Psychology Graduate School Panel

An opportunity to hear about some psychology graduate experiences!

Hosted by Peer Advisers: Frank and Vivian

Graduate Programs/Degrees in Psychology

- M.A.
  - Training to become a practitioner in a variety of fields (mental health services, government agencies, industry, etc.)
  - Some masters programs can help prepare you for Ph.D programs
- Psy.D.
  - Training for professional practice in psychology (e.g., clinical, counseling)
  - Little to no research
- Ph.D.
  - Training to become researcher in a particular area (e.g., clinical, social, cognitive, developmental, behavioral neuroscience)
  - Clinical programs also involve training to become a practitioner or licensed psychotherapist (e.g., clinical psychologist)
  - Careers include academia, industry, and professional practice

Applying to a Ph.D Program

- Major Components
  - GRE
  - GPA
  - Letters of Recommendation
  - Personal Statement
- Process
  - Solicit LOR (at least a month before 1st deadline)
  - Submit applications (Nov-Dec)
  - Visit Day/Interview (Jan-Mar)
  - Make your decision (Apr)
  - Begin (Aug-Sep)

Getting Research Experience @UCSC as an undergraduate

- Options
  - Volunteer
  - Psych 194 (Advanced Research)
  - Psych 193 (Field Study)
- Many ways to get involved
  - Talk to your professors
  - Talk to your TAs
  - Talk to the researchers when you participate in studies
  - Check out lab websites- some opportunities are posted online and near the psych department

Psychology Graduates Panel

Abby Walsh
(she/her/hers)

5th Year Developmental

Research on gender,
ethnicity, and sexuality
in children's media

Andrew Guydish
(he/him)

2nd Year Cognitive

Research on Spontaneous
Communication with
Professor Jean E. Fox Tree

Emily Hentschke
(she/her)

4th Year Social

Research on Economic
Justice, Narrative of
poverty and their
influences on policy

What was your experience applying to grad school?

Emily:

After undergrad, I knew I wanted to go to graduate school but I didn't know exactly what that would look like (I was debating between a Social Psychology PhD and a Masters in Public Policy or Public Administration). I took two years off to work at nonprofits, figure out what I wanted, and have plenty of time to do research on programs. I ultimately decided I wanted a PhD in social psychology in the Spring before I applied, took the GRE and researched programs in the summer, and applied in the fall.

Andrew:

It's a bit overwhelming. I definitely recommend planning ahead, staying organized, and taking your time!

What did you do to prepare and gain experience for grad school?

Emily:

I joined research labs as an undergraduate, I volunteered in the community and interned at nonprofits to gain real world experience that still informs my world view and research today, I bought books written by researchers whose work I was interested in to figure out more of my research interests. The most important thing I did was take an opportunity to conduct my own research study (there are different grants, programs, and capstone opportunities on campus), that really solidified my interest in research and I think helped me get into a program.

Andrew:

I joined several labs during my undergraduate degree. Over the course of my undergrad, I had roughly 1000 hours spent working in labs. That experience in invaluable, for it doesn't only get you prepared for the work you'll be doing as a grad student, but it sets you apart from other applicants.

How did you find programs to apply to?

Emily:

Spend a lot of time researching programs. In some ways this is the most important step. I had a google spreadsheet of programs that I spent a lot of time refining and adding to and a lot of different search techniques. I knew that I wanted an applied program that would allow me to conduct research in the community with a social justice focus so I played around a lot with different search terms involving those things (Social Psychology PhD program, community, justice, etc.). I also looked back through journal articles that I read in classes that were interesting to me and looked up what universities the authors were at.

Andrew:

I wanted to stay local (I'm from Santa Cruz, and did my undergrad here at UCSC), so the programs I applied to were around the bay area mostly. That's how I arrived at SJSU for my masters, and why I'm now back at UCSC!

What 3 recommendations would you give undergrads for gaining experience/applying?

Emily:

1. Take time off if you need it: Unless you know exactly what type of program you want to go to and you are able to devote a lot of time to the application process during your senior year, I recommend taking time off between undergrad and grad school to work, travel, network, breathe, think, and be, so you can go into graduate school with more clarity about your passions and goals. I hear people being worried that if they take a break that they will lose momentum, be behind, or never go to grad school, but most people in PhD programs and even some masters programs don't go straight from undergrad.

