



Feb/Mar 2023 Newsletter

At PhD Balance, we are continuing to strive toward creating a platform where all graduate students can share their stories, experiences, and accomplishments. This March we've celebrated PhD Balance's 5th Birthday! Over the past five years we have found joy in our shared appreciation of memes, quotes, and experiences as graduate students, and we hope to continue for many more. It's fitting that this milestone coincides with Women's History Month, as we are woman-founded and (currently) woman-led. And we know that it is even more important to lift up the voices that have for so long been marginalized in our communities.

In 2020, we chose, along with other graduate student and mental health-focused organizations of the time, to form the IDEALs team: Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, Leadership. The role of the IDEALs team initially oversaw the addition of inclusive and respectful language, led projects directed at supporting the community, and updated the resources on our website. This group operated as a team set apart from the rest of the PhD Balance organization and was a checkpoint through which most of our content flowed. Now, we aim to follow some of the more recent research and insight into DEI operations from other organizations to understand how to best move forward with our IDEALs team, making the work of diversity and inclusion integrated into each step of our content creation and engagement. This is an important step in our ongoing education.

Celebrate our birthday with us by sending us your wins during graduate school. Have you submitted your first publication? Had a successful meeting with your advisor? Participated in strike action? If you have a story to share, please send it in. We are excited to hear from you.

In this joint newsletter, we celebrate Black History Month, Women's History Month, and all the small wins by highlighting the stories from the wide breadth of our community. We will continue to strive to lift up these voices.

Take care,

Courtney Applewhite
PhD Balance President

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Story Showcase: Black History Month *by Laura Klask*
- The Founder's Corner *with Susanna L Harris*
- Story Showcase: Celebration *by Laura Klask*
- Featuring PhD Pets - submit yours for our next issue!

Speaking With, Not For

with founder *Susanna Harris*

PhD Balance was created with a single purpose in mind: to enable others to share their stories of dealing with mental illnesses in grad school. While our mission has expanded to encompass a wide range of topics across and beyond all areas of academia, we hold fast to the belief that nobody can tell their own story better than themselves.

Reflecting on Black History Month and the stories that have been shared by our Black community members, we remember that there is a world of difference between speaking **with** others and speaking **for** others. Maintaining these platforms and facilitating crucial conversations enable us to lift up the voices of the storytellers, and we work to respect the unique perspectives and agency of whoever accepts the offer to use our tools.

Over the years, we've had the honor to collaborate, overlap, and build alongside many amazing communities dedicated to supporting and uplifting Black academics. We encourage you this month and every month to follow, engage with, and the work of these organizations. If you need a few suggestions to get started:

- Black Women PhDs
- Sister Scholars
- Black Male PhDs
- Black In Chem
- Black in the Ivory

February was Black History Month in the U.S. and Canada. We want to use this space to dive into history a bit and to highlight some personal experiences and resources of BIPOC PhD students that you might find helpful and supporting! Check out our [BIPOC stories here](#).



In 1876, Dr Edward Bouchet was the first African American to receive a PhD from an American university.

Find some more details about him in the [post here](#).



Moving on to a very personal story, find out how Lizbeth Dávila-Santiago found her support network that accompanied her through the intense times of grad school and even greater loneliness caused by the pandemic.

Read Lizbeth's full [story here](#).

The Founder's Corner

with Susanna Harris

“How will you celebrate this win?”

My accountability coach loves to ask this anytime I tell her about an accomplishment from the past week. She also enjoys watching the discomfort flash across my face at the idea of giving me credit for something.

For as long as I can remember, I've struggled to complete tasks of all sizes; from tidying a room to writing my dissertation, I'd stall out just before the finish line. Over the last year and a half, my coach has helped me achieve personal and professional goals... and learn how to recognize myself for the effort I put in to reach them.

In contrast to the idea of withholding rewards to push ourselves forward, psychology tells us that we increase the likelihood of being successful again if we give ourselves a moment of congratulations. If I stopped giving my dogs praise or treats when they did what I asked, they would eventually lose all interest in trying.

Learning to celebrate wins of all sizes has been challenging but worthwhile. **So... what are *you* going to celebrate this month? Post it on social media and tag @PhD_Balance so we can help cheer you on!**

PhD Pets - Submit your cozy friends today!

We want to see your pets, plants, rocks, and all things cozy that helped you get through grad school! Use our Google Form to submit yours today! Pets will then be shared in our newsletter, just like the pets below!

[Click here to access the form!](#)

PhD Pets



Kitty the Dog

Donuts and dissertations go hand in hand. Kitty helped her person get through the PhD by stepping on her laptop when she worked too long and always having snacks nearby. - Ellen

PhD Pets



Oats

Oats is the snuggly-er of Courtney's two cats. He is most attentive when she's wearing her favorite succulent covered Oodie!

PhD Pets



Guinness

Guinness is extremely tuff and excellent at math. For example, he can tell the difference between a whole treat and one you broke in half to make “two.”

PhD Balance Birthday

March was the PhD Balance Birthday Month in which we turned 5! We want to dedicate some space to celebrate accomplishments and showcase some of YOUR academic and personal wins. Thank you for trusting us with your stories for so many years and sharing them with the community.



"And what history has taught me so far, is that you need to face each step ahead as a toddler. With excitement and courage despite your fear of the unknown." Sofia Raftopoulou shares her experiences of how to successfully navigate a PhD by communication and finding support. [Read here.](#)



There have been ups and downs in Kels's PhD journey for sure. However, as they state in their article, *"For every insight gained, there were... missteps. And that's okay—we're here to learn, right?"* Read the [story here.](#)



"Getting unlost in my PhD required accepting my bipolar disorder."

Evi describes how she not only learned technical and scientific skills in her PhD, but also to accept and manage her mental health. [Read here.](#)



Finally, we want to point you to an older GradChat episode with our guest, Erin Berlew. She goes into detail on how to define your individual PhD goals to make your PhD phase a success! [Find it here.](#)