

1.) How to best prepare for graduate school in undergrad?

Research opportunities:

- Wet lab skills
- Mentoring
- Networking in your area of interest

Summer internship

- Understanding what research is like full time
- Can make connections for graduate school

Masters degree

- Exposure to different topics and areas in research
- Salary increase
- More informed to decide whether academia is for you
- More qualified for a PhD

Post-Baccalaureate Program

- Understanding full time research work
- Expertise and skill
- Salary
- Able to “try out” a laboratory and meet the faculty
- More qualified for PhD
- SNIP: summer neuroscience internship program
 - can meet faculty
 - practice interview skills

NIH Preparatory Program: Fully funded 1-year Post-Baccalaureate program

- Low income
- First generation students
- Diversity: (Race, Gender, Sexuality)
- RA position while taking graduate courses, funneled into PhD program, on track with other PhD candidates to graduate

2.) What if I got a “bad” grade in a required class?

- Most programs want to see that you persevered through it! One class won't prevent you from acceptance into every program
- Classes aren't the best measure of your success!
- Research experience shows that you've put in the work and will stick with it
- In interviews you can elaborate on your other extracurriculars or research experience in place of your academic record

3.) How do admissions teams look at your application?

- You are applying in a holistic way, once you meet basic requirements, your application is viewed as a whole, taking into account your activities
- You are applying for a mentor, if they aren't taking students you will not be accepted

4.) What strengths helped you get to where you are?

- Summer internships gave great experience
- Strong letters of recommendation from people who know you
- Connect with mentors who have things in common with you and would like to help you
- Add a personal touch to your application (they will remember you better)
- Demonstrate how you are different than other people: everyone is a strong candidate, don't be afraid to show your personality

5.) What weaknesses do you think held you back?

- Lacking classes that are helpful in current research interests (advanced biology and chemistry)

What do interviews look like?

- Letters of Rec! They want to see that you have a good experience with your past mentors, as you will closely be working with them for 6 years
 - Wave your right to review the letters, if you don't opt out, it may be viewed as a negative
- Your research statement: what did you gain from your research experience and how do you know you want to be (and stay) here?

How do I talk about research experience in an interview?

- What question were you looking into?
- What did you find?
- What didn't you like about it?
- What did you enjoy about it?
- Talk about the hard skills involved- they will have to train you if you don't have lab skills

Interview Advice:

- Cold email PIs so that you would be interested in working for, they will vouch for you in the admissions process
- Do not use any form of auto generated email to reach out to PIs
- Review recent publications before your meeting with PIs, this way you have a better understanding of their research and if you want to be there
- DON'T bullsh*t your answers, they will know if your experience isn't real
- Honesty is important: if you didn't enjoy your experience, you can tell the truth about that
 - Do not ridicule your past mentors and burn bridges, you can be honest that you know that research wasn't for you and spin it into a positive direction
- Always have respect, if being pushed or prodded in an interview, maintain a respectful tone rather than a defensive one, be honest about what you don't know they are gauging your response and want to know how you react in a tough spot

- Vibes are everything! Trust your gut in interviews, don't get caught up on a school's "reputation" pick where you "vibe"
- Talk to the students, they will be honest about their experience (happy hours, dinners, etc)

Application Information:

- December 1st applications are due
- Submit Early!!
- Will get rejections right away and may have to wait for others
- DO apply to places where you have a connection (programs want to see your commitment)
- DON'T apply anywhere you couldn't see yourself actually living
- Apply to 8-15 programs, PhD programs are incredibly competitive, this will better your odds
- Fee Waivers!

Do I need to have a field narrowed down before applying to a PhD?

- Pick a mentor, not a field it will make your experience more enjoyable
- Your entire career does not need to be based off of your PhD topic
- It's better to understand what methods and models you enjoy
 - Rodent models
 - Human trials
 - Data models

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