"From conference paper to journal article: The ins and outs of publishing"
Virginia Tech Graduate Education Week 2013
Summary of panelists' advice to graduate students/young scholars:

1) Read the journals in your field. Set aside several hours per week to read papers that interest you in a variety of journals. As you read, think about how the paper is organized, what makes it work, and what the format for the journal is.

2) For some of these papers, write an abstract (don't peek at the abstract that goes with the paper until you're done!). This exercise forces you to look closely at the organization and elements of the paper. What is the main point of the paper? Where and how does the author make this point?

3) When you are organizing your thoughts about your own work and deciding how to divide it up or put it into journal article(s), ask yourself how and why it will be cited. Make this--the "take-away message" from the article--clear in both the introduction to the paper and again in the summary (and, of course, in the abstract).One panelist referred to this as the "So what?" question. Be sure the "So what?" question is answered early on so that readers will keep reading.

4) Find the submission guidelines for the specific journal you plan to submit your paper to. Each journal has its own requirements for form, length, citations and reference lists, style, etc. Back to #1: when you are reading journals, ask yourself whether your work would fit. Are you doing the sort of study (generally) that you're reading about? In your imagination, hold your paper on top of a paper that has been published in this journal. Do they "match"?

5) Use conferences as a discipline device. The deadline for submission can make you get something put together. The comments you get from the audience or from a moderator can serve as feedback to help you reframe your question, flesh out your results, redesign your tables and figures, or whatever. If you apply for competitive workshops at a conference, you'll have to submit a more finished paper ahead of time to be circulated among other presenters; everyone will read all the papers ahead of time, and you'll get lots of feedback about your work. This sort of workshop may be attended by journal editors, who may then approach you about your paper and invite you to submit it when it is more polished.

6) Speaking of polished, DO NOT SUBMIT A PAPER THAT IS IN A DRAFT FORM. Write your paper, edit it, edit it again, read it through and edit some more, rearrange things to see if they work better another way, edit some more, set it aside for a few weeks and read it with fresh eyes, edit it again, give it to a colleague and ask for a "pre-review," edit it more. Give the writing of a paper that you hope to publish plenty of time. It is a long process. If it gets accepted, it will be out in the world, with your name attached to it, forever. Do not submit it until you feel that it is truly the best that you can do.

7) And be ready to do that all over if you get a "revise-resubmit" provisional acceptance. The reviewers will have comments, the editor may also have comments, and you will have to respond (by revising your paper accordingly) to all the comments. Occasionally you will need to stand up for something that you feel is correct in your paper that has been misinterpreted by reviewers. But if it's been misinterpreted, you perhaps did not state it clearly enough.

8) Follow the "3 c's rule": be sure that your paper is clear, coherent, and compelling.

9) Somewhere close to the beginning of the paper, let the reader know how you are organizing the paper. Make is easy for the reader to follow your argument. (This advice makes less sense to those in the hard sciences and engineering, as all science papers have to follow the organization set by the journal, typically something like Intro, Materials and Methods, Results, Discussion. But it is good general advice.)

10) While you are a graduate student, start to build your network of colleagues, both your classmates and lab mates and those in your field that you meet at conferences. These are people with whom you may want to collaborate, who might be willing to read your papers or grant proposals, and whom you might want to invite to be presenters in a conference workshop or panel discussion at some future time.

11) Honestly assess your work; get advice from your advisor and committee members; and then submit your paper to the highest level relevant journal you can. In other words, aim high. Why not?

12) Back to #1 and #4: be sure the paper you submit seems like the sort of paper this journal publishes.

13) Who is the audience for your work? Back to #3, how and why will your paper be cited--also ask yourself WHO is going to cite your paper. Answer this question before you decide what journal you want to send it to.

14) Don't try to cram too much information and data, or too many arguments or main points, into a single article. Some of the best and most often cited papers are short and simple and make one important contribution to the field very clearly and concisely.

15) Things that make editors decide not even to send a submission out for review: lack of organization, lack of polish, longer than word or page limit, wrong format, blatant disregard of submission guidelines, topic irrelevant to journal.

16) Things that make editors not want to work with authors though the sometimes long process of getting a paper into print: pestering the editor, being prickly or uncongenial or otherwise difficult to work with, ignoring the feedback you get from reviewers and editors. Be polite, pleasant, and professional.

17) Last but perhaps should be first: Do not take reviewers' and editors' comments and suggestions personally, and do not be demoralized by rejection. Papers that go on to be landmark publications often begin life as rejected manuscripts, often from multiple journals. If at first you don't succeed, try, try, again! But don't just keep sending the same paper out without addressing the concerns and suggestions you receive from editors and reviewers.