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Mt Baker Snow School Intern

Megan Moran Western Washington University

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COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Internship Title: Mt B	aker Snow School		
Organization Worked F	or: Northwest Avalanche Cente	ər	
Student Name: Mega	an Moran		
Internship Dates:	2/17/20	5/21/20	
Faculty Advisor Name	Rebecca Bunn		
Department	ESCI		•

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STUDENT SIGNA	rure_Megar Moran
DATE:	0

Learning about Environmental Education and Snow Science Methods with NWAC's Mt Baker Snow School

Megan Moran

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INTRODUCTION

My internship with Northwest Avalanche Center's (NWAC) Mt Baker Snow School (MBSS) spanned from February to May of 2023. During my time at Mt Baker Snow School, I was able to engage in lots of hands-on learning opportunities, both for myself and the students I was leading. Through the primary scope of my internship, which was leading student field trips, I was able to combine snow science knowledge from my Western classes with tools and guidance provided by MBSS to facilitate a fast paced, hands-on learning environment and get students excited about our mountain systems in Whatcom County. During MBSS, I learned the processes of snowpack analysis, as well as how the snowpack interacts with forces like weather, snow algae blooms, and even our own recreation. To fully understand the scope of this material, my students and I engaged in a few different stations each day; snow water equivalency (SWE), snow profile analysis, snow algae education, and a station I taught which would range in topic from snowflake formation to watershed analysis depending on the group of students. This internship evolved from the original MBSS form into more generalized work, helping with tasks and events after field days finished. I used the knowledge I gained at MBSS to do practice

analyses in the backcountry on personal recreation days, as well as use programs such as ArcGIS Pro to help fine tune teaching materials, and even helped at the Snow to Sea science fair.

DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During the first half of my internship, my primary focus was being a group leader for the middle school science students from around Whatcom County. On these field trip days, I was charged with leading my group of 7-10 students through the activities of the day. This had a few different phases. First, getting my group properly outfitted for the weather by checking out snow gear like jackets, pants, boots, and goggles to students who needed them. This process was followed by showing the students how to put snowshoes on as a group and leading them through a game of snowshoe rock-paper-scissors so they could get used to walking. This part of the day included conversation of what kinds of animals have evolved similar adaptations to the snowshoes to help them thrive in alpine environments.

After preparing my students for the trek, I would lead them to our station area while talking about the kinds of animals they may have seen on their journey up, or about what the kind of weather we were having that day means for the snowpack. Once at the station area, I would lead my group around to the four different stations for the rest of the day. On any given day I would start at a different station, however there would always be a rotation including the Snow Profile, Snow-Water Equivalency, Snow Algae, and Independent Teaching stations.

The Snow Profile Station was taught by an NWAC outreach staff member who taught everyone how to perform hand hardness tests for snow stability, as well as how to identify layers in the snow and what these different kinds of layers meant for snowpack stability. For this, students would push on the snow with the force it would take to slightly bend their nose with their fist, then four fingers, then a single finger, then a pencil, and then a metal snow card. Whichever stage the snow moved at first was recorded in their field journals for each layer of the snowpack. This information was then used in the post trip activity. Following the snow profile, we then learned about snow-water equivalency at the SWE station from another NWAC staff member. This activity entailed helping the students to fill the field tubes with snow and weigh it using the spring scales as well as perform mental math of the weight of the snow divided by the volume to determine the SWE of the snowpack that day. After SWE, we would go to the snow algae station, where WWU students from the Living Snow Project lab would teach the students about what snow algae is and what the current state of knowledge is. The group would discuss and choose a hypothesis which was then tested. We tested it by melting the snow and using filters and magnifying glasses to try to find any algae in the snow at either the surface of the snow or the bottom of the snow pit that was dug (we did not find any during Snow School as algae is usually not present until springtime). Finally, I had the opportunity to teach my own lessons to my groups at the independent teaching station. Here, I enjoyed teaching the formation of snowflakes as well as how water moves from glaciers through a watershed, as well as things like environmental interactions. These independent lessons typically were comprised of an initial group discussion on the topic, starting with what they already knew about it, and then moved into questions and explanation, followed then by a hands-on group activity. I saw a lot of success in the activities, which included things like designing our own watershed and building it out of snow or making a large web-like human snowflake. Weaved throughout the day was the topic of snow safety and what sort of things to look for to ensure that they are recreating responsibly. I would wrap up the day with a discussion of the big topics from the day, and if there was extra time (which was rare) we would play an environmental interactions yarn web game and go around discussing how the different roles we were assigned all connected to each other and the snowpack. This first part of my internship was my favorite; I enjoyed teaching the students to like science and plan to pursue further environmental education.

