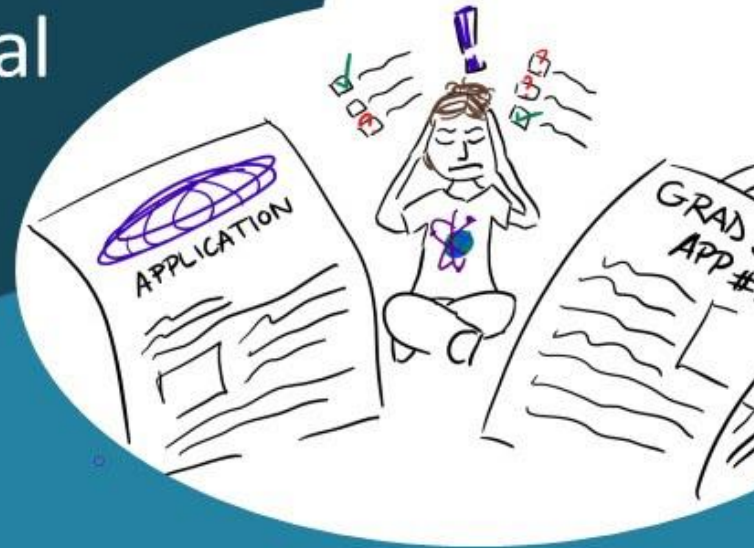


How to apply for graduate school in Ecology and the environmental sciences

WildResearch
Workshop
Series 2021



Date: May 19, 2021

Time: 6 PM – 7:30 PM

Location: Online

Speaker: Dr. Jacob Usinowicz, UBC





x^wməθk^wəy'əm

(musqueam)

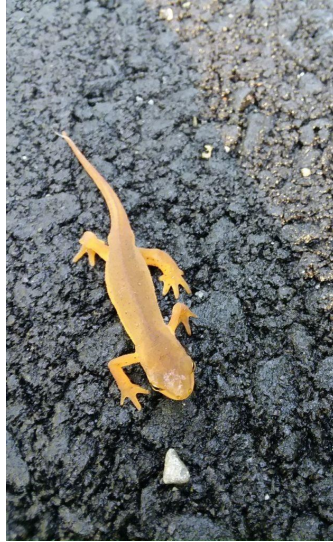
About me

18 yrs



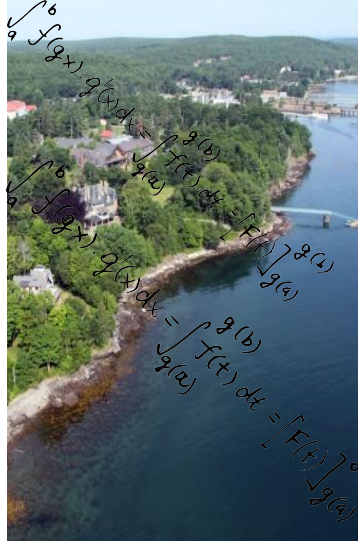
About me

18 yrs



NJ

4 yrs



Undergrad

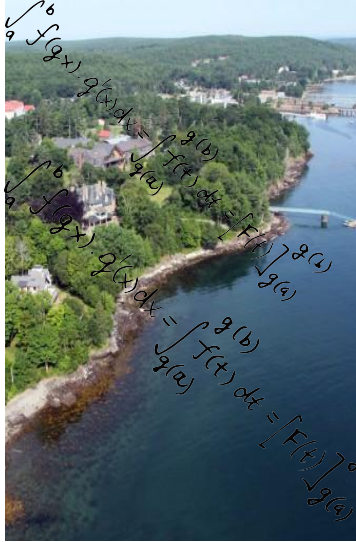
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Undergrad

~5 yrs



Grad school

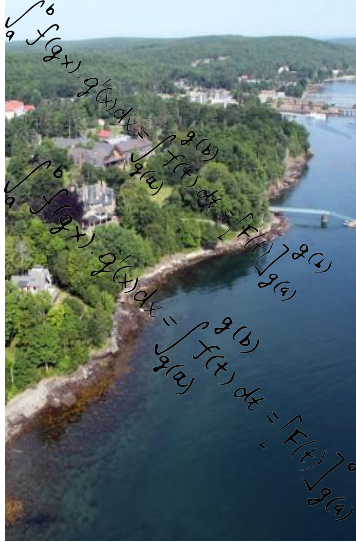
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FAIL

