any means. I was able to give my presentation the way I had practiced. I was not asked many of the kinds of questions I had anticipated based on the research I did on my committee members, so I had to think on my feet more than expected. I also had a somewhat adversarial person on my committee that made it a more uncomfortable experience. Everything that I had practiced, though, went well.
- I think I spent so much time thinking about my project that I lost sight of what base of knowledge most people are starting from. We were warned this would happen at the beginning, but I think this is kind of unavoidable given that you need to spend so much time thinking about your project.

**Besides practicing your talk, how did you prepare – mentally, physically, or otherwise – for your prelim presentation?**

- I read a lot of papers and took good notes the whole semester leading up to the prelim so I knew my topic well.
- I asked friends who both were and were not in my field to ask me any question they could think of to try to poke holes in my project and see how Ii would deal with it. I also looked into the scientific backgrounds of my examiners to anticipate those questions. The day before my exam, I also did very minimal practicing/reading, just so I would have a chance to rest rather than cramming any last info.
- This might fall in the realm of practicing, but I did mock Q&A sessions with my lab and peers, which really helped me get a sense of what questions people might key in on, and identified any weak spots in my knowledge that I could amend before the actual exam. Other than that, I made an effort to not spend all my free time stress-writing (a.k.a. staring at a blank page for an hour) and went to the gym when I hit a writer's block.
- I discussed my project with labmates and friends and tried to think about potential questions that I could be asked and prepare for them. For example, I would make sure I knew the details of the different experimental techniques I was proposing using.
- Lots of sleeping and spending time outside.
- Listened to a lot of show tunes. Give 'em the 'ole razzle dazzle.
- I read up on the work of my committee members and tried to think about my project through the lenses of their work – one of them worked a lot with T cells, for example, so I thought about and wrote out some information about how T cells were related to what I studied. This didn't actually end up being terribly useful, but it helped me feel better in the lead-up. Other than that, I took a lot of time away from the bench in the lead-up to my prelim and focused on taking care of myself.
- Making sure that I was putting my best foot forward and not letting myself get anxious or deprive myself of sleep and trusting that I would be ready when the time came.

**Was going through the prelim process helpful for thinking about your thesis project? Were you able to use your proposal for any later writing tasks?**

- Yes, and I used most of the proposal for my F31 grant. It's also helpful to have an abstract handy for posters.
- Yes. It helped me organize a timeline/plan and also forced me to do a very thorough literature review to help me fit my project into the broader field. My prelim was the basis for an F31 grant (although I'll have to resubmit in the summer).
- Yes, I was lucky enough that my proposal for my F31 ended up on the same project, but I think the most helpful part was in learning how to think about grants/the people who will read your grants. So even though my project was the same, I ended up still rewriting most of it after thinking about the document from the POV of the review counsel.
- Overall yes, and I turned my proposal into a F30.
- Sort of, I am doing some of it and not others. It was not the most realistic experience based on the constraints but it did make me do a lot of reading which has been helpful.

- My thesis project is only tertiarily related, but preparing helped me think about experiments and the literature differently.

- It definitely forced me to think very critically about my project in both short- and long-term ways. I've built off my project extensively and some of the feedback I got through the prelim process was important to that. My original aims page has also formed the basis/groundwork for two T32 applications.

- I did not find the prelim process helpful for anything besides prelims. I think that the format is a little bit too constrained/specific. For instance, to make my project fit neatly into the prelim format I had to overemphasize parts of it I didn't plan on pursuing yet and underemphasize parts of it I was actively planning to pursue solely for the purpose of avoiding codependent aims.

**Did you find the feedback from your prelim committee helpful? Did any faculty from your prelim committee end up on your thesis committee?**

- I received minimal feedback and none of the faculty ended up on my thesis committee.

- Yes, the feedback I received were all fair points and aspects I knew I needed extra work on. One person on my prelim committee did end up on my thesis committee.

- The feedback was sparse but I'm not complaining because it was overall very positive. Yes, the same person I asked to be the head of my prelim committee is the head of my thesis committee.

