Laura Grabowski tells us about her plans after Grad School.
Written by Laura Grawbowski

My name is Laura Grabowski. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, in my fifth year of doctoral study. Some people may call me strange, but I actually enjoy graduate school. Really, I do. Otherwise, why in the world would I have forged my way through several different Masters' degrees, to now find myself nearing the completion of a Ph.D.? Even I have to admit, though, that I am looking forward to life after graduate school.

Currently, I am working on the last piece of my dissertation. In my research, I am interested in both natural and artificial intelligence. My work builds on studies of the evolution of intelligence in natural organisms such as bacteria, bees, ants, and rats. I work with Charles Ofria and Robert Pennock in the Digital Evolution Laboratory (Devolab). Like the majority of students in Devolab, I use the Avida digital evolution platform in my work. Avida is a virtual world, but real evolution; Avida "organisms" (self-replicating computer programs) evolve through natural selection in complex computational environments, and evolve new survival strategies in unexpected and creative ways. Evolution has a proven track-record of producing both simple and sophisticated forms of intelligent behavior, and that process provides insights into the construction of systems that are similarly flexible, adaptable, and robust. I am currently working on a suite of experiments that focus on the evolution of memory and learning, critical components of intelligent behavior. Results of those experiments are of interest to biologists, on the one hand, since how those capabilities may have evolved in the natural world remains an open question, and to computer scientists on the other hand, since the evolved strategies may lead to improved implementations for systems in a variety of problem domains. I believe that this kind of work is at the cutting edge of computer science research, and has tremendous potential for future directions and impact.

In Fall 2009, I will be starting a tenure-track computer science faculty position at the University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg, Texas. I was very fortunate to find a position that offers an excellent balance of teaching and research opportunities. I love teaching; teaching was the primary motivation behind my seeking the Ph.D. I love the joy of discovery that I find in learning, but an even greater thrill, is seeing that joy and wonder in the eyes of a student, as concepts and skills come together. Those "light bulb" moments are wondrous, and that experience never gets old. In my new job, I will be able to be involved in both undergraduate and graduate teaching, ranging over a variety of topics in computer science. I am also excited about continuing my research. My current direction of inquiry is very rich, and may keep me busy for a while, even after the dissertation has been signed, printed, and delivered. I already have lots of ideas that will add new dimensions and directions to my future research agenda. I plan to continue the collaborations I have built here at MSU with my excellent committee, fellow students, and post-docs, and build new research relationships in my new department.

I am truly excited about the prospects of my career, post-graduation. In the meantime, I still have a lot of work to do!

Laura Grawbowski is working with robots that are used in the Digital Evolution Laboratory.
STAYING HEALTHY

It is that time of year to practice healthy lifestyles while maintaining balance at work and in school. MSU’s Health 4U Program is focused on making a difference for faculty, staff, and graduate student employees, by promoting health awareness among these groups and others. The program offers students a chance to participate in activities which includes personal health coaching services, classes, seminars, support networks, and on-line services. The Health 4U program has developed a website that offers a wide range of resources in order to encourage healthy lifestyles.

**Quick Healthy Tips For You**

- Eat More Fruits and Vegetables
- Always Wash your Hands
- Have a Hearty Breakfast
- Exercise Regularly

**Grad News produced by**

Graduate Students: Andrew Baczewski, Laura Grabowski, Jennifer Ni, & Amanda Portis

Staff: Lynda White

To help out on the newsletter, email me at, whitely@egr.msu.edu.

**101 ways to Manage Stress**

Take 10 deep breaths • Visualize a relaxing scene • Learn to say “no” • Stay clutter-free • Read good books • Stretch • Write in a journal • Try yoga • Laugh often • Watch clouds go by • Look at a magazine • Believe in yourself • Prioritize tasks • Get some fresh air • Hug someone • Get plenty of sleep • Watch a movie • Seek out positive people • Make to-do lists • Take a brisk walk • Star-gaze • Sip a cup of herbal tea • Put your feet up • Enjoy a hobby • Confront your feelings • Exercise • Plan ahead • Talk with a friend • Dance • Laugh at Yourself • Count your blessings • Be silly • Set realistic goals • Sing • Think Positively • Squeeze a stress ball • Eat right • Take a nap • Walk away • Vary your routine • Play with children • Get a massage • Ask for help • Find a quiet spot to relax • Take regular breaks • Listen to soothing music • See problems as challenges • Smile • Play a sport • Be faithful • Avoid caffeine and tobacco • Eat a good breakfast • Cry if necessary • Be flexible • Don’t procrastinate • Wear earplugs when it’s noisy • Buy fresh flowers • Spend time with loved ones • Celebrate life • Do one task at a time • Meditate • Plant a garden • Avoid distractions • Budget time and money • Share jokes • Play games with friends • Look at the big picture • Get up earlier • Set limits • Express your feelings • Treat yourself with a gift • Simplify your life • Reflect on your joys • Punch a pillow • Go out to lunch • Don’t dwell on the past • Play with a pet • Go to the park • Soak in the tub • Wear comfortable clothes • Take off your shoes • Forgive and forget • Delegate work • Love others • Have plants at work and home • Daydream • Bake a special treat • Savor meals • Look at old photos • Take a vacation • Fly a kite • Learn something new • Volunteer • Go out for frozen yogurt • Join a group • Rub your neck and shoulders • Take the bus or carpool • Have a picnic • Recognize beauty around you • Take it one day at a time • Make someone smile • –

Copyright The Positive Line

**MSU offers Financial Wellness Program**

In an effort to help students overcome financial woes, Michigan State University has launched a pilot program that provides one-on-one counseling and resources. The Financial Wellness Education and Counseling program, begun in January at the Olin Student Health Center, was borne out of a university student survey in which more than 50 percent of students said financial problems or concerns were affecting their academic or personal lives. See news story at http://www.news.msu.edu/story/6008/