



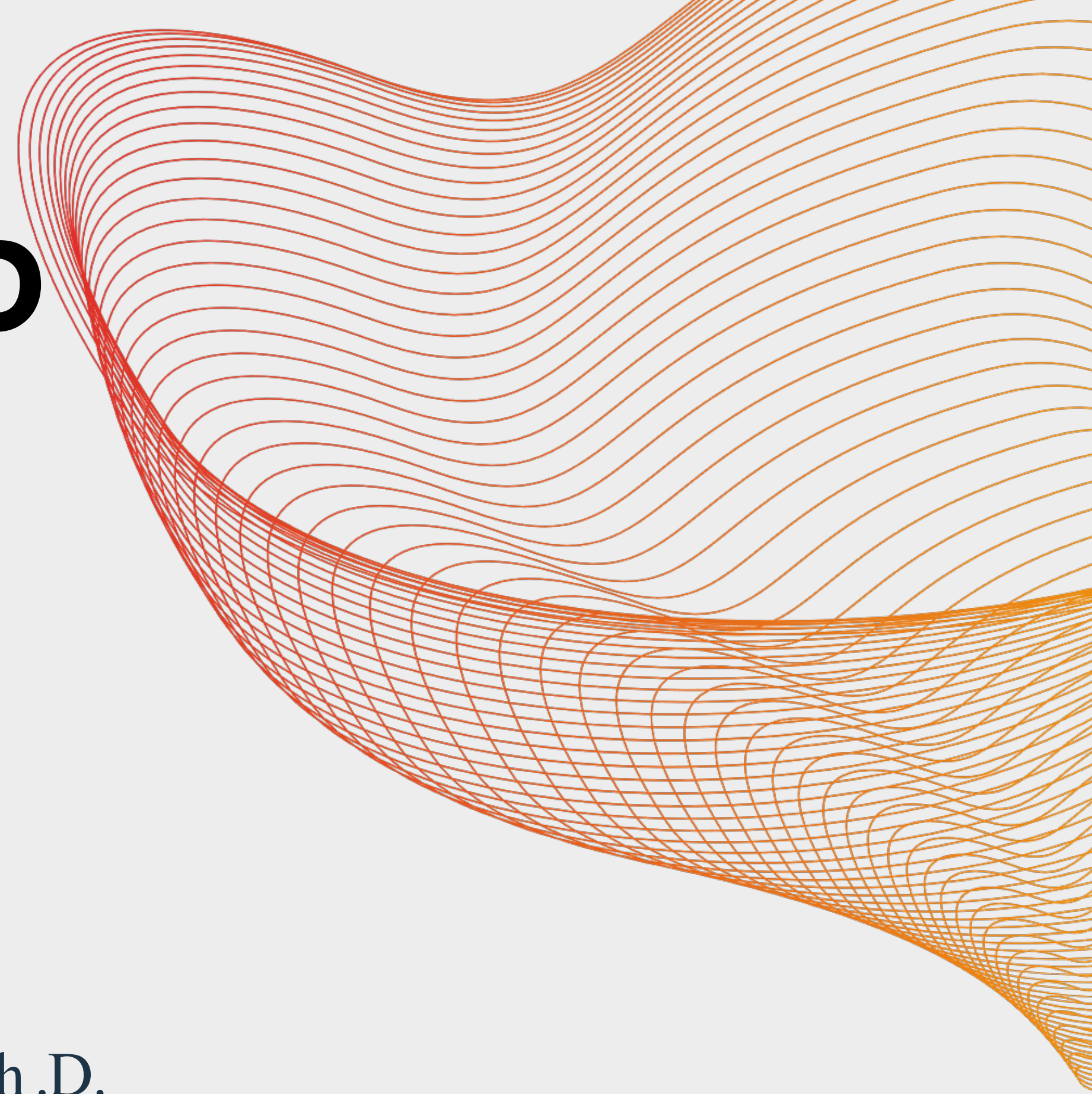
# Tricks to Keep Dissertation Students



# on Track

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TCCHawaii Conference, April 2023





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# U.S. Graduate Student Data Snapshot



- Fall, 2021 – approximately 160K doctoral candidates entered school.
- Disrupted graduate school attendance has resulted in an average graduation rate of only 50%.