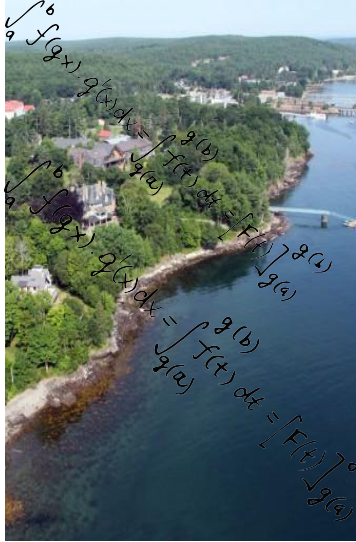
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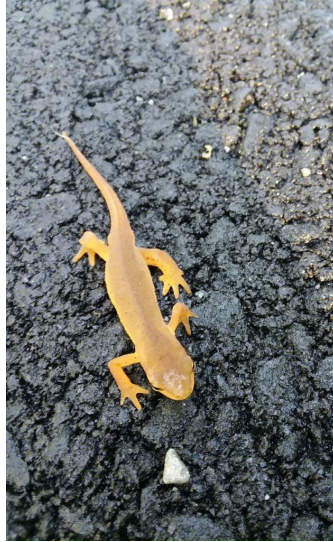
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Real world

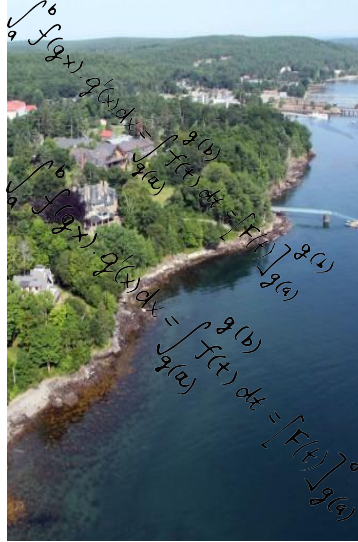
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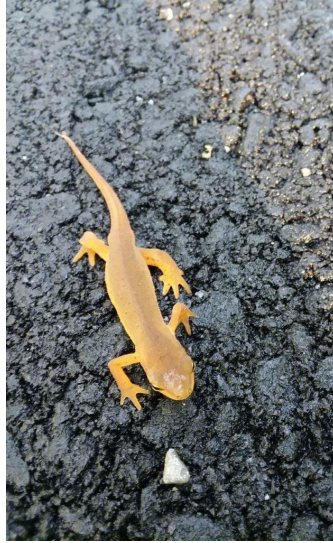
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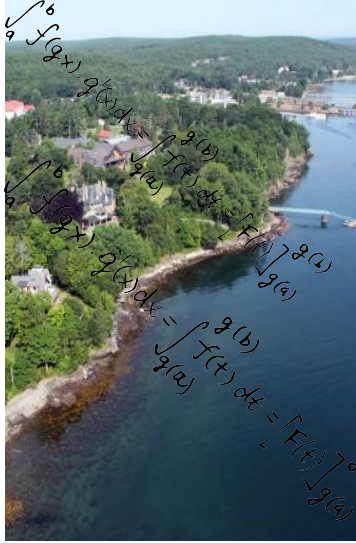
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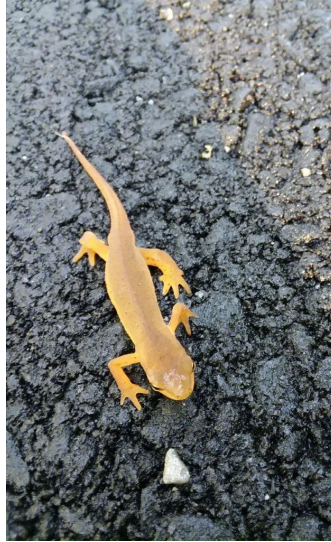
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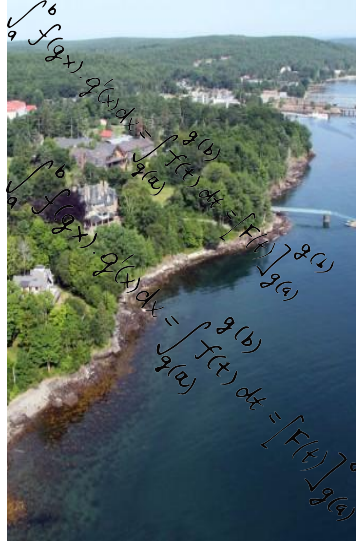
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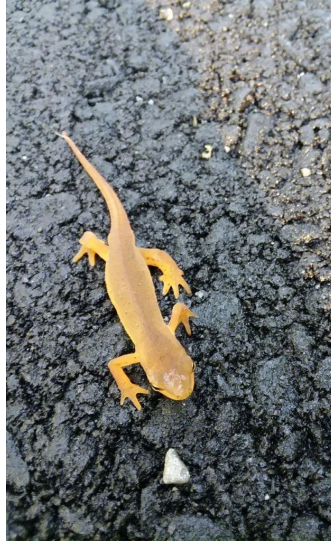
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Grad school