In the later part of my internship, I was able to interact with the same groups of students when I helped monitor the Snow to Sea Science Fair that was run in cooperation with the Living Snow Project Lab. At the fair, the students had all chosen stations from MBSS and done projects on their topics. At this event, I primarily supervised the students in the main presentation room, listening to their project presentations and making sure the students were on task. I also got to lead a couple of groups on walks around the central campus and answer their questions about studying science in college. It was a great experience to reconnect with the students I had previously taught and see how their knowledge of the subjects had grown since they first attended Snow School. In addition to the Snow to Sea Science Fair, I helped refine lesson plan materials that MBSS instructors use on the post-trip lesson days in which MBSS staff go into the science classes of the students to discuss what we found at the mountain. I took the materials that were already in use and narrowed the scope a bit to make them more specified to our content. I also made them clearer for instructor use to ensure the same information was being given to each class and important details weren't forgotten. Additionally, I used ArcGIS Pro and Google Earth to calculate the surface area of Bagley Basin to be used in the post-trip lesson calculations. While I attempted ArcGIS Pro initially, I found that the surface area calculations were easier to perform when using Google Earth data, which is also more freely available to instructors who do not have ArcGIS Pro access.

While all these activities were taking place, I also was doing more in-depth practice of snow science being taught at MBSS in tandem with my WWU studies to create a deeper well of knowledge for teaching the content. This includes activities such as sampling snow algae for use in Dr. Khan's lab, digging snow pits to perform tests that were taught in the snow profile and SWE stations of MBSS, and doing additional research about various glacier systems around the world, including those in the North Cascades to better understand how different conditions impact snowpack stability.

OUTCOMES

My internship with Mt Baker Snow School did not produce any results that could be represented in charts or data. I gained many new skills throughout this experience that will carry over into the work I hope to do in my career, which I consider to be the deliverable in this situation. Since beginning my work with Mt Baker Snow School and the Northwest Avalanche Center, I have learned how to effectively manage a group educational setting. In running my groups during the field trips, I honed my skills in making new content accessible and fun for both the young age group of my students and the adult age group of the teachers and chaperones. While learning how to effectively teach environmental science content to a broad range of students, I also learned to manage a group. By the end, I led with respect, while maintaining a professional order while having fun, cultivating a positive learning environment that everyone can enjoy. This was further practiced at the Snow to Sea Science fair. Here, I got the gratification of seeing the same students again. Many remembered me and were excited to show me what they had learned. I got to practice giving positive feedback to students who were confident, and gentle encouragement to students who were shy. Seeing the confidence of students grow over the short presentation was a rewarding experience to walk away from the program with. I feel that this experience in leading educational groups has prepared me well to continue in the career path of environmental education.

In addition to learning how to provide environmental education to varying groups, I got to learn the content deeply myself. Coming out of this internship, I am confident that I would be able to perform a variety of snow science field tests. During my time with MBSS I got to be familiar with the hand hardness test, finding snowpack layers, identifying types of snowflakes, taking temperature measurements, measuring snow water equivalency, and collecting and storing different types of snow samples for later analysis. During these activities, I hypothesized about the events that may have occurred when snowflakes were made, what conditions form them, and analyzed what the temperature gradient means for snowpack stability. These skills in addition to the interpersonal skills I practiced by learning said skills in a teaching environment will be very useful for future snow science work that I hope to be a part of, whether that be in another educational or a research setting.

During the later part of my internship, I was able to use GIS software to practice calculations which were useful in creating the post trip lesson plan. I also used Google Earth to find more accessible values for other instructors in the following seasons. Working on the behind-the-scenes part of the program material gave me a deeper understanding of both the reasoning behind specific content and how that content is chosen for students. Gaining this knowledge empowers me to offer input on this type of work in future positions.