Hurt, S., Woods Ways, E., & Holmes, B. (2022). Wait! Don't Quit! Stay with your Doctoral Program During the Global Pandemic: Lessons Learned from Program Completers. *The Journal of Advancing Education Practice*, 3(1). <https://openriver.winona.edu/jaep/vol3/iss1/2>

GradSchools.com (2020). Why Do People Drop Out of Ph.D. Programs. GradSchools.com, <https://www.gradschools.com/get-informed/student-guide/why-do-people-drop-out-phd>



# Why People

  
**Earn  
Advanced  
Degrees**





# 7 VALID REASONS WHY TO DO A PHD IN 2023?

1. Advance the current state-of-the-art and produce new knowledge.
2. A PhD degree is necessary for career development.
3. Motivation and career satisfaction.
4. You've got a big research idea that can change the world.
5. A personal motivation to become a professor.
6. An interesting project with full PhD funding .
7. You want to change the world.

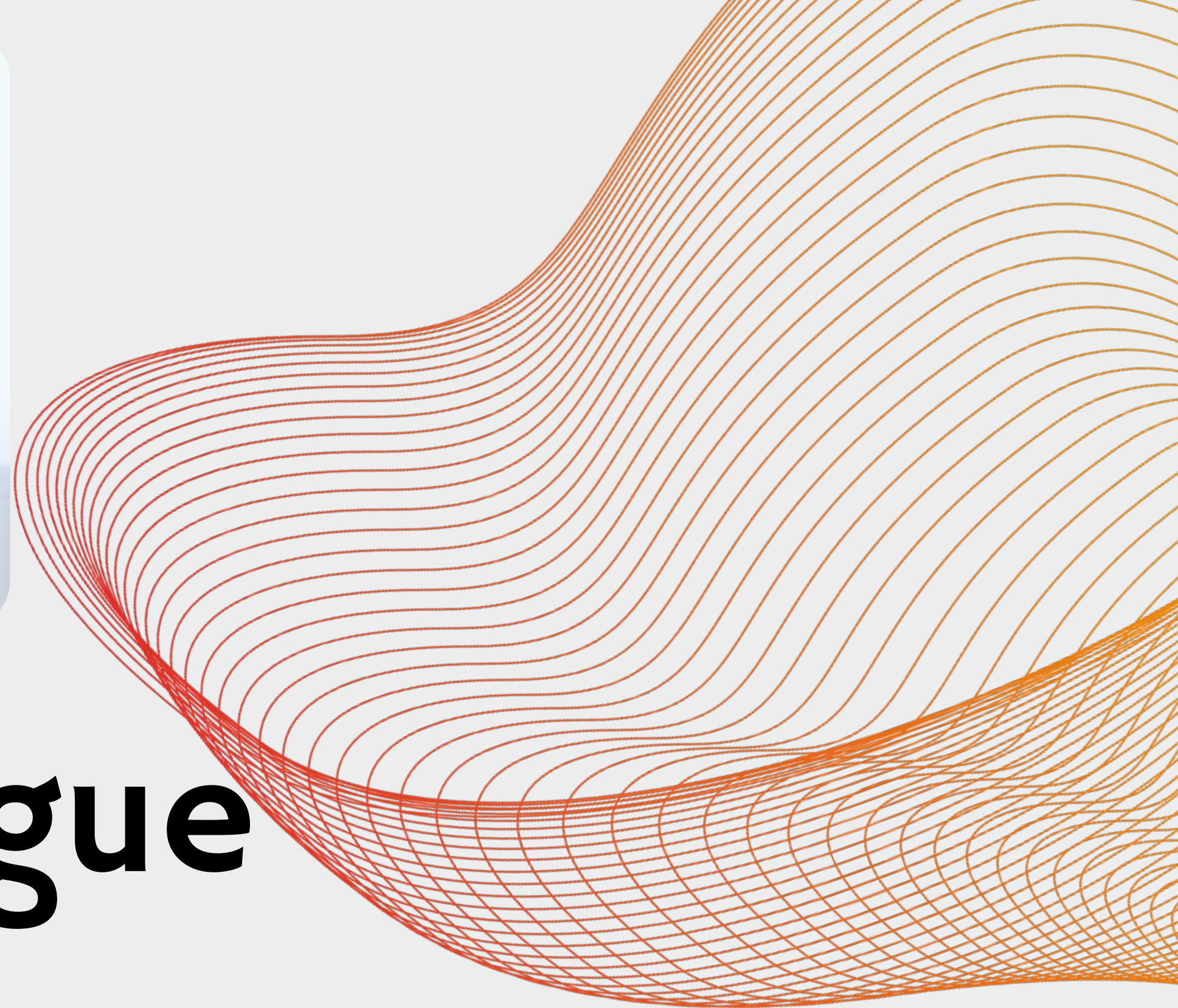
<https://motivatedacademic.com/why-to-do-a-phd/>



