

# Grad student explains the daily grind of school

Ryan Bennett shares his experience as a meteorology graduate student

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After graduating in spring 2012, FSU student Ryan Bennett decided to continue his studies at his alma mater in the graduate meteorology department.

"I already knew the faculty and I already knew a lot of the people applying to the program," said Bennett. "I'd already been here for four years for undergrad, so staying another two and a half years doesn't make a big difference."

In the field of meteorology, there are several options available to prospective employees after earning a degree, such as broadcast, working for a private company or continuing research in academia.

"I tried broadcast—it wasn't my thing," said Bennett. "It's been a passion of mine to work with something earth science related. The only logical way is grad school. The companies I would want to work for won't hire you without grad school."

Bennett isn't completely sure where his studies will take him, but he sees graduate school as a time to learn and grow.

"I knew it was more feasible to stay in school than to take a year or two off to find out exactly what I want to do," said Bennett. "I have no idea where I'll end up as a professional."

FSU's meteorology graduate program is one of the most comprehensive programs in the southern United States, and encompasses four different areas of meteorology study: dynamical, physical, synoptic and climatology. Students are required to take two courses in each subject, and do research projects in all of them.

"Each of my classes has an end of the semester project," said Bennett. "The presentation is worth 50 percent of your grade. I'm taking three classes from three different fields, and they all have

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individual research, computational and programming.

They're related because they're all meteorology, but they're different."

Compared to the traditional test-heavy workload in many undergraduate classes, Bennett explains graduate school projects are more independent and require effort outside of a textbook.

In undergrad, we had like three homework assignments a week, but now it's like one a month, but it's not on the same scale," said Bennett. "It's more like a mini research project. I haven't had any exams yet, either, but by this time in undergrad, there would have already been exams."

Bennett says the relationship with professors differs on the graduate level. The class sizes are smaller and the students are more serious about learning.

"My grad classes, the smallest has six people," said Bennett. "Undergrad classes had 40, 50, 100 people. So the class sizes are definitely different. And the professors treat you differently. It's more one-on-one, research-based conversation. They ask you what you're interested in and help you get there. They make more of a conscious effort to be there for us than they are for undergrad. It's more of a personal relation than a teacher-student relation type thing."

Ultimately, Bennett is pleased with his decision to continue graduate school at FSU and plans to pursue a doctorate degree.

"Those connections I made in undergrad definitely helped, and they've been expanded more than in the four years here," said Bennett.

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