Psi Chi/UPO Minutes

November 4, 2013

**Life as a grad student**

Overview: Six UNL graduate students from the psychology department (Clinical, Social, Psych/Law, Cognitive, Neural Science and Behavior, and Developmental) gave their opinions and personal experiences of applying to graduate school to attending graduate school.

Notes from President:

* Sign in and pick up water bottles if you had paid your dues to UPO
* Members of Psi Chi can purchases a water bottle for $5

President opened up questions

**Questions asked**

*When is the most reasonable time to start looking into graduate school and starting the process?*

* Junior and senior year start looking at names in research that were really interesting and looking at those programs more closely and other programs related to those programs
* One graduate student advised that a masters program helped narrow down her interests. (If you are unsure if you want to commit to 4+ years of school)
* Have an idea of where you want to apply when you take the GRE because they send your scores to 4 places for free. Otherwise it’s $20-$30 per school
* Recommended applying to both PhD and masters programs to have a sort of backup plan
* Be somewhat flexible in what you would like to do
* Email the person in the lab so you can know if they are actually taking students about a year in advanced. That way you don’t spend the money to apply when they are not even accepting students.
* Letters of recommendation. It is very important to make sure you give your professors enough time to write a GOOD letter of recommendation.

*Is there anything you should stay away from in a PhD or master program?*

* It is all about the fit between you and the program (including faculty)
* If you are invited to interview weekend you need to go
  + First impression is really key
  + Ask graduate students questions about the faculty while you are attending interview weekend.
  + Have specific questions about the program, graduate students, etc. to ask

*What do you think about taking time off after graduating undergrad and applying to graduate school?*

* If you take time off, make sure you do things that will benefit your CV
* Keep track of your old professors as well

*What is the major difference between graduate school and undergrad?*

* Graduate is a heavier workload than undergraduate
* You have to be far more independent in graduate school
* You come up with own projects and come up with your own time schedule to graduate, you aren’t given as many deadlines (those you create yourself)

*What is your daily schedule like as a graduate student?*

* The majority attends classes, do research, and also teach classes.

*Pros and Cons between a masters program and a PhD program?*

* In a PhD program you receive a stipend, but in most masters programs (that they were aware of) you do not receive a stipend.

*Who should you get letters of recommendation from?*

* General rule is you want faculty members to write your letters also try and get to know the professor beyond your letter grade.
* The best way to get experience is to do research in a lab.

*What type of research makes you stand out?*

* Running your own project is very important
  + In general knowing what is going on in the project gives you a step up
* Knowing what you are doing and why it is important is one of the most important things you can do
* Doing something like UCARE is very good as well

**General Advice from the graduate students**

* Pick out your dream schools but also pick out back up schools and some in the middle as well
* When in the process of applying: Be flexible, be open, and ask lots of questions

Presented a website:

* Graduate-schools.phds.org
  + Not a starting point for looking at schools but it is a good resource