**Setting  
the Stage**

**—  
for**

**New Students**



# Begin a Dialogue

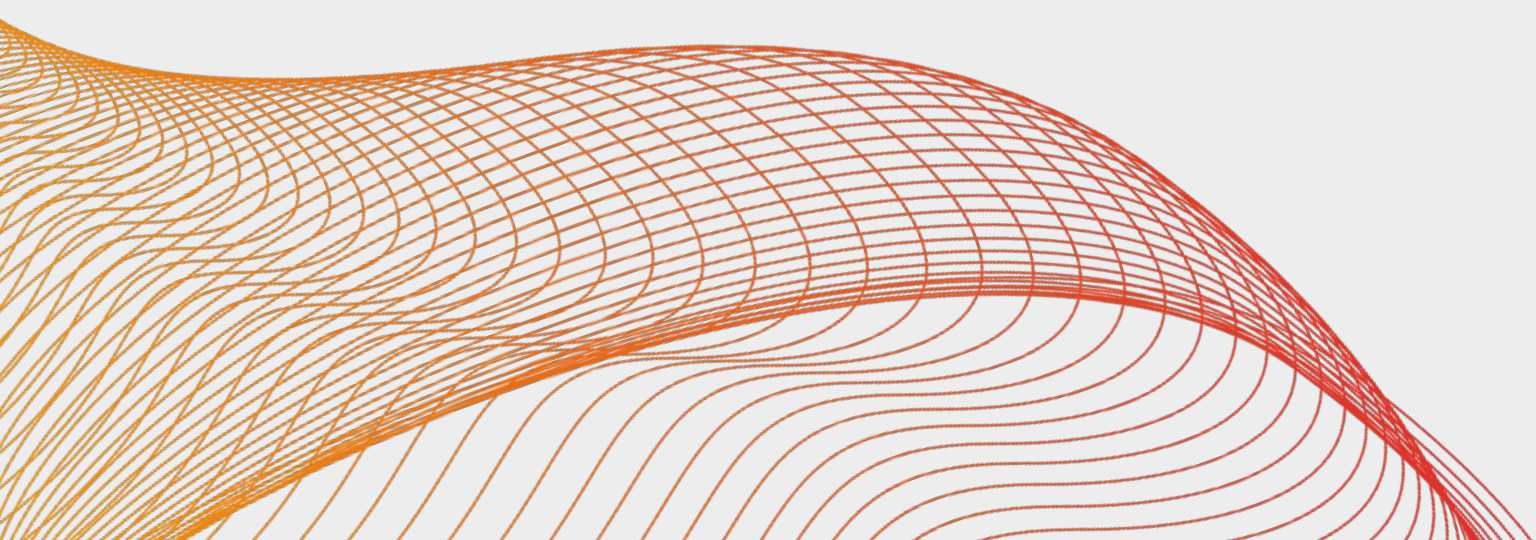
Set up a time to talk - not just about school but check-in to see how things are going with life in general.



# What Motivates Students



- Family: giving a better lifestyle and opportunities.
- Career: promotion or what's next in their career.
- Academic Community: faculty and peers who support their research.







# What Impacts



# Student Success

Family | Work | School





# What Causes Students to Get Off-Track



- Fear of Failure
- Anxiety of the Unknown
- Family Issues
- Work vs School
- Time Management
- All of the above!

