Considerations for graduate school: the inside scoop!

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My Story

Undergraduate Research

Masters

Work Experience
So you are thinking about graduate school…
I am not sure what people have told you but…

ONE DOES NOT SIMPLY ENROLL

IN A PHD PROGRAMME
Now what?

Degree type
- Environmental Science
- Physiology
- Molecular Biology
- Ecology
- Forestry
- Wildlife Biology
- Evolutionary Biology
- Systematics

Advisor/institution

Thesis topic

- Environmental Science
- Molecular Biology
- Ecology
- Forestry
- Wildlife Biology
- Evolutionary Biology
- Systematics
What to study?

• Get experience:
  – Get research experiences as an undergraduate
  – After graduation, find internships, seasonal jobs, or volunteer positions
What to study?

• Talk to current professionals
• Check out the job market

http://wfscjobs.tamu.edu/job-board/
Remember to relax

• Graduate school is the beginning of your journey not the end.
Picking a graduate advisor/program

- Do your homework
- Ask for recommendations
- Check the job boards/listservs
- Think about funding

http://wfscjobs.tamu.edu/?job_category=graduate-assistantships
**Marriage vs. The Ph.D.**

**Marriage**
- Typical Length: 7.5 years
- Begins with: A proposal
- Culminates in a ceremony where you walk down an aisle dressed in a gown:
- Usually entered into by: Foolish young people in love
- 50% end in: Bitter divorce
- Involves exchange of: Vows
- Until death do you part? If you’re lucky

**Ph.D.**
- Typical Length: 7 years
- Begins with: A thesis proposal
- Culminates in a ceremony where you walk down an aisle dressed in a gown:
- Usually entered into by: Foolish young people without a job
- 50% end in: Bitter remorse
- Involves exchange of: Know-how
- Until death do you part? If you’re lazy
Treat it like an interview, but you are hiring!

• Arrange to speak with prospective advisors (over the phone and then in person if possible)
  – Funding
  – Teaching & research philosophies
  – Expectations
  – Mentoring style
  – Future research directions
Check references

• Talk to current graduate students
  – Without the advisor present if possible.
• Find recent graduates
• Volunteer in the lab you are interested in
Consider the institution and program too

- A highly rated school can mean
  - Better job prospects when you graduate
  - More funding opportunities
- **BUT** a good fit is most important
Make the most of it!

• Be open to new opportunities
  – Find your own funding
  – Collaborate with people outside your lab, department, and institution
  – Go to workshops, meetings, and webinars
  – Learn skills and participate in projects outside of your thesis project
  – Be a teaching assistant
  – Take breaks!
Give back

• Be a mentor for new students, or undergraduates
• Volunteer in your community
  – Be a Science fair judge
  – Find a local cause you care about
  – Visit local schools
• Get involved in a society or committee
Further reading:

- Advice from an ecologist [http://ib.berkeley.edu/labs/lacey/prospectives.html](http://ib.berkeley.edu/labs/lacey/prospectives.html)
- A guide to starting graduate school: [http://www.dartmouth.edu/~mpayres/teaching/gradprogram/Guideforphds.pdf](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~mpayres/teaching/gradprogram/Guideforphds.pdf)

“What is one thing you wish someone had told you when you were starting grad school”

[vhttp://www.dartmouth.edu/~mpayres/teaching/gradprogram/Wisdom.EEB.html](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~mpayres/teaching/gradprogram/Wisdom.EEB.html)

- molecular [http://www.dartmouth.edu/~mpayres/teaching/gradprogram/Wisdom.MCB.html](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~mpayres/teaching/gradprogram/Wisdom.MCB.html)
- EE [http://www.dartmouth.edu/~mpayres/teaching/gradprogram/Wisdom.EEB.faculty.html](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~mpayres/teaching/gradprogram/Wisdom.EEB.faculty.html)

- What graduate students never ask (but should) [https://me.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/advice_paper_web.pdf](https://me.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/advice_paper_web.pdf)
Have questions?
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