

# Considerations for graduate school: the inside scoop!

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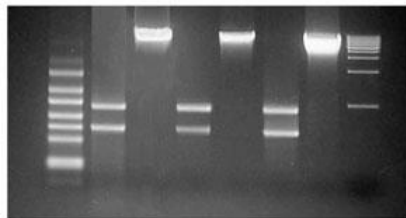
# My Story

Undergraduate  
Research

**UF**  
UNIVERSITY of  
FLORIDA



Work  
Experience



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

  
**UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA**

Masters



 **Birdstrike Control Program**



**Florida Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Commission**

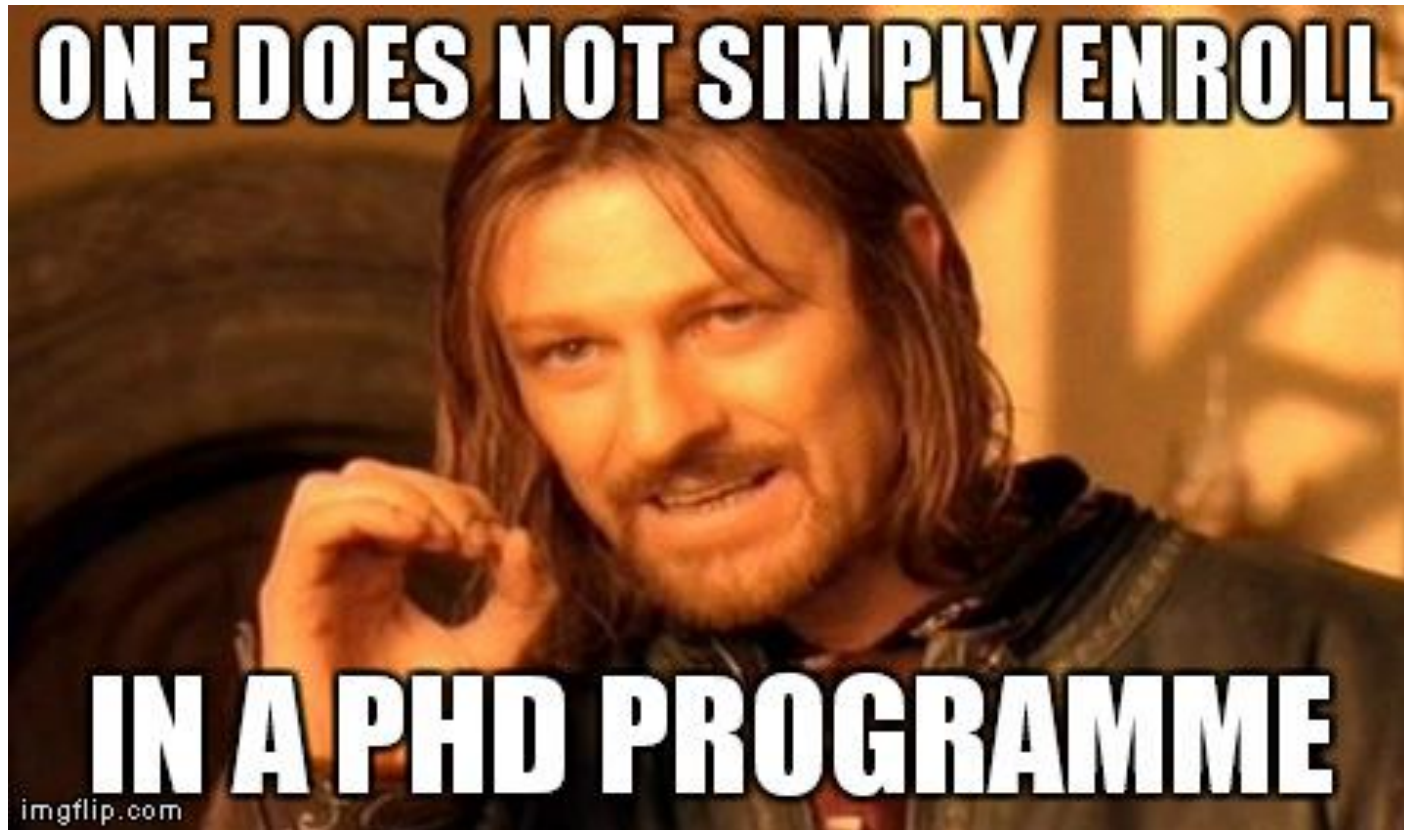


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Integrated Digitized Biocollections