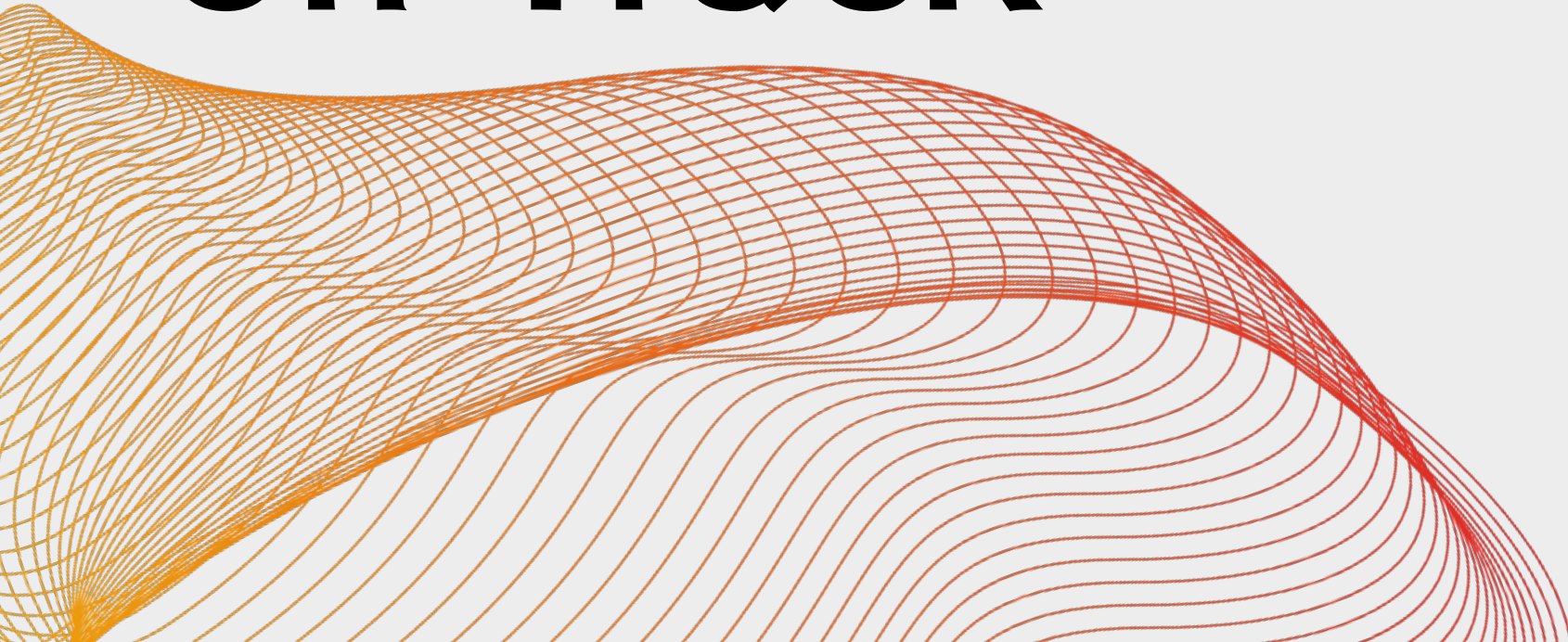
Here's some helpful tips!



# How *We* Help Students



## Get Back