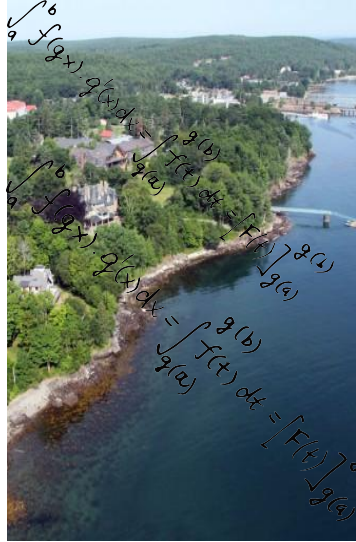
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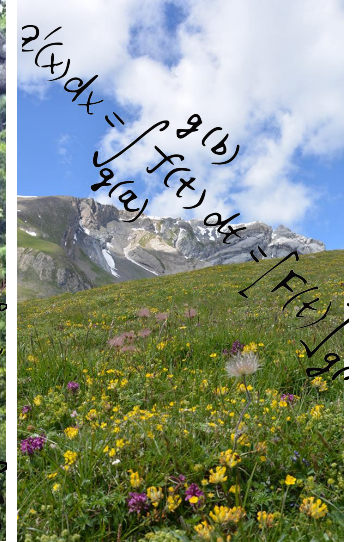
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~5 yrs



Grad school

~4 yrs



Postdoc 1

Overview: The steps of applying

Find a lab

Reach out

Interview I: The “informal” interview

Interview II/ Applying/ Choosing

Overview: The steps of applying

Find a lab

Reach out

→ What are potential mentors looking for?

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→ What are potential mentors looking for?

→ Funding?!

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Dealing with rejection

1. Find a lab

This is where a successful career in grad school begins.

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Alistair Blachford | Department of Zoology
zoology.ubc.ca



Jennifer Klenz | Department of Zoology
zoology.ubc.ca



Doug Altshuler | Department of Zoology
zoology.ubc.ca



6th annual Zoology Faculty Research Symposium



Ben Matthews | Department of Zoology
zoology.ubc.ca



Di (Amy) Liu | Department of Zoology
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Kenji Sugioka | Department of Zoology
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Eric B. (Rick) Taylor | Department of Zoology
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Matthew Pennell | Department of Zoology
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Katie Marshall | Department of Zoology
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1. Find a lab

Identify a lab that is asking questions or doing work that is of interest to you.



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Jennifer Klenz | Department of ...
zoology.ubc.ca



Doug Altshuler | Department of ...
zoology.ubc.ca



6th an
zoology



Ben Matthews | Department of Zoo...
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Assistant Professor

Our lab investigates how biotic and abiotic factors shape rapid adaptation in ecological communities. We test ecological and evolutionary theory using laboratory and field experiments with freshwater communities, and with insects and their parasites.