**So you are thinking about graduate school...**

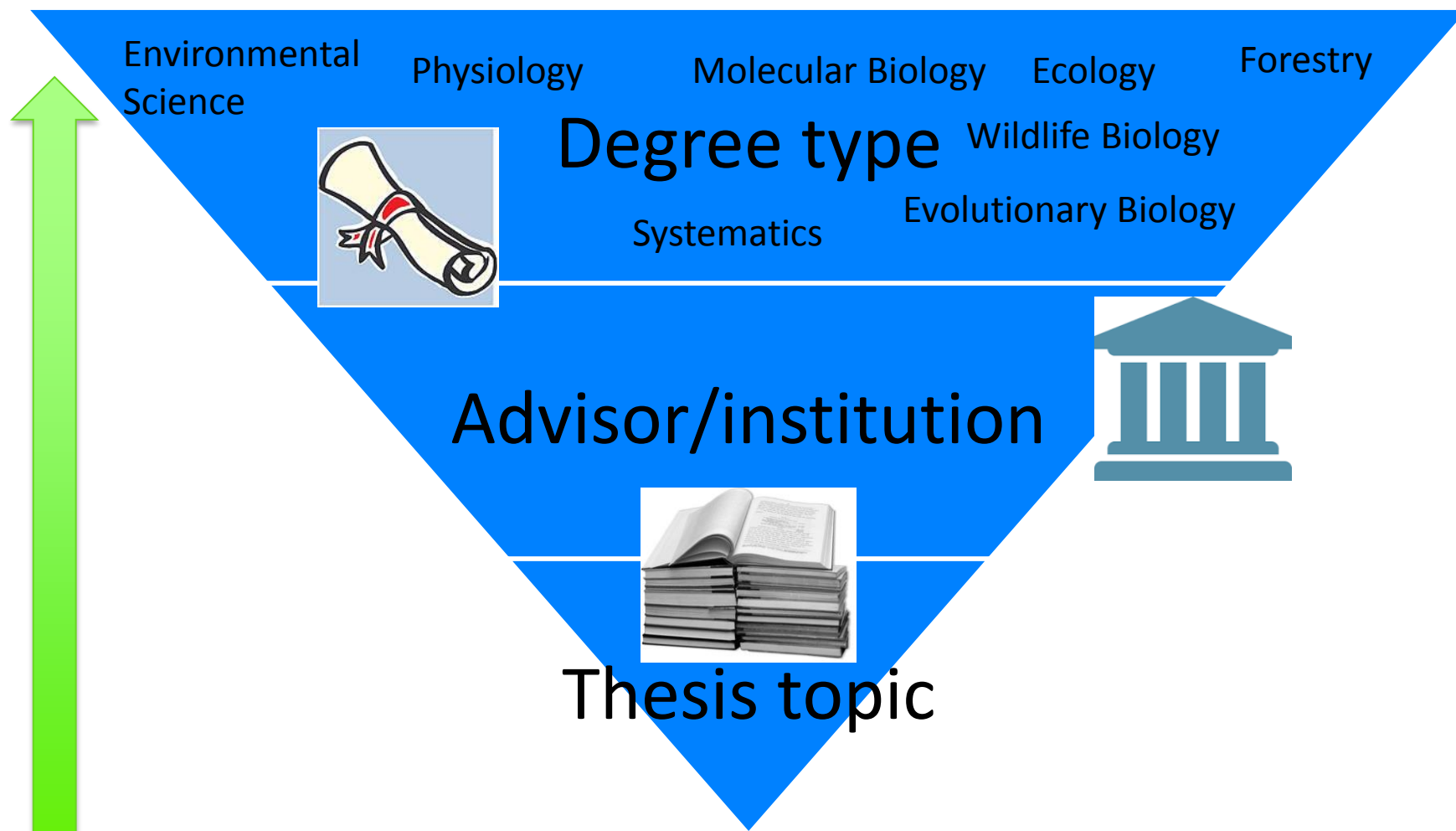


**I am not sure what people have told you but...**





# Now what?



# What to study?

- Get experience:
  - Get research experiences as an undergraduate
  - After graduation, find internships, seasonal jobs, or volunteer positions