on Track



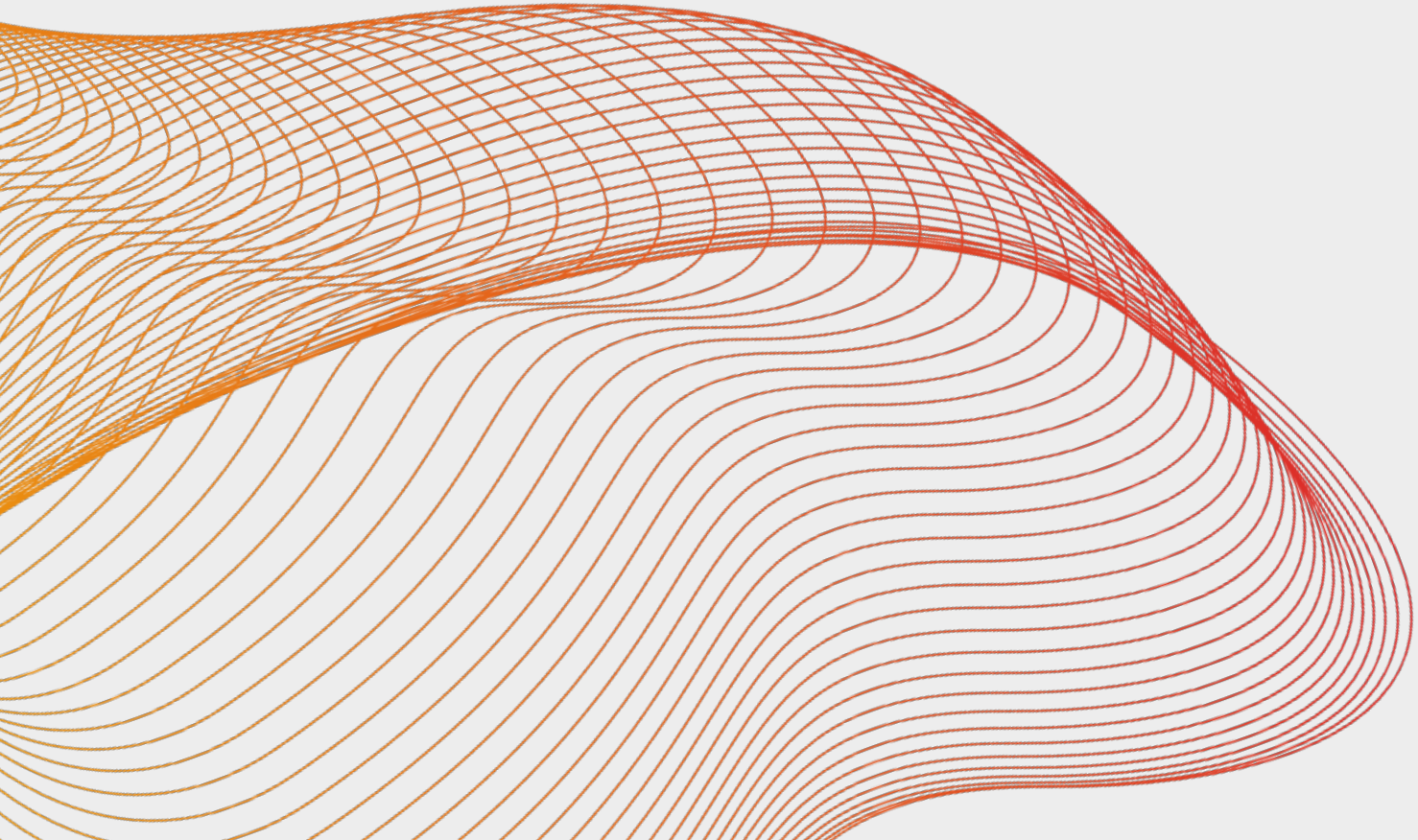
**Ask Students to respond to  
3 Questions every Monday:**

