

Master's Degree: An Untapped Fountain of Self-Development

It was nearing the end of my last semester here at UNBC and I had yet to figure out what I wanted to do following the completion of my degree. Pursuing a master's is something that I had not put much thought into because I was convinced that this type of degree was something that required a high skill set. Yes, I had research experience – and quite a lot of it – but a master's, in my mind, was so much more than just research and the mere thought of a thesis was very intimidating. But I knew that I needed to make my decision sooner rather than later as time was steadily running out. Having found myself unsure on how to proceed, I thought of a friend of mine who had just recently completed his master's from UNBC and I sought his advice.

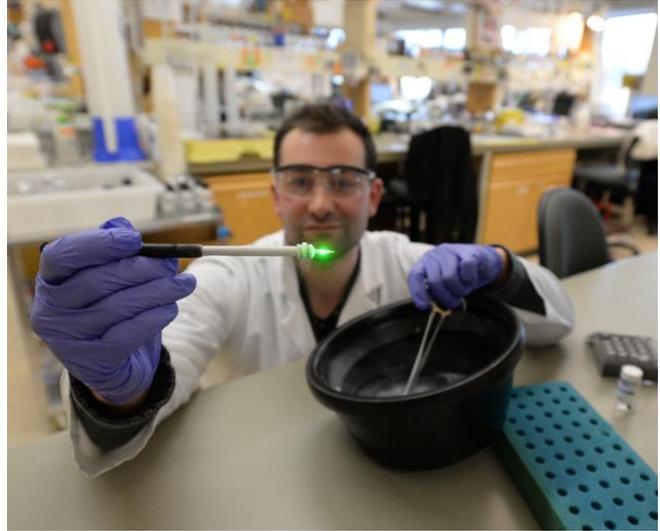


Corbin Black, a recent UNBC alumni of the Rader lab had just secured an amazing opportunity to pursue his PhD at McGill University, in an X-ray crystallography lab. During his time in his master's, he was very involved in the research community beyond his studies and having seen all of that, I wanted to learn more about his experience with graduate studies. Further, I was looking to him to answer the question of not only why pursue a master's degree, but more importantly, *why a master's degree at UNBC?*

Prior to deciding to pursue a master's, Black was undecided over what he wanted to do career-wise. "When I was finished with my undergrad, I was left with a choice of what to do – which I thought was dentistry. After spending a lot of hours shadowing dentists however, I realized that it wasn't for me". Left reeling on what his next steps were, he decided to draw on his research experience from his undergraduate studies and pursue a master's degree. Something he reflects back on and is happy he did. "Going in, I thought it was a perfect choice because [a master's] wasn't too much of a commitment, and at the end of it, I could still do basically anything".

He's even more grateful for choosing to do it here at UNBC because of the rich research community at this university. In his opinion, one of the huge advantages of UNBC as a research institution was the impressive number of dedicated professors that are well versed in a large variety of research areas. More interestingly, the vast amount of collaborations amongst departments is something that while it doesn't happen much, is an area for lots of exploration and is filled with boundless opportunities for upcoming graduate students.

In terms of required skillsets, while it does help to have some prior research experience, a master's degree is less about the project, and more about personal development, he explains. "What a master's degree signifies, is the ability to do and pursue an independent project with all of the management, time allocation, and due diligence that is required to successfully complete the degree. And at the end of it all, being able to reasonably explain and support the various decisions made during that project when you defend the thesis". Reflecting back, he sees the amount of skill he has developed and has used to evolve himself, making him a more goal and detail-oriented person. He believes that a



master's has unmeasurable amounts of benefits to offer those willing to step up to the challenge, "and it's something that I would encourage anybody to do. These skills that you gain are applicable to all aspects of your life, regardless of what field you decide to pursue". – *Raliat Abioye, Prince George BC.*