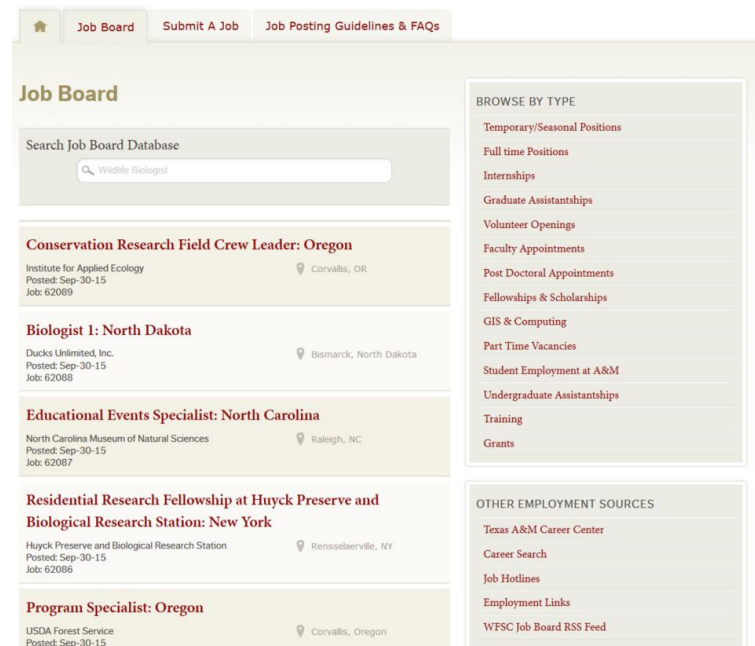


# What to study?

- Talk to current professionals
- Check out the job market



## Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences Job Board



The screenshot shows the 'Job Board' page of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. It features a search bar with the text 'Wildlife Biologist' entered. Below the search bar, there are several job listings:

- Conservation Research Field Crew Leader: Oregon**  
Institute for Applied Ecology | Corvallis, OR | Posted: Sep-30-15 | Job: 62089
- Biologist I: North Dakota**  
Ducks Unlimited, Inc. | Bismarck, North Dakota | Posted: Sep-30-15 | Job: 62088
- Educational Events Specialist: North Carolina**  
North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences | Raleigh, NC | Posted: Sep-30-15 | Job: 62087
- Residential Research Fellowship at Huyck Preserve and Biological Research Station: New York**  
Huyck Preserve and Biological Research Station | Rensselaerville, NY | Posted: Sep-30-15 | Job: 62086
- Program Specialist: Oregon**  
USDA Forest Service | Corvallis, Oregon | Posted: Sep-30-15

On the right side of the page, there are two sections: 'BROWSE BY TYPE' and 'OTHER EMPLOYMENT SOURCES'. 'BROWSE BY TYPE' includes links for Temporary/Seasonal Positions, Full time Positions, Internships, Graduate Assistantships, Volunteer Openings, Faculty Appointments, Post Doctoral Appointments, Fellowships & Scholarships, GIS & Computing, Part Time Vacancies, Student Employment at A&M, Undergraduate Assistantships, Training, and Grants. 'OTHER EMPLOYMENT SOURCES' includes links for Texas A&M Career Center, Career Search, Job Hotlines, Employment Links, and WFSC Job Board RSS Feed.