- 'How are you doing?'
- 'Share what you feel was your smallest\* accomplishment this past week.'
- 'Identify what will be worked on this week.'



# How Does This Help?



- Every Monday helps them think about the week ahead and set some initial goals.
  - It helps students to think through what they've previously accomplished and what questions are top of mind.
  - Small victories help people take stock of positive reflection.
  - It allows students to identify if they need help.
- 

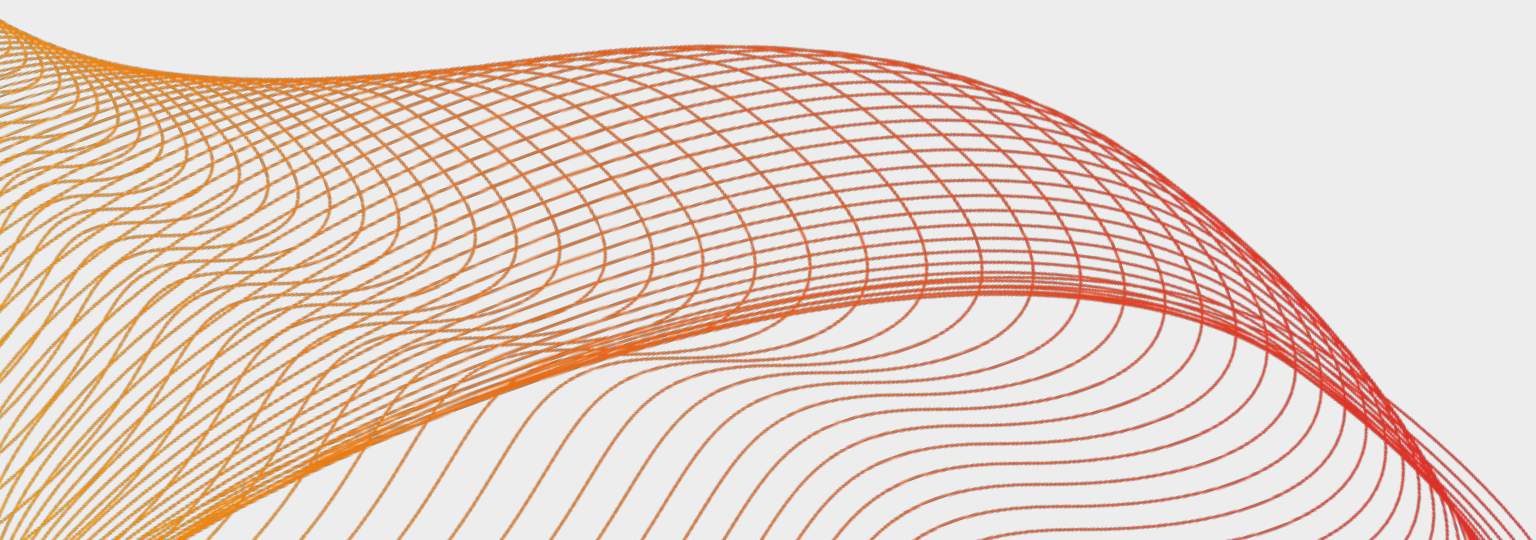


# How *We* Help Students



## Get Back on Track

- Walk them through the dissertation process and tools provided by your institution.
- Overall, demystify the process! Identify the steps, what occurs next, and approximate timelines. Make sure they understand who is available to assist them and how their committee members come into process.

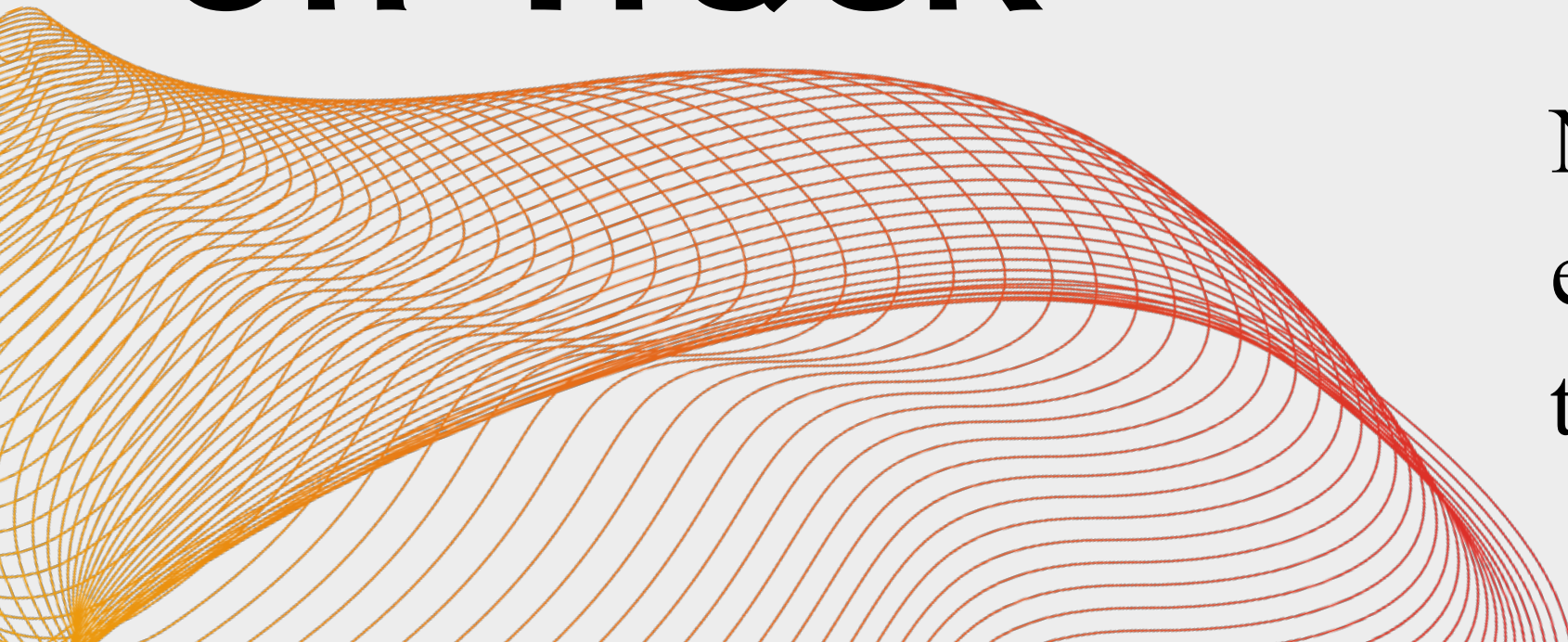





# How *We* Help Students



## Get Back on Track



- Send notes including helpful tips and reminders.
  - Important to provide suggested tools and location of resources (LMS, library)
    - Ex: Zotero, to make work more organized
  - Student Handbook, Library, pertinent offices and staff members

Notes can be set up at the beginning of each term and sent by automation. Use these between regular correspondence.