Overall, I feel strongly that Mt Baker Snow School and Northwest Avalanche Center empowered me to take charge of my experience and learning. I gained a wealth of knowledge and experience through this internship that I feel has greatly prepared me for future work opportunities in environmental science and more specifically snow science, which I am pursuing. Through this experience I found my passion in snow science as well as connecting youth with their mountain environment, and look forward to pursuing employment in this field, if not with NWAC specifically.

ASSESSMENT

Project Success:

I strongly feel that the Mount Baker Snow School program is successful in accomplishing its mission to educate young students about the importance of the Mt Baker snowpack and of the systems that interact with the glaciers and local society. Through this program, the hosting NWAC employees in collaboration with the Mt Baker Ski Area and the help of the volunteer group leaders successfully teach middle school science students of Whatcom County about various snow science test methods as well as the importance behind the questions being asked about the mountain system.

My Contributions:

Through this program, I feel very fulfilled by having contributed to the learning of so many different students. I got to witness on a daily basis the journey of students from shy to empowered, and unexperienced with the subject matter to confident in the knowledge they learned. It was truly amazing to me how much of a difference could be made in the individual students lives by having a gentle guiding hand in the realm of science. On multiple occasions I had students in my group that started the day claiming that they didn't like science or were not good at it, and I made it my mission to empower those students specifically in making them feel smart. The experience I had in seeing these students grow from the beginning of Snow School to the end of the Snow to Sea Science Fair was amazing and has had a lasting impact on myself and the career path I have chosen to pursue in environmental education and snow science research. I committed myself to being an essential part of this program and feel that I represented both myself and WWU well.

Skills and Experience Gained:

I learned even more during this internship than I had originally hoped I would, in a variety of different areas. During the field trip days up to Mt Baker Snow School at Heather Meadows, I got firsthand experience taking measurements of snow-water equivalency (SWE). While I have since learned the more accurate field measurement process of using a scale and metal pie measurement device in the later part of my internship, at MBSS I learned how to take this measurement quickly using a graduated cylinder and a spring scale with mental math. I also got to learn how to read a snow profile; first cutting a 90-degree angle wall into a snowpack facing North, and then using tools such as a metal crystal card and measuring stick to identify layers. Once the layers were identified I learned to take temperature measurements as well as the SWE values, and how to identify which kind of snowflakes were making up each layer. After gathering this information, I became proficient in synthesizing all of it together to hypothesize what sort of weather events and conditions contributed to certain layers, and how stable the snowpack is as a result. In addition to these field skills, I got hands on experience with how snow algae are examined in the field, and even learned about identifying and collecting snow algae later in the season when it was present in the Mt Baker area. In addition to this snow centered science, I also got to learn with my students about how the water from our snowpack moves through the watershed to eventually go into our water source of Lake Whatcom. I think understanding where our water comes from is essential in protecting its sources.

While learning all these skills about carrying out snow science, I feel that I mastered my skills of managing educational groups and learned a lot about the content side of programs like this. I have far more confidence in my abilities running learning environments coming out of this experience than I had going in and feel happy about the experiences I had empowering my own students in their knowledge. I truly feel that I have felt very little in my life that is more rewarding than seeing a student become confident in what they know and feeling value in their intelligence and knowing that I aided in that progress. I look forward to experiencing more of this in my career, as well as implementing the skills I learned about lesson organization and the administrative processes involved with running a program like this. I hope to use all these skills in the position I am currently in the application process for as Education Coordinator with NWAC.

APPENDICIES

Appendix 1. Letter of satisfaction from my supervisor, Greyson Herdman (Youth Education Coordinator, NWAC).

Megan Moran Snow School Internship Completion Northwest Avalanche Center June 16, 2023



This letter serves to document that Megan Moran successfully completed the Mt Baker Snow School volunteer internship. Megan's combined efforts participating in Snow School training, five in field teaching days, post trip curriculum development and the Snow School Science fair has fulfilled 120 internship hours.

Mt. Baker Snow School combines applied science with a snowshoe experience at Mt. Baker Ski Area. During Snow School, volunteer interns engage in research and hands-on teaching about weather, watersheds, snow algae, snowpacks and avalanches. Instructors support students as they interact with stations and lessons that promote field science and hands-on learning. These include snowpack analysis, snow algae sampling, snow water equivalency and much more.

