

## Psi Chi March 2011 Meeting Graduate School Timeline

Dr. Tim Nelson

### List of questions you should be asking yourself:

- **Do I really want to go to graduate school?**
  - You should not go to graduate school because you do not know what to do
  - You should not go to graduate school because you want to be called a doctor
  - You should not go to graduate school because you want to make money
- **Is the thought of taking classes, doing research, and writing papers sound miserable to you?**
  - Do not go to graduate school
- **Do I want to go to graduate school for clinical or can I do anything else? (Avoid clinical if at all possible)**
  - Most people assume clinical psychology is the only way to go
  - If you want to work in clinically psychology, it makes sense
  - But if you want to do research, there are many other opportunities
    - Developmental, Biopsychology, Cognitive, Quantitative, etc.

### Clinical

- Way harder to get into
- Takes you longer
- You will have to move and do an internship
- You will have to do a post doc
- You will have to get licensed
- About 2.5% of clinical applicants get in at UNL
  - Incredibly competitive elsewhere, too

### Clinical Psychology

- **Do want to get a doctorate?**
  - Different states have different laws in terms of whether you can practice with a masters
  - If your goal is just to practice and you do not want to do research, you could do so with your masters
- **Which doctorate do I want?**
  - **Psy. D.** –meant to be a more applied degree – more practice focused and less research focused
    - These degrees tend to be less respected in the field
    - These people make less money
    - They tend to struggle getting their internship
      - Nothing worse than doing graduate school and then not getting the internship you need to actually receive your degree
  - **Ph. D.** – research and clinical training
    - Programs across the country range on being heavy on the research training and light on the clinical training or vice versa
    - Applying to the right program and getting into the program is finding where you want to be on that continuum

- You will do 4-6 years of graduate school
  - Then you have to do a 1 year internship on top of it
  - Very competitive
  - 25% of applicants do not get an internship their first year
  - If you never get your internship, you will never get your degree

### **What Topic Area Within Clinical Do I Want to Study?**

- You apply to work with a specific faculty mentor
- It is all about fitting with that one person and that one lab
- If you do not know what you want to study, you will not know where to apply
- You pick your program based on your specific interests
  - You can write better personal statements because you will be able to tailor them to the specific schools and specific faculty within those schools
- If you do not fit with the program – you will not get in
  - Even if you have good grades and GRE scores

### **Practitioner and Researcher Continuum**

- Go to the website of each program and look at the stuff they are talking about
- Science-practitioner – balanced between research and clinical
- Clinical-scientist – research oriented
- Psy. D. or Avail model – clinical oriented
- You can also just faculty from the school you are interested in

### **Grades matter**

- Measures whether you are a quality student
- Above a 3.5

### **GRE**

- GRE scores do not have to be “through the roof” but you have to have a solid score
- Give yourself time to take the GRE twice
  - BUT... only take the GRE if you know you can IMPROVE DRAMATICALLY
  - If you take it again, you have to wait a month after your last test
- You can study for this and IMPROVE
- Allow a month or two of solid studying for it
- Take it the summer before your senior year

### **Research Experience**

- Start as early as you possibly can
- Real experiences – do not do just an hour or two a week
- Poster presentations or publications
  - Undergraduate research fair
  - Regional research conventions

### **Letters of Recommendations**

- You will need three

- You want people to write letters who have relationships with you and know your skills outside the classroom
  - Ex. Research faculty

## **Personal Statement**

- The personal statement is a professional statement
- It is NOT personal and about you and your emotions and problems
- They should be about your interests and experiences and fitting yourself to a particular place
- Show that that faculty member does what you want to do
  - Make sure that that person is actually taking graduate students though
- You will modify it for each place you apply to
- Usually 2-3 pages in length
  - Be concise and clear
  - Explain how you have prepared to do graduate work

## **What If I Don't Get Accepted?**

- You do not have enough experience or you were not a good fit
- You just need to get more experience
  - Be a full-time research assistant
  - Work in a children's hospital
- If you applied to places that you didn't fit with, you will want to reevaluate the places you applied to

## **How Many Schools Do I Apply To?**

- Do not apply to as many schools as you can
- 12 is the magic number
- If you start to get to many, you will have a hard time going to interviews and traveling
- Plus, applications and traveling are EXPENSIVE

## **Should I Use Masters as a "Stepping Stone?"**

- Only if the masters experience is relevant
- Some research experiences may look better than getting a master's degree
- This also stretches out your time line
- That masters degree may also not count towards your Ph.D. degree later on
- Plus, it costs money

## **Interviews**

- Be normal (no inappropriate behavior, use good social skills)
- Have questions ready to ask
- Let them know why you fit and why you should be accepted
- Read your personal statement again and hit those same points
- The entire time you are there, you are being interviewed
  - With graduate students, with faculty, everywhere

## **Rankings**

- Do not believe school rankings
- Just ask the faculty you are working with what the good schools are in terms of what you are interested in
- You do not just have to look at the top programs because you must remember that ***YOU ARE APPLYING TO A PERSON – NOT A SCHOOL***
  - Excellent people are working at schools that are not ranked
- Plus, it is what you have done in graduate school and not WHERE you have done it

## **Money**

- If you go to a good reputable program, your tuition will be waived and a stipend
- Also eligible for student loans
- You will not go into debt to get another degree
- YOU GET PAID TO GO TO GRADUATE SCHOOL