- Honestly, most of the feedback I did not find useful. Some thoughts and feedback were helpful. Yes, the committee helped me identify members who I felt would (and would not) be a good fit for my thesis committee.

- Not particularly helpful information. None of them are on my thesis committee.

- Yes and yes.

- Some of it was useful and challenged me to think about my project in a new way. I also had one faculty member from my prelim committee join my thesis committee because his feedback and expertise were both very helpful.

- Yes, I found most of the feedback helpful and one of my committee members did end up on my thesis committee. I think that if I had to redo prelims again the feedback would have made it much easier than the first time around. That being said, the feedback was mostly not on the direction of my project and so didn't really impact the experiments I did going forward.

**How did you reward yourself for getting through your prelim exam?**

- I sat outside in the sun drinking mimosas while waiting for the call.

- I went to dinner that night and went on a short vacation to Toronto shortly afterwards.

- My lab was nice enough to get me ice cream! After I got my result, I went home and took a nap.

- Vacation.

- Nachos and Margaritas.

- Got a bottle of Johnnie Walker Blue Label.

- Had a good cry when Sunny called to say I passed, and then treated myself a bit extra for a few months.

- Taking time away from the lab and going on vacation.

**Did you feel differently in lab after qualifying? Why or why not?**

- Not really, I continued doing the same research. It was just nice to be done with classwork and other distractions.



- I think there's definitely a sense of relief and pride for the few months following finishing the prelim. Although now that more time has gone by, passing the prelim becomes less and less of a "benchmark" for ongoing progress in the lab. I've definitely had to rely on other self-assigned achievements to feel like things are still progressing well.

- Yes, I had been challenged to think in a very different way through this process, and it made me more confident in my critical thinking abilities as well as depth of knowledge in the field.

- I felt a big weight lifted off of my shoulders. Looking back, it really isn't that bad. As long as you've been working hard in the lab, doing reading, and thinking about your project I think you don't have to worry. The committee just wants to make sure you are prepared to a certain extent and I can't imagine any of the students I know having an issue with that aspect.

- Not as a member, but I felt more relaxed.

- Suffered from a post-prelim slump. Little bit of whiplash after getting heavily myopic about the exam.

- Not particularly. I changed my email signature to "PhD Candidate" instead of "PhD student" but that was the biggest change lab-wise. It's kind of like having a big birthday – a process has occurred, but you're still fundamentally the same person in roughly the same situation.

- Nope, I thought of prelims mostly as a hoop to jump through/requirement to get through and not as an evaluation of my abilities as a scientist.

**Did your PI develop increased expectations of you after your prelim exam?**

- No (x 5)

- I think my PI had been pretty appropriate in his expectations for each level of student. That being said, I think we refine our abilities in the process, so as a result, his expectations increase accordingly.

- No. In my opinion the prelim seems like a bit of a formality and the PI just expected that I would pass without any issues.

- My PI elevated their expectations for my data reporting, but that was mostly correlated with my increased data output. I also became a more senior student and so got a little more leeway and became more self-directed, and was asked to take on mentorship responsibilities.