Interns work alongside snow scientists from the Northwest Avalanche Center, biologists from Western Washington University, Public School teachers and students to create a positive learning environment for students.

Please reach out with any questions to Greyson Herdman (greyson@nwac.us)

Signed,

Grycon H

Greyson Herdman Youth Education Coordinator Northwest Avalanche Center *Appendix 2-Table 1*. Activity Log kept between the first day of Snow School, February 17th 2023 to May 20th 2023 when my last snow research day was completed. All information included in the log is from personal experiences during my internship with Mt Baker Snow School.

Date	Hours	Activity/Work
02/17/2023	11	Snow School field training day: Went up to Mt Baker, met all the trip leaders and staff, got the student lending gear out of storage, gear inventory, got acquainted with teaching materials/tools, snowshoed around to stations, learned content for teaching and met all of the NWAC instructors. I spent another hour going over the teaching booklet when I got home in preparation for the season.
02/24/23	10	Snow School field day: We had a morning meeting, gathered our teaching materials and then welcomed students off of buses and got into our groups. Then everyone got into their borrowed snow gear and down to the gear shop to get students fitted into their boots. Then I got snowshoes on my group and did a get to know you game before heading to our first station. Today I started at station 3 which is the Snow Algae station run by students from Dr Kodner's lab. We then moved on to the independent teaching station (4) where I taught my group how snowflakes are made and did an activity with everyone to help them visualize the process of the particle accumulation. Then we moved on to station 1 which is the snow profile station. This station is run by an NWAC outreach instructor named Pat; the kids really liked this one. Then we moved on to station 2 which is the SWE station run by another NWAC instructor named Graham. After this station we had a lunch break and let the kids run around and play in the snow for a few minutes before returning and organizing everyone's gear and then we put the kids back on the bus. After the kids left we cleaned up all of the gear and teaching materials and had our end of day meeting before heading back home.
03/03/23	10	Snow School field day: Had our morning meeting, gathered our teaching materials and then welcomed students off of buses. Got into our groups, then everyone got the gear they needed and went down to the gear shop to get fitted into their boots. Then I got snowshoes on my group and did a get to know you game before heading to our first station. Today I started at station 2, then moved on to the 3 rd and 4 th stations. Then we went back around to station 1 and then had a lunch break and let the kids run around and play in the snow for a few minutes before returning and organizing everyone's gear and then we put the kids back on the bus. After the kids left we cleaned up all of the gear and teaching materials and had our end of day meeting before heading back home. The weather today was pretty good, which helped keep the kids energies up.
03/09/23	10	Snow School field day:

		Today followed the same format as the previous days, where I went to the mountain and set things up before the kids arrived. Then I got my group and made sure they were prepared for the day before heading out to the stations. Today our order was 3,4,1,2 for stations. The weather was okay but could have been better. The kids were older this week and a bit too cool for school which made teaching a bit harder.
03/10/23	10	Snow School field day: Today followed the same format as the previous days, where I went to the mountain and set things up before the kids arrived. Then I got my group and made sure they were prepared for the day before heading out to the stations. Today our order was 3,4,1,2 for stations again, however the weather was a bit better today. I had a couple of difficult students this week, which was difficult, but the other kids helped to keep each other accountable for behavior which I appreciated and was proud of. I am excited for the 6th graders to return next week, they're more excited about the content than the 8 th graders.
03/17/23	10	Snow School field day: Second to last day was lovely. I got to the mountain and got everything ready for the students before they arrived, and we hit the ground running as we had limited time today. I got them ready as fast as possible and skipped the snowshoe practice rock paper scissors game to get them onto the stations as fast as possible. We went 1,2,3,4 today and didn't have time for an inside lunch so we had our lunches out in the snow. I'm happy we had nice weather for this day because I think the short time span would have been much harder with rough weather.
03/22/23	3	Started a mapping project of Bagley Basin for some Snow School post trip material.
03/23/23	3	Continued working on the Bagley Basin surface area map.
03/28/23	5	Started working on post trip lesson plan update.
03/29/23	2	Used Google Earth to finish the Bagley Basin map, ArcGIS was proving too tricky.
04/01/23	5	Finished up the updated lesson plan on Canva
04/02/23	10	Spent the day at Baker recreating – I used information learned from my Snow School colleagues to watch for signs of avalanche and do small scale snowpack analysis
04/08/23	10	Spent the day at Baker recreating – I used information learned from my Snow School colleagues to watch for signs of avalanche and do small scale snowpack analysis
04/09/23	1	Read up on cryosphere news about how our snowpack is changing
04/10/23	1	Read up on cryosphere news about how climate change will impact PNW glacier systems
04/16/23	10	Spent the day at Baker recreating – I used information learned from my Snow School colleagues to watch for signs of avalanche and do small scale snowpack analysis