Email mtseng@zoology.ubc.ca

Lab phone 604-827-4077

Website <http://michelltseng.weebly.com/index.html>

Research area Ecology, Evolution

Lab members N. Klasios

Lab Website <https://www.bugsandplankton.com/>

History 2017+ Assistant Professor, UBC, Departments of Botany and Zoology
2014-2016: Research Associate, UBC
2006-2013: Founding and Managing Editor, *Evolutionary Applications*
2005-2007: NSERC Postdoctoral Fellow. UBC
2005: Ph.D. Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

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HOME RESEARCH & TEACHING PUBLICATIONS OUTREACH & EDI CONTACT

Research & Teaching

ONGOING RESEARCH

WARMING AND NUTRIENT AVAILABILITY IN AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS

Warming temperatures change the nutritional value of phytoplankton in predictable ways. How do these changes affect the productivity other trophic levels?
Jihyun Kim, Masters student

MICROPLASTICS, WARMING, AND AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM HEALTH

How many and what kinds of microplastics are found in lakes in British Columbia? How do warming temperatures affect the biological effects of microplastics on zooplankton and fish?
Natasha Klasios, PhD student

SHRINKING INSECTS

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Katie Marshall | Department of Zoology
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1. Find a lab

Which departments to look in?

Basic: Zoology, Botany,
Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

Applied: Department of Forest and
Conservation Sciences, Forestry and
Wildlife.

Wildcards: Institutes. E.g.,
Institute for Oceans and Fisheries.



Ben Matthews | Department of Zoo...
zoology.ubc.ca



Di (Amy) Liu | Department of Zoolo...
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Internet stalking is helpful here: Web, Insta, Twitter presences?

Size of Lab

Do you know anyone that knows anything?

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Stated support or recognition of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) activities

1. Find a lab part 2: Postings

Sometimes specific graduate opportunities are posted. The approach is similar.

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GRADUATE STUDENT POSITION AVAILABLE (MASTER STUDENT)

Posted on [23/04/2021](#) by [Veronique Connolly](#)

Project description: Seeking graduate student with a keen interest in marine benthic community ecology. The project will characterize the spatial and temporal variation in soft-sediment macroinvertebrate communities in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland using contemporary

Requirements: Four-year Bachelor's degree in Biology (B.Sc.), GPA 3.0 or higher.

Prior experience: All applicants will be considered. However, applicants with strong scientific writing skills and some laboratory experience in molecular techniques (e.g., DNA extraction, PCR) and/or macroinvertebrate identification will be given preference.

1. Find a lab part 2: Postings

Sometimes specific graduate opportunities are posted. The approach is similar.

Check society pages, e.g.

Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution (CSEE)

<https://www.csee-scee.ca/category/jobs/grad-student/>

Ecological Society of America (ESA) hosts ECOLOG

<https://www.esa.org/membership/ecolog/>

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Universities and other institutions sometimes have lists.

E.g.:

<https://umaine.edu/ecologyandenvironmentalsciences/internship-resources/>

2. REACH OUT



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2. REACH OUT





A concise, informative email of 2-3 paragraphs.

2. **REACH OUT**



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Introduce yourself, tell them briefly about your background and academic interests and why you're interested in their work.



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Ask if they would be interested in talking with you about your interest.

→ This is a chance to demonstrate some creativity and critical thinking!



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→ However, you probably have **SOMETHING** that inspired you on this path (an experience, a class, a book). These are key things to help you communicate your passion and vision!



2. REACH OUT

Let's look at some examples:

<http://jacobusinowicz.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/email-1.pdf>

<http://jacobusinowicz.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/email-2.pdf>

(can also be accessed this way, password is wr_apply_grad):

<http://jacobusinowicz.com/jacob-usinowicz/teaching-and-outreach/sample-emails-to-professors>

Dr. O'Connor,

I am interested in pursuing a Master's degree in your marine community ecology research group. I completed a BSc in Natural Resources Conservation at UBC, and I currently volunteer for XXX in the Fisheries Centre at UBC. I am interested in beginning my studies in January, but I am also available to start in September if the earlier option is unavailable. I have attached my CV, and I encourage you to visit my personal website (www.com) at which you will find more information about my past experiences.

Dear Dr. Ives,

I am writing to you to inquire about the possibility of pursuing graduate studies in your lab. I have a background in physics and I have always been interested in ecology (please see my attached CV). I have a BA in Human Ecology from the College of the Atlantic, which is a unique interdisciplinary degree that allowed me to pursue both physics and biology as an undergraduate. I have been out of school for several years and I am passionate about returning to school to pursue my interest in quantitative ecology. Your work which uses mathematical models to understand the population dynamics of multi-trophic systems is of great interest to me, and I am fascinated by your approach which combines models with large-scale experiments in agricultural systems to explore ecology.