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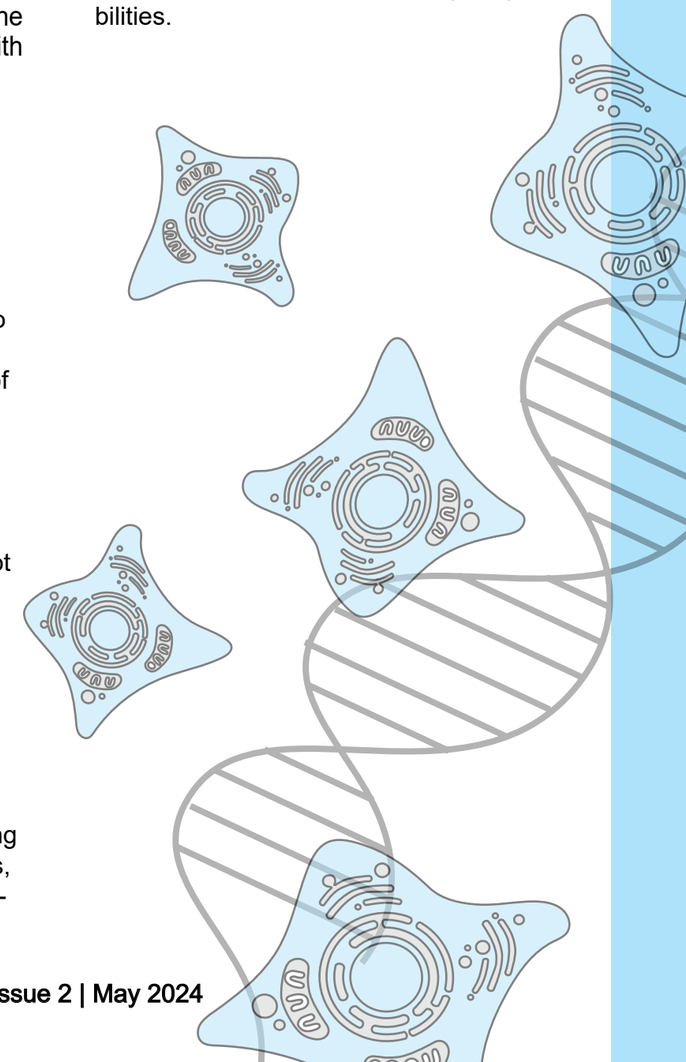


**How has your post-prelim career felt different?**

- Before the prelim, there was less pressure to produce a lot of data, especially since we were still juggling coursework. However, being in the lab full time does put more pressure to be productive and there's less external reinforcement that things are going well (of course, this will vary from PI to PI).

- I feel more capable about things like writing grants, and intelligently communicating with others about my (or their) science. I have also felt a shift from being a junior student to a more senior student and stepping into the mentor role. I've definitely taken on more responsibilities over time, which is natural. With each new task I accomplish, I feel ready to try something new or add more to my plate.

- Now what feels different is the main checkpoint that I am working towards is committee meetings/defending rather than the prelim. I think the thesis committee is extremely different from the prelim, which took me a little while to appreciate. The thesis committee is not out to get you – they are really there to help and support you.

- More relaxed and like I am in control of my project and time here.

- More in flux, more dynamic.

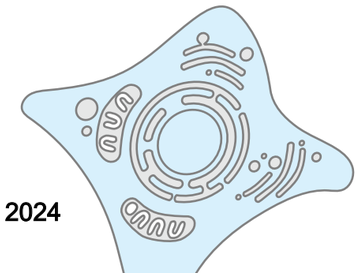
- Third year slump is real. There's a lot more "feast or famine" as far as science goes – sometimes I'm overwhelmed with everything I have to do, and sometimes I'm twiddling my thumbs. Things are also a lot less broken up since I don't have classes and my next big benchmark is just my eventual thesis/defense. I guess I really just feel more like somebody with a job than I do a student, which has pros and cons. I know this sounds kinda negative overall but I am genuinely happier overall being on the other side of prelims. You get to just be a person.

- It has not felt particularly different

*We would like to thank the CAMBers that took the time to respond to our survey.*

*Overall, we can all agree that it is nice to have your qualifying exams in the rear-view, but you then enter a phase of your PhD in which you must be more self-directed. This can sometimes be a difficult adjustment during your third year and beyond. Depending on your funding situation, a good way to utilize your momentum after qualifying can be to apply for an NRSA or F31 grant from the NIH as discussed above. These applications require many more documents than the prelim exam, but the format of the research statement itself is similar.*

*As a general rule of thumb, try to select your thesis committee as soon as possible and schedule your first meeting within 6 months of your prelim. Once you are qualified, your committee meetings become your checkpoints as you get closer to your defense, so take them seriously and do your best to get as much insight from your committee as possible.*





# Thank you for reading.

For any questions, comments, concerns, or if you're interested in joining our team, please feel free to contact us at:
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## Meet our team