<http://wfscjobs.tamu.edu/job-board/>

## Remember to relax

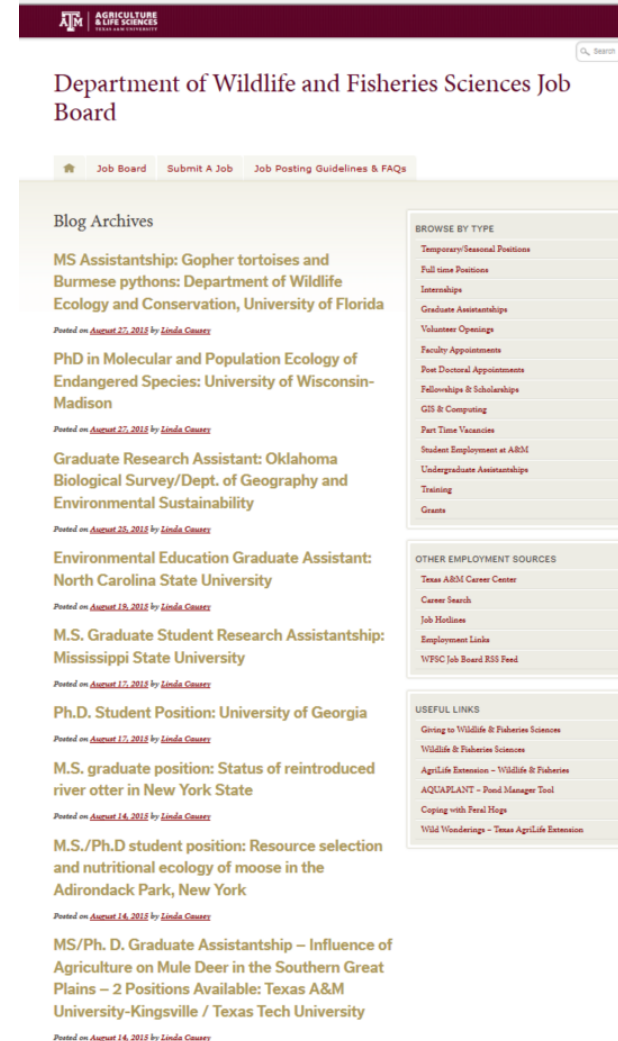
- Graduate school is the beginning of your journey not the end.





# Picking a graduate advisor/program

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



The screenshot shows the website for the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences Job Board at Texas A&M University. The header includes the university logo and the department name. Below the header, there are navigation links for 'Job Board', 'Submit A Job', and 'Job Posting Guidelines & FAQs'. The main content area is titled 'Blog Archives' and lists several job postings with their titles, dates, and authors. On the right side, there are three sidebar sections: 'BROWSE BY TYPE' with a list of job categories, 'OTHER EMPLOYMENT SOURCES' with links to external job boards, and 'USEFUL LINKS' with various resource links.

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences Job Board

Job Board Submit A Job Job Posting Guidelines & FAQs

Blog Archives

MS Assistantship: Gopher tortoises and Burmese pythons: Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, University of Florida  
*Posted on August 27, 2012 by Linda Conner*

PhD in Molecular and Population Ecology of Endangered Species: University of Wisconsin-Madison  
*Posted on August 27, 2012 by Linda Conner*

Graduate Research Assistant: Oklahoma Biological Survey/Dept. of Geography and Environmental Sustainability  
*Posted on August 25, 2012 by Linda Conner*

Environmental Education Graduate Assistant: North Carolina State University  
*Posted on August 19, 2012 by Linda Conner*

M.S. Graduate Student Research Assistantship: Mississippi State University  
*Posted on August 17, 2012 by Linda Conner*

Ph.D. Student Position: University of Georgia  
*Posted on August 17, 2012 by Linda Conner*

M.S. graduate position: Status of reintroduced river otter in New York State  
*Posted on August 16, 2012 by Linda Conner*

M.S./Ph.D student position: Resource selection and nutritional ecology of moose in the Adirondack Park, New York  
*Posted on August 16, 2012 by Linda Conner*

MS/Ph. D. Graduate Assistantship – Influence of Agriculture on Mule Deer in the Southern Great Plains – 2 Positions Available: Texas A&M University-Kingsville / Texas Tech University  
*Posted on August 16, 2012 by Linda Conner*

BROWSE BY TYPE

- Temporary/Seasonal Positions
- Full time Positions
- Internships
- Graduate Assistantships
- Volunteer Openings
- Faculty Appointments
- Post Doctoral Appointments
- Fellowships & Scholarships
- GIS & Computing
- Part Time Vacancies
- Student Employment at ARMS
- Undergraduate Assistantships
- Training
- Grants

OTHER EMPLOYMENT SOURCES

- Texas ARMS Career Center
- Career Search
- Job Hotlines
- Employment Links
- WFSC Job Board RSS Feed

USEFUL LINKS

- Giving to Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences
- Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences
- AgriLife Extension – Wildlife & Fisheries
- AQUAPLANT – Pond Manager Tool
- Coping with Feral Hogs
- Wild Wonderings – Texas AgriLife Extension

[http://wfscjobs.tamu.edu/?job\\_category=graduate-assistantships](http://wfscjobs.tamu.edu/?job_category=graduate-assistantships)

# National Institutes of... THE NINE TYPES OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

## Big Talker

These results have clear implications for the cure of cancer in our lifetime

- (+) Makes your data seem really important
- (-) Doesn't really understand what you do

## Slave Driver

You know, 60hrs a week just isn't going to cut it in this lab

- (+) You get lots done
- (-) You forget your spouse's name

## Demi God

- (+) Power, prestige, better job prospects
- (-) You never see them

## Control Freak

Why didn't you use 25mM NaCl in the second wash?

