

ESO Meeting Minutes
Monday October 2, 2005

General ESO business:

1. First social event of the year was very successful. 70 people attending orioles vs. red sox game.
2. Attention doctoral students- Stella- will be collecting info on how things are going in the doctoral program? If you have any concerns; email her at Ssyi@jhsph.edu. Meeting Oct 11th at lunch.
3. Finals are coming up: Is anyone planning any stress relief events?
4. Attention first years: Wed Dec 14th is the date of the Holiday party.
5. India service trip: See Brian Lee's October 3rd email; It requires you to do your own fund raising.

Workshop: "So you want to be a doctoral student?"

Presenters: Dr. Thomas Glass, Eric Maeise, and Katie Sutcliffe

General statistics about acceptance into the doctoral program:

Last year, there were 21 in-house applicants from MPH/MHS programs; 16 admitted; 5 were rejected.

Reasons for rejection:

1. Lack of experience (Need 1 year of work experience).
2. Focus was not clear.
3. Grades and comprehensive exams.

Additional advice: Build relationships with advisors because their recommendations count; Probability of getting in is good if in-house. Be sure to have the whole application complete so that it is forwarded from the admissions office to Fran.

Applying to the doctoral program; What the committee needs to make their job easier:

Dr. Glass was on the admissions committee for 5 years and has offered the following advice on the application process. In general all in-house students have good grades, strong backgrounds, and good GRE scores. It is important to focus on the statement and work experience.

The Statement

1. The goals for the statement are outlined on the website under the guidelines page: These are more specific and informative! Use!
2. Stay within 2 page limit. (5 pages has extraneous or irrelevant information)
3. Don't start statement with personal experience; Don't give a travel log. Either of these are not relevant on a population level.
4. Overall the statement is a way for the committee to evaluate how **effective** you are at **communication**. Beware of a sloppy essay, lack of focus, or a poor grasp of the English language. Edit and re-edit.
5. Convey thoughtfulness and **intellectual maturity**. Don't be vague. What is your anticipated career plan? What research areas interest you? 90% of personal statements are on work experience and 10% on career plans. The reverse is preferred. The work experience is easily seen on your resume/CV. Saying that you want to gain more skills and apply them to the field of public health conveys that you are not ready for the doctoral program. Be specific about your aims and future career goals! (ie. You want to be a methodologist who wants to do multilevel modeling at the individual and population level. You want to train in clinical trials and go to a pharmaceutical company.)
6. Convey **clear trajectory of future research**. Doctoral students are a major investment for the faculty so there is a higher level of scrutiny. Once you are in the program, you can change/modify the direction you stated in your statement. The statement is a working document. If you don't know your

trajectory, then go and get experience and come back. Otherwise, your statement may convey floundering.

CVs

1. Keep them lean and mean. Eliminate extraneous stuff such as dance instructor or bartender.
2. You need at least 1 year of **work experience**. There are a few exceptions. Why? It ensures that you are able to carry out/execute a research program. You learn to differentiate good questions vs. bad questions. If you are more of a student mind-set, you may look for someone else to tell you the difference. Remember, you start as a student and leave as a colleague.
3. For those with little work experience, it is harder to make the transition into a professional career. It also takes longer to complete the dissertation.
4. Don't just compile all "work" experience to equal a year. Need a consistent year in lab or on a project.

Letter of recommendation

1. This is the single least useful part of the application. All recommendations say the same thing, "this student walks on water".
2. The one letter that matters most is from your advisor. Have your advisor comment on your research goals in their recommendation.

Comprehensive exam scores

1. These raise flags if they are low (in 70s or did not pass)
2. They can be offset by a strong performance in classes (biostats) or if the student has trouble with the English language.
3. A 480 on verbal, a questionable recommendation, or a "C" in a course can be offset by a strong essay.

General questions

1. **How do you write a second statement?** Don't read your first one. Write a new one because it has different objectives.
2. **Who reads the statement?** 3 members of department. 2 of the admissions committee and one other who has similar interests or who was mentioned in your essay; A faculty member is needed who can train/mentor you.
3. **How does the Epi dept. deal with Dr.PH?** This is a more practical degree and therefore has different goals. Applicants may focus more on prevention programs. Applicants are evaluated according to the research in the department. If your research is more in the scope of IH, then you will be referred to that department. Otherwise the principles are the same. Where do you want to be in 5 years?

Suggestions from other students who have made the transition

Eric:

1. Take your time in applying. Do not wait till the last minute.
2. Have an alternate plan. Hopkins may not be your first choice; Review how you may strengthen your application.

Katie:

1. Follow guidelines on the website.
2. Focus on the statement.
3. You don't need to submit grades because they are already on file.
4. You also only need one more letter of recommendation.