# How *We* Help Students

## Get Back on Track

- Hold a periodic reset meeting to help students when things get difficult.
  - Help redefine a timeline.
  - Remind them of pertinent dates on the university calendar.
  - Set up next steps to refocus.

Help build a cadence throughout the term!

**But Managing  
Students**

**Takes Time!**



**So how do  
Faculty  
handle the  
workload?**

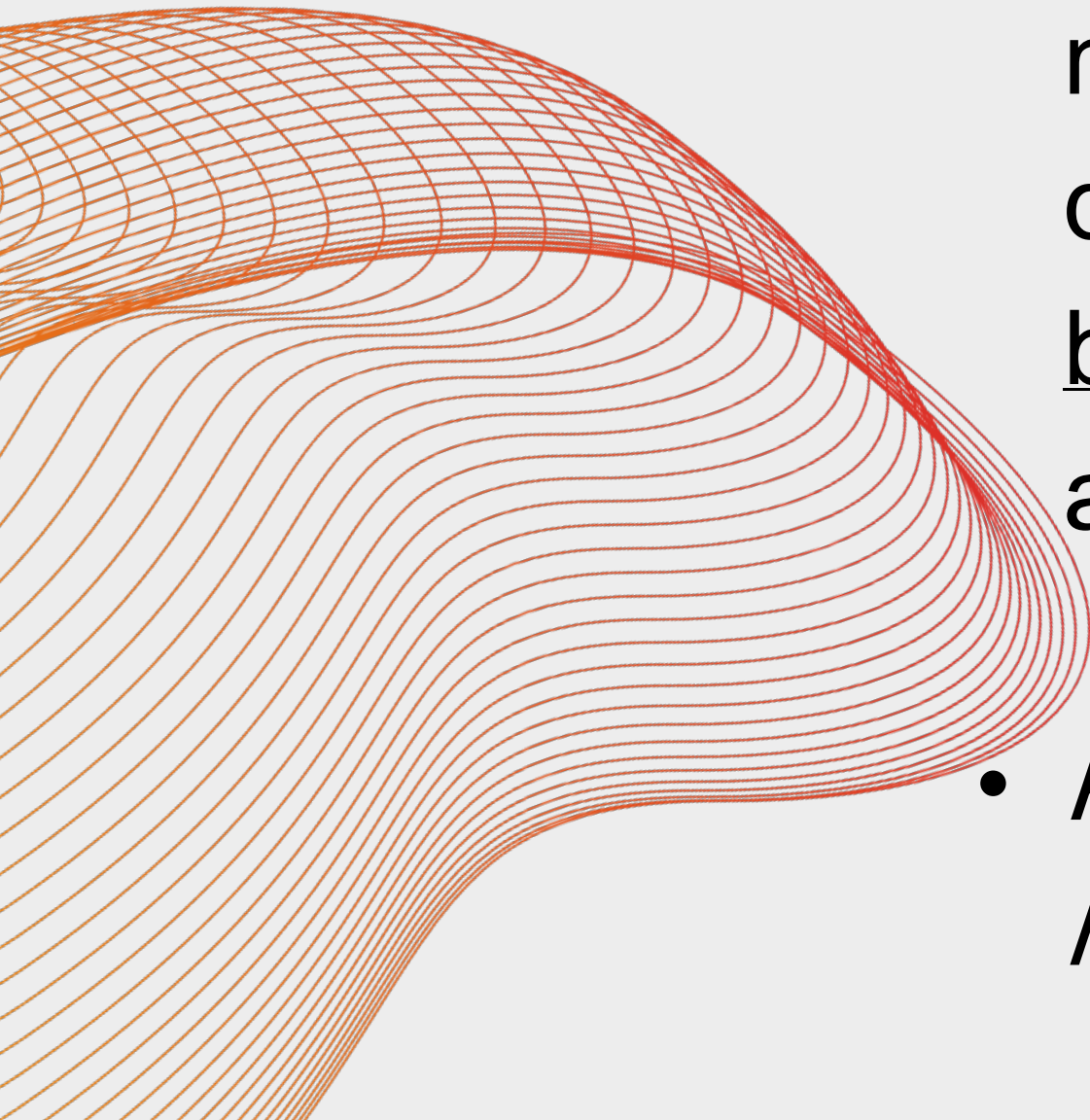




# Work Smart



- Establish automated emails that can go out as needed including resources, data reminders and deadlines to keep students motivated. Use in between regular correspondence to give additional contact and content.
- *Keeping this information 'top of mind' will also help guide students with less individual questions.*



