Medium Term Career Development:
Things to Think About Before You Graduate

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Collaborate

- If nobody will work with you on your brilliant idea, don't bother
- Your advisor needs to buy into your work
- Work with other universities or research labs if you can
    - o Increases visibility
        - More people talking about your research
        - Meet new people
        - Potential letter writers
- If you are the first author, there's almost no difference between having one other author or three other authors
    - o Consider changing your last name

Measure your Productivity When There Isn't a Deadline

- Are you able to focus when there's no deadline forcing you to be productive?
- Do you find yourself procrastinating instead of making progress on your research?
- Are you excited about your research?

Prove to your advisor that you don't need him/her

- If your advisor doesn't think you can survive on your own, it is very obvious in the recommendation letter
- In the year before you go on the market, conceive of and write a paper on your own
  o A good exercise to prove to yourself, and your advisor that you can do this
  o Only do this at the END of your graduate career --- at the beginning, you should work as closely with your advisor as possible

Ignore your advisor's advice

- Taking career advice from your advisor can be dangerous
  - o Most advisors have not spent significant time outside of academia
  - o It is a fundamental human trait that people want to believe they made the right decision
    - At some point, your advisor chose to become an academic
    - Your advisor is thus biased towards academia

Should you choose academia?

- Do you view the opportunity to teach undergraduates as a privilege (and not a burden)?
- Do you want to spin off a company based on your research?
- Do you want to do non-applied and/or risky research?

Keep in mind

- Tenure is overrated
- More access to developers outside of academia
- More access to equipment outside of academia
- More access to data outside of academia