

## **A Year in the Life of a Science Nerd**

Alexis Weber

I am Alexis Weber, a third-year Ph.D. Candidate in the field of analytical chemistry, with a forensic science focus. I commonly like to tell people that I am in the 22nd grade. During this time, I have realized that finding the balance between being a graduate student and having a life is one of the most difficult changes in my career thus far. While I know the academic portion of my life is what will push me forward within the science field, interacting with my friends and having down time is what will allow me not to burn out in the long run.

On the academic/science side, I put significant effort into my work, and I try to be a devoted, hardworking team member and leader. My goal is to work diligently on my research while also allowing those around me to grow and learn. Within my laboratory, I have taken on several leadership roles such as, mentoring several undergraduate research students and master students. I am also the student lab manager which requires the ability to be self-sufficient and consistently stays up to date on what is occurring within the laboratory.

My doctoral research centers on the forensic analysis of bloodstains. Specifically, focuses on laying the foundation for the creation of a needed methodology for determining the time since deposition of bloodstains. This research requires significant laboratory time, as it involves measuring samples at specific timepoints during an aging trial. From this research, I have been able to publish five publications thus far.

On top of my graduate student life, I have also expanded into another aspect of the science field highlighting my time management skills. Due to my hard work and strong leadership skills, my advisor asked me to run his University Spin-off company, SupreMEtric LLC (<https://www.supremetric.com/>). I am currently the Principal Investigator of a \$256,000 NSF STTR Grant. Along with managing the grant, I am also the Chief Operating Officer of the company. I have tried my best to maintain balance running the company as well as staying on top of my academic work. I was interviewed for “SUNY Empowers Entrepreneurs” (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/11lpj2U85zvOt0e1St8l7LcjOuAVVr2xi/view>).

Despite all that I do on the academic side, I still work to maintain a life outside of school. I have main friendship group that I have built from my high school, undergraduate, and graduate communities. At heart, we are a bunch of nerds who like doing nerdy things. Therefore, we have a weekly Dungeons and Dragons game where we get to catch up and role play. And if we are not up to doing that, we just play games online since we are

located all along the east coast. Within Albany, I like to explore the area via hiking, and I have joined hiking group and I am excited for it to start again this summer. To decompress I do a few things: workout daily, do paint pouring (an arts and craft version of chaos), and support local breweries to try craft beer. These activities connect me with my friends as we can do them all together. Finally, I think there is something special about connecting both the science and life portions of myself. And this comes from social activities in professional societies. These social activities allow me to have a fun time with member of the scientific community. The most recent group I joined was STEM Noire, a group of black scientists. They have a wellness Wednesday each month, that allows time to relax with a community of people who understand the struggle but allows the most intersection between science and life.