# Work Smart



- Create a spreadsheet that can easily be updated with resources. When needed, the link can be resent without searching for information.
- *This also helps you manage emails.*

# Work Smart

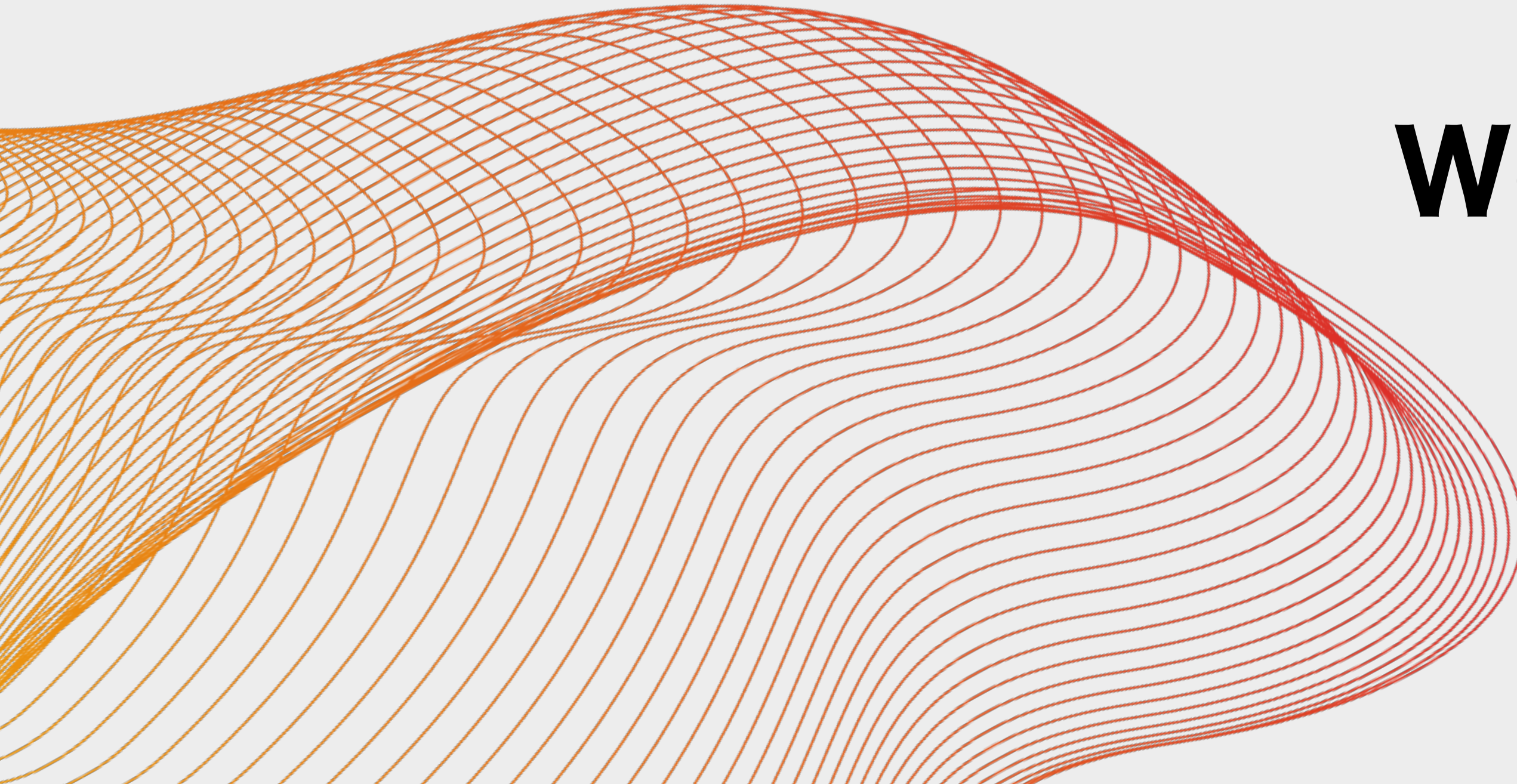


- Recognize you're the biggest resource and content may or may not have been previously covered with the student.
- *Moving their thought process forward relieves anxiety and refocuses on what's next to be done.*



- Talk with colleagues. Ask for helpful tips!
- Ask your students! Different students may have distinctive needs, so find out if there's a way that helps them.

**Work Smart**





**Together, faculty  
and students**

**can create a  
path of success!**



# Questions?



# Thank You!

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