

## 9/26 Psi Chi General Body Meeting: Graduate School Panel

### Graduate Students:

- David Brush (Clinical)
- Natalie Pickett (Human Factors/ Cognitive)
- Luke Alward (Forensic)
- Richard Currie (Industrial Organization)
- Fernando Montalvo (Human Factors)
- Daniel Pinto (Clinical)
- Rosie Peterson (Clinical)

### What is something that you didn't expect coming into Grad School?

- Luke: The amount of reading required of me per day and how important time management skills truly are.
- Natalie: One of my professors told me not to worry about my grades that much because as long as I don't fail out of the program, grades aren't that important. Research should be your number 1 priority and doing whatever you have to do to complete your research. Another thing would be the social aspect, it really is a balancing act when it comes to finding time to hang out with friends and family because you really are busy all the time.
- Richard: Not having enough time to manage social relationships and stuff that you can't prepare for that stresses you out.
- Rosie: I didn't expect to transfer out of my original lab into a different lab in order to focus more on a particular aspect of research. The process of transferring labs was easier than I anticipated and I'm very grateful for that, although the process depends on the program you're apart of.
- David: The different aspects of being a grad student and what that entails. For example, your responsibilities vary in terms taking classes, teaching, seeing patients, doing research, etc. Time management skills are crucial for accomplishing all of the different tasks and prioritizing tasks.

### Advice for undergrads that are interested in applying to graduate school.

- David Brush: While GRE scores are important, they aren't the end all be all. Most schools want above the 50th percentile for the program and different schools/programs place different emphasis on math or verbal score. It is important to research the schools you are interested in because they tell you important information such as the average GPA/GRE scores of admitted students and the amount of people that stay with the program. Get to know your professors beyond a purely academic standpoint. They can write great letters of recommendation about your character and review your applications. It's perfectly fine to wait a while and build up your resume before applying to PhD programs. I didn't apply right away, I spent time managing a research lab which helped me narrow down my research interests which helped me when I was ready to apply to grad school.

- Natalie Pickett: Make sure when you apply and accept your PhD program that you are ready to start immediately because it is nonstop until you graduate. If you need to take a gap year for your mental health than that is fine because everyone is different and you don't want to run the risk of burning out. When you're applying to schools have a really good back-up plan because sometimes the back-up plan ends up being better than the original plan.
- Richard Currie: Make sure you know for certain that you want to be in a PhD program. The best way to find out is to get involved in research and see if you enjoy it because majority of what you do (about 98%) is research. It is not entirely true that a masters is better than a PhD, so figure out the best path for you. Make sure you are confident in your ability to get in because applying to grad school is expensive and you don't want to waste money.
- Daniel Pinto: The application pool is really fierce so it's best to be as ready as possible and getting research experience is the first step. Don't be afraid to get rejections because they can give you good feedback and help you improve your application to make you a stronger applicant.
- Rosie Peterson: I focused more on the networking aspect to get in because my GRE scores were not that great. It's important to look at the professors for the schools/programs you're interested in and see if your research interests match up. Email potential faculty members asking about their research interests or if they are looking for someone to help with their lab, this helps get your name around. You can boost your resume by volunteering and working.

#### **Did anyone do an H.I.M or something similar and how did that help you?**

- Fernando Montalvo: It's good for getting to know professors which can help you get good letters of recommendation and if you do it in something surrounding your research interests it can help you in your application process.
- Richard Currie: Having research experience is not enough to get into a PhD program, you need to have quality research experience. Try to get as many opportunities as possible more than just helping running a study ex. Poster presentation, get on a publication, etc.
- Natalie Pickett: I did Honors in the Major and all of my interviews asked about it. It is by far the best way to get involved in in-depth research and the process is similar to what you will be doing in the future.

#### **What if you've done research, but you're still not sure about getting a masters or a PhD?**

- Rosie Peterson: For clinical programs it's best to go from a bachelor's to a PhD because PhD programs want to train you a certain way.
- Natalie Pickett: I think it's best to talk to different people and see which one will benefit you in the future.
- David Brush: It depends on what you want to do in the future, perhaps weigh the pros and cons of each option to see if it's worth it. For clinical programs, if research is not

your main priority look into PsyD programs. A PsyD is still a doctorate program, but with less emphasis on research and more on applying.

### **Tips on writing a good personal statement.**

- Natalie Pickett: Be straightforward in your writing and eloquent. Writing takes a lot of time so make sure to give yourself plenty of time to write a good personal statement.
- David Brush: It is important to tailor your personal statement for the school, you can use the same outline but make sure it fits what the school is asking for. It might take multiple rewrites, ask your professors or grad students to review it. You can look up examples online of good and bad personal statements to give you an idea on what yours should look like. A personal statement is really important, it is the only chance you have to tell them anything you deem important so don't waste it.

### **Graduate school funding.**

- Richard Currie: Most good PhD programs are funded and a handful of masters programs are funded too. It is important to do your research to find out if the program you are applying to is funded and if not how much it will cost.
- Luke Alward: Funding varies per program. For example, I am part of the criminal justice PhD program, so funding is merit based, this means that in the beginning it is not funded but if you contribute to the program (i.e. work with professors, etc) it becomes funded.

### **Advice for choosing an advisor:**

- Daniel Pinto: Choose an advisor that has similar if not the same research interests and try to establish a relationship to see if you click.
- Natalie Pickett: Basically, your whole life is dictated by your advisor so it is really important to see if you mesh because your advisor is responsible for guiding and training you. If you have the opportunity try to talk to former/current students to get an honest opinion about a potential advisor.