- (+) Knows exactly what experiment you're doing
- (-) Knows exactly what experiment you're doing

## Science Wonk

Why don't you try this new reverse gyropismatic amplifying DOR technique?

- (+) Knows everything about science
- (-) He's a total geek

## Laid-Back

Make it quick, I've got a 2:00 tee-time

- (+) Leaves you alone
- (-) Doesn't care about your results

## Psycho

WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU MADE A MISTAKE!?

- (+) Keeps you on your toes
- (-) Scary

## Small Town Grocer

- (+) Happy with his own little niche
- (-) Little Ambition

## Rising Star

- (+) Exciting Ride
- (-) Not much room for you

# MARRIAGE vs. The Ph.D.



## Marriage



## Ph.D.

Typical Length:

7.5 years

7 years

Begins with:

A proposal

A thesis proposal

Culminates in a ceremony where you walk down an aisle dressed in a gown:



Usually entered into by:

Foolish young people in love

Foolish young people without a job

50% end in:

Bitter divorce

Bitter remorse

Involves exchange of:

Vows

Know-how

Until death do you part?

If you're lucky

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

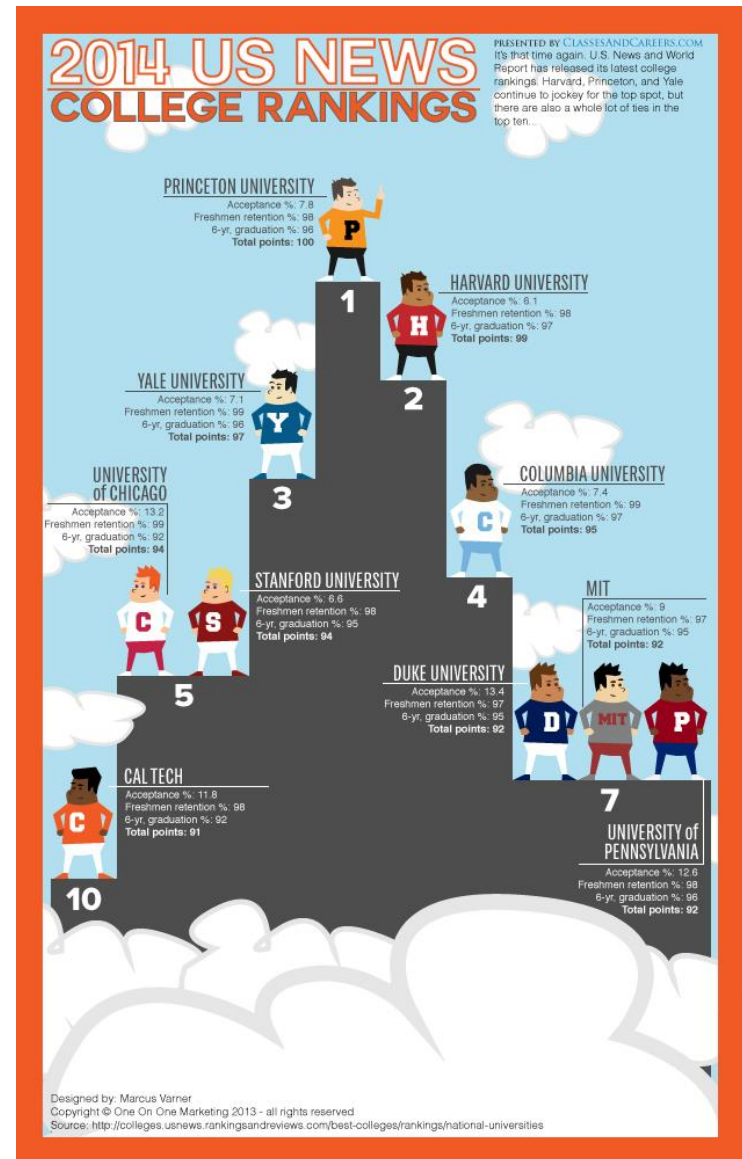
## Check references

- Talk to current graduate students
  - Without the advisor present if possible.
- Find recent graduates
- Volunteer in the lab you are interested in



