10/22 Psi Chi General Body Meeting

Introduction: Well blow me down!

Yeeee haaw!  Well blow me down! YEee haw! \*pew pew\*

Dr. Chin: Usually in Research Methods, we have an extra day!  We usually have a little spiel about graduate school. I’ll do a mini version of that!  How many of you are interested in pursuing a Doctorate or Master’s degree?

Lots of hands raise

Emphasis on research is a Doctoral concern.  It doesn’t matter what the field is. If it’s a doctoral degree, you definitely need research experience (except for PsyD).  This is something that everyone will say.

I want to start out by saying none of the things I say are my personal opinion unless I say so.

TOP SECRET INFORMATION!!!!!

Doctoral programs want people who have research.  Go to psychadvising - we’re lucky we even have one here in the psychology department.

It’s better to have some research experience than some research experience - except, what they’re gonna do is pick people with research who have research that aligns with them, or peopple working in the same field.  You want to focus your research experience in the area you want to go to graduate school for. You nneed to convince a research lab and professor that youo are the one person to be in that lab, because they only get to pick so many applicants.

Think about what kind of psychology you want to research in, because you’ll want professors in the field you want to work in to write you letters of rec.  This applies to I/O, HF. There are over 4,000 psych majors here at UCF, and labs will only take either a small amount or 0. The maximum is something like 15.  That’s how many spots there are relative to the major.

You need to start as early as possible, we have sophomores in our lab (probably not freshmen because they have prereqs to take), start ASAP.  Spring of your senior year doesn’t matter unless you take a gap year, but start as soon as you can.

Don’t give up, because you need to be persistent to get into a lab.  Keep asking if there are openings in labs! You have to have a story, where the narrative of your life follows you chasing the field you want to be in.  What you do for a personal statement is to write a story on your journey into professionalism.

If you’re applying to a Master’s program, play to your different strengths as an intern, volunteer, etc.

How can you create the narrative for your future?  What do you like doing that will make sense for your future?  Internships and volunteering experience is great, and research programs are competitive.

It’s all about working to increase your odds to be accepted, and a bit of luck and planning.  You need to present yourself in the best possible way. Emphasize your strengths! Do not talk about what you haven’t managed to do.

You have to be willing to do things you do not have to do.  When we ask things like, “do we have to do that?” That is what graduate schools look for - people to live, eat, and breathe psychology.  They want you to be the type of person to stay up until 2am reading scientific articles.

You don’t get a lot of money in grad school, and they want a research article workhorse.  It’s about intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation, because you become shaped as a person and researcher.

Don’t think about how little you have to do, think about what you can do that is extra that helps you grow.  I wish we could say that all 4,000 people were lining up at the door to volunteer for things.

You don’t have to be here, but you are - you’re one of those people.  This is exactly the type of person they’re looking for, to show up to a meeting at 6:00pm for a meeting.  You should make friends with people and stress as little as possible.

One advantage of a PhD program is that programs offer big money to go to them - most Master’s programs offer nothing.

You learn to make do without a lot of things, like an old car - at least in my days.  This was before Uber! And we didn’t eat fancy meals.

Jackie: I know most PhD programs ddon’t want students to have outside jobs?

Dr. Chin: So how do you afford a - life?  I was making $13,000 a year in my heyday, and we could pay for rent and utilities and some food.  Occasionally we’d pool money together and do something for cheap. No one’s charging to go for a hike or bike ride!

Besides the money they give you for being a GRA or GTA, they usually give you tuition waivers for costs.  You’re basically paying more for everything else in life than school. Usually people are bringing a paycheck of $1,000 a month, and you have a lot of difficulty working with relationships when you’re work is .

There are times where you ask yourself, what am I doing?!  You’re working hours with unknown end times or your advisor gives you work over the weekend.  Sometimes you go to the psych department at night and do work. They don’t hand out PhD’s to just everybody.  50% of the people in my program didn’t make it through the program, after being accepted to the lab.

It’s kind of a scary thought, that you’ll try this and not make it - but for a lot of people psychology is their passion and they want to do original research on topics that no one has ever investigated before.  It’s important to think about your motivation!

Going into a Master’s program can help you get better letters of recommendation for a PhD program, but some programs do build their Master’s programs into a Doctoral program.  If you can find a program that states that they admit a high amount of Master’s students into their Doctoral program, then that is surely a program to look into. However, PhD programs can be snobby!

Jackie: As a Master’s student, I’m sure you’re able to get a part-time job?

Dr. Chin: Yes, in Master’s programs you can work part-time and focus on a job where you wouldn’t be able to do that in a PhD program.

If you’ve had a course with me, I’ll probably write you a letter of recommendation!  Get 3 academic leltters, they don’t want a letter from your manager at Applebee’s or your swim coach.  They want someone with at least a Master’s degree to write you a letter. For Doctoral programs, get someone who is at least a Doctoral candidate to write you a letter.

You have to really want the degree deep down to do it.  Don’t wait too long to apply, but you can take a gap year to build up your experience before applying to grad school.

It takes at least 5 years for a PhD, and at least 2 years for a full-time Master’s program (5 for full-time).

Dr. Chin: Yee haw!

Try and visit the grad schools you’re applying to.  When you visit, go talk to the graduate students - and they’ll tell you “secrets” that only graduate students know that the faculty don’t talk about.

If you don’t get in, don’t just “take a year off” doing nothing - do something that will help get you in next time!  Work on making yourself a stronger applicant.

If you guys have any questions, drop by my office hours or send me an email - ask me questions!  If you are reading this from the website, you can email me too!

Student: Is it okay to apply to more than one program at a school?

Dr. Chin: It could look bad for a Doctoral program because applying to different fields within a school will destroy your personal statement.  If the faculty you’re applying for do collaborative research in other fields, they might tell you to apply to both! That is totally fine, something like applying to the business department and I/O program.  Just make sure it fits into your story.

It’s amazing who knows who, so just be careful where you apply multiple times to.

I hope I don’t scare you!  If you are a good student and you do research or get good GRE scores, you have a good chance of getting in!  Don’t give up!