05/06/23	9	Snow science day at Heather Meadows
5/20/23	9	Snow science day at Artists Point

COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Section 1 – Student Identification				
Last Name, First Name: Moran, Megan Western ID: 01535350		1535350		
Email Address moranm9@wwu.edu		Major/PreMa	jor	Environmental Science

Section 2 – Registration Information			
Total Credits:	2	Faculty Advisor:	Rebecca Bunn
Internship Start Date: 02/17/2023 Internship End Date: 03/24/2023			
Number Credits Per Quarter (F/W/S/Sum)			
Note: You must be registered for credits during quarters you perform <u>any part</u> of the internship work (Including Summer Session) to include writing of reportsthis can be spread over multiple quarters. You are expected to register an appropriate number of credits based on anticipated hours worked BY Quarter (Example: Working 120 hours during Summer = 4 Credits Summer Enrollment)			

Section 3 – Organization for Internship		
Organization Name:	zation Name: Mount Baker Snow School	
Intern Supervisor Name:	upervisor Name: Greyson Herdman	
Mailing Address: 1444 NW Hartford Bend, Or		
Email Address:	ail Address: greyson@nwac.us	
Phone Number: (360) 739-0749		
Description of Duties (Or Attach Job Description):		
During Snow School, students and teachers engage in research and		
hands-on learning about weather, watersheds, snow algae, snowpacks and avalanches. Instructors support students as they interact with stations and lessons that		
promote field science and hands-on learning. These include snowpack analysis, snow		
algae sampling, snow water equivalency and much more!		
You will be working alongside snow scientists from the Northwest Avalanche Center,		

biologists from Western Washington University, Public School teachers and students to create a positive learning environment for students.

Section 4 – Learning Objectives

What do I intend to learn from this experience:

During this internship I intend to learn as much as I can, however the highlights are as follows; I look forward to learning about and analyzing the natural systems of Mount Baker through processes such as snowpack analysis, taking field samples from the mountain such as snow algae, and how to facilitate group learning among the students. During my daily snow school activities, I will engage students in learning about snowpack analysis through lessons from NWAC instructors. This will teach us what conditions make a snowpack vulnerable to avalanches to increase snow safety knowledge. Additionally, I will be learning about what snow algae is and why it thrives in a mountain environment. I also will be doing snow/water density activities to help students visualize how much water exists in a snowpack to better understand how much of our water sources come from the Mt Baker snowpack. While all of this is going on I will be honing my snow shoe skills, which I am very excited for! I think that accomplishing these things will not only increase the students knowledge and appreciation for the mountain, but my own as well.

How does this experience contribute to my educational goals:

This experience gives me field experience that I have been searching for while feeding my love for snow and Mt Baker. I am excited to learn more about the sampling process for the various snow field tests described above, as well as how the different parts in a mountain ecosystem interact with each other (plants, snow, waterflow, etc.). Additionally, I think working with students throughout this process will teach me how to effectively lead a field group and facilitate team work while maintaining a fun environment, which is knowledge I hope to use in my future career during field research.

If Faculty require any additional Learning Objectives, they should be listed here:

Section 5 - Deadlines, Evaluation, and Assessment (Completed by faculty advisor)

Meet with Advis	or: Rebecca Bunn	Additional Learning Objectives (as assigned by faculty)	Yes
First Draft Due:	end of week 8		\sim
Final Draft Due:	end of week 10	Oral Presentation Required Daily/Weekly Log Require	•

Section 6 – Students Certification I certify that I have read the University Policy on Risk Management Considerations for Student Internships and I will report any injuries suffered while performing internship promptly to WWU. http://www.wwu.edu/bfa/Risk_Mgmt/documents/Internship%20Considerations%20(14).pdf

I will endeavor to represent myself and my college well and will abide by the relevant policies, procedures and ethical standards of the university and the internship organization.