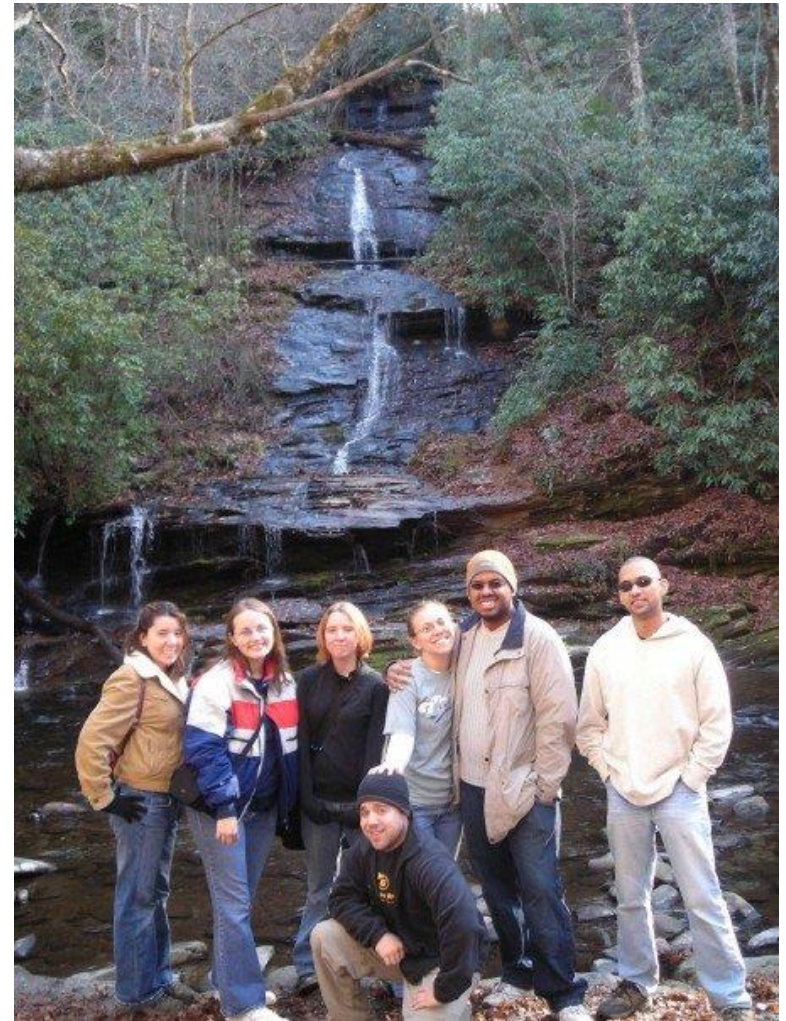
# Consider the institution and program too

- 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:

- Cynical advice: [http://bio.fsu.edu/duval/papers/Stearns\\_cynical\\_advice.pdf](http://bio.fsu.edu/duval/papers/Stearns_cynical_advice.pdf)
- Not so cynical advice [http://bio.fsu.edu/duval/papers/Huey\\_acynical\\_advice.pdf](http://bio.fsu.edu/duval/papers/Huey_acynical_advice.pdf)
- Advice from an ecologist <http://ib.berkeley.edu/labs/lacey/prospectives.html>
- A guide to starting graduate school:  
<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”

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~mpayres/teaching/gradprogram/Wisdom.EEB.htm>

- molecular <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~mpayres/teaching/gradprogram/Wisdom.MCB.htm>
- EE <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~mpayres/teaching/gradprogram/Wisdom.EEB.faculty.htm>
- 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)
- Insider guide into choosing an advisor and lab  
<http://www.psychwww.com/tipsheet/insider.htm>
- Introduction to the PhD comic  
<http://www.phdcomics.com/comics/aboutcomics.php>



# Have questions?

# Contact me @ [mphillips@flmnh.ufl.edu](mailto:mphillips@flmnh.ufl.edu)



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