2. Talk to faculty about graduate school: Make connections with faculty early and often and ask them for advice about choosing a career path. Even if you don't want to apply right away, you can still maintain relationships with faculty to get letters years later, just visit their office hours before you graduate and let them know that you want to apply to graduate school (eventually when you are ready you can give them your CV, a personal statement, and remind them about your relationship to them to help them write the letter). You can also ask for their graduate school advice to further build relationships with them and get more great tips!

What 3 recommendations would you give undergrads for gaining experience/applying?

Emily:

3. Contact schools before you apply: It is always a great idea to contact programs before you apply, maybe they have a visiting day or application information sessions, it is a great idea to make some connections and learn a bit more about the program. You can ask if there is a current graduate student there that you can talk to as well, graduate students are usually more than happy to help people who are interested in applying because we all know how challenging the process can be. If you are applying to a PhD program absolutely email the faculty you are interested in working with. (I was too scared to do that and it was a huge mistake, I ended up wasting time and money applying to work with people who were not even considering accepting students that year and I could have found that out if I would have emailed them beforehand).

Andrew:

Join a lab as soon as you can, start thinking about three letters of recommendation, and give yourself plenty of time to apply! Each grad school has a different app, so it's vital to stay organized.

Why did you choose grad school?

Emily:

> While I was gaining experiences in working in different communities at nonprofits and traveling I found myself wanting to work more upstream to address root issues and having a lot of research questions about how to make more lasting/sustainable social change, so a PhD felt right for me.

Andrew:

> Research. I loved the idea of going after questions that I came up with, and chasing after new knowledge. Also, I really enjoy the independence. It's up to myself to set my scheduling and deadlines.

What/where did you study during your undergrad and is it along the lines of what you're studying now?

Emily:

I started as a bio major and then switched to psychology. The more I took classes and worked in the community the more my interests evolved from being a clinical psychologist to being a nonprofit executive director, to being a professor and researcher (Social psychology classes changed everything for me). I also got certificates (like mini minors) in Nonprofit Management and Serving at Risk Youth, to gain more experience. My senior research project was centered around designing a stigma free food pantry on campus and now I work on projects related to basic needs here so in a way my research has stayed on a similar path. However as time has gone on I have certainly gained a more explicit policy focus to my work. Research interests are continually evolving and that is part of why it is exciting!

Andrew:

Yes! I studied here at UCSC, and I studied Cognitive Science (emphasis was HCI and AI).

What are you planning to do after grad school?

Emily:

I plan on gaining some experience in the policy world (working at a think tank, doing a policy fellowship, etc.) and then becoming a professor and researcher. I want my research to be able to inform social policies but I need to gain more experience about the policy making process first.

Andrew:

I hope to be a professor some day!

How do you deal with the costs that grad school comes along with?

Emily:

Loans, hustle, being resourceful, picking up extra work here and there, applying for grants and fellowships. It is hard and stressful but definitely doable.

Andrew:

Budgeting. There are a lot of horror stories out there regarding financial situations of grad students. To be honest, it's not the best, BUT it is definitely doable. Funding / financial packages should be a top topic for students looking at programs.

If you could go back in time, what would you have done differently in your academic career?

Emily:

> More time boundaries. I am still learning this. It is hard to prioritize doing your own research and writing when you are TAing, taking classes, and trying to be a functioning human, so I wish I would have allocated protected structured time to my own research and writing earlier and better.

Andrew:

> I've honestly been very lucky, and have been very content with my career thus far. IF I were to go back, I would go back and spend some more time on my applications. That was a very stressful time (including GREs) and I think if I had given myself more time, it wouldn't have been so bad!

Do you recommend grad school?

Emily:

Yes if you know it is what you want. Do not go to grad school because you are not sure what you want to do, or it feels like it is what you should do.

Andrew:

Absolutely, 100%.

Psychology Department Hours:
Peer Advisors Drop-in Advising: 9:00-12:00 & 1:00-4:00
Social Sciences 2, Room 273
831-459-2002

Thank you to our graduates and thank you for coming!