I understand that 30-hours of work per credit earned is expected for an internship. I understand that I am expected to enroll in a number of credits commensurate with hours worked each quarter.

Student's Signature/Date

Megan Moran 01/12/2023

Section 7 – Internship Site Supervisor Certification

I have reviewed the student's indicated learning objectives and on behalf of my organization agree:

- To enrich the Student's knowledge by orienting him/her to the occupation, the work setting, and the responsibilities relating to the assignment
- To regularly evaluate/provide feedback to student on progress, projects and areas of growth
- At or near the completion of the assignment to provide an evaluation of the student's performance
- To review and approve the Student's Learning Plan and communicate with the college if areas are not going to be met.
- To supply the student with, and abide by the organization's policy against discrimination and/or harassment in the workplace
- To contact the instructor or the College of the Environment Internship Coordinator (360) 650-3646, ed.weber@wwu.edu should any problems arise

Internship Site Supervisor

Congoon Hendon

Signature/Date

Section 8 – Faculty Advisor Certification

I certify that the student intern and I have reached agreement on the learning objectives and academic expectations for this experience. These objectives are challenging and enriching to the student's academic and/or career goals. I will award grades after satisfactory completion of all learning objectives/tasks/reports assigned.

Faculty Advisor's	
Signature/Date	

Section 9 – College of the Environment Internship Coordinator

Actions:

- 1. Review Agreement
- Update Course Override
- 3. File Agreement in Student Records
- Communicate with Employers as necessary during internship

Registering and Completing ENVS/ESCI/UEPP 498B Credits

YOU MUST BE REGISTERED FOR INTERNSHIP CREDITS WHENEVER YOU ARE PERFORMING WORK RELATED TO THE INTERNSHIP TO RECEIVE ACADEMIC CREDIT

This INCLUDES Summer Sessions

REQUEST FACULTY MEMBER TO OVERSEE 498B CREDITS

- The CRNs for ENVS/ESCI/UEPP 498B credits are linked to specific faculty members
- · Students need to speak with the faculty member for these credits
 - If possible, students should have a draft of an Internship/Learning Agreement completed before they approach a faculty member to supervise the internship.
 - o Most students use their faculty academic advisor as their faculty internship supervisor
 - During Summer Sessions, your faculty advisor may not be available. If not, then register for internship credits with Ed Weber, CENV Internship Coordinator
- Environmental Science students register for ESCI 498B and all others for ENVS/UEPP 498B
- Registration for 498B (Internship Credits) requires an override, which is normally given by the CENV Internship Coordinator (Ed Weber, ES545)
 - You must have a completed/signed Learning/Internship Agreement signed before the override will be input

CRNS FOR ENVS/ESCI/UEPP 498B

- See Classfinder for the CRNs for ENVS/ESCI/UEPP 498B Internship credits
 - During Summer Sessions, if you faculty advisor is not listed, please register for credits with Ed Weber, College of the Environment Internship Coordinator

VARIABLE CREDIT REGISTRATION ON WEB

- · Initially you can only register for one credit.
- Return to the registration menu after registering. Then go to Change Variable Credits to change the 1 credit to the number of credits desired. (Instructions for Changing Variable Credits are included on the Add/Drop page for registering.) 30-hrs work = 1 academic credit. Register in good faith based on anticipated hours for the whole quarter.

RESOLVING K GRADES

- · To graduate, you must receive a passing grade for any credits listed on your major evaluation.
- (For Internship, students must receive a Satisfactory (S) for S/U grading. Incomplete grades not completed and graded after a year from the quarter of registration automatically become a U (Unsatisfactory) or a Z (equivalent to an F). Incompletes can impact financial aid standing.

REPORT SUBMISSION

- Final report will be submitted to your faculty advisor using the ESIGN Form available on the CENV webpage.
- Always consult with the faculty advisor in advance about how much time he/she will need to read and grade the report by the end of the graduation quarter.
 - The most difficult time to get a grade on a report is for summer quarter graduation because faculty are generally not available during this time.
 - Spring graduation is a close second in difficulty because many faculty leave campus for extended periods after their last final.