→ What are potential mentors looking for?



→ What are potential mentors looking for?

Communication skills

Critical thinking

Creativity

Personality

Technical skills



→ What are potential mentors looking for?

Communication skills

Writing will be 60-70% of what you do.

Presentations will be another 20-30%.

Critical thinking

Creativity

Personality

Technical skills



→ What are potential mentors looking for?

Communication skills

Critical thinking

Frontiers and innovation

Frontiers: Can you identify and articulate novel, interesting questions that advance the field?

Creativity

Personality

Technical skills



→ What are potential mentors looking for?

Communication skills

Critical thinking

Creativity

Frontiers and innovation

Innovation: Can you adapt or invent approaches for your novel questions?

Personality

Technical skills



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Creativity

Personality

Are you a good fit for the lab?

Organized, handle stress, persistent, social

Improvisational skills, adapting and being flexible, shmoozing

Community building

Technical skills



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Unique technical skills can set you apart, especially if they relate to a potential adviser's interests!



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These are not necessarily academic skills



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Examples: quantitative (physics/math), GIS, field skills (monitoring, capturing, and tagging), computer or data science, molecular lab work (sequencing), Climbing, boating, hiking, orienteering, diving, birding, working with animals



→ What are potential mentors looking for?



Remember:

Communicate your passion and vision

Convince that you have the skills to succeed.

→ Funding



→ Funding



Department of Zoology **Doctoral Student Supervision & Financial Support Form**

Name of Student:

Supervisor:

Program Start Date:

Funding Policy

- All students making satisfactory progress are guaranteed to receive financial support equal to or above minimum levels established by The Department of Zoology for the duration of their graduate career.
- The minimum level of financial support may be adjusted yearly for cost of living. Typical adjustments are 2-3%.
- For the 2021-2022 academic year, the minimum support level is \$28,000 for all students except international PhD students in their fifth year or beyond, for whom the minimum is \$29,208.

→ Funding



Department of Zoology Doctoral Student Supervision & Financial Support Form

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TA Salaries (effective September 2020)

Less Than 2yrs Exp.: \$6,362 per term.
More Than 2yrs Exp.: \$6,612 per term

Scholarships (supervisor to provide top-up):

PGSD: \$21,000 (two or three years)
CGSD: \$35,000 (two or three years)
4YF: \$18,200 (four years)

Funding Plan

- Complete each box with details of funding sources. The Total Financial support for each year must match or exceed the minimum level of funding listed in the table.
- All students making satisfactory progress will continue to receive total compensation that adheres to the policies above, throughout their graduate degree.
- If a TA position is available, the assignment will be made according to the policies laid out in the CUPE 2278 collective agreement.

Source	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5+
TA salary					
GRA salary					
Award (details)					
Other funding (details)					
TOTAL Financial support					
Minimum Canadian	\$28,000	\$28,000	\$28,000	\$28,000	\$28,000
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(Thanks Jacqueline!)



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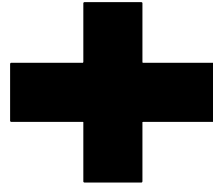
Check out:

<http://www.aerinjacob.ca/funding--awards.html>



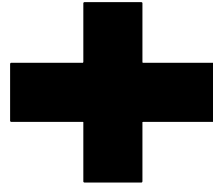
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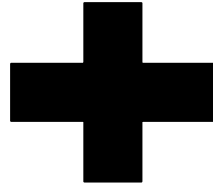
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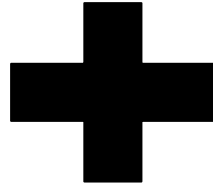
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Demonstrate knowledge of funding landscape.

Demonstrate willingness to do some work to support yourself.

Secure support from mentor in funding process.

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Demonstrate knowledge of funding landscape.

Demonstrate willingness to do some work to support yourself.

Secure support from mentor in funding process.

Many advisors will still take you on!



You will need a CV.

2. **REACH OUT**



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A CV is different from a resume.

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You will need a CV.

A CV is different from a resume.

Check out these links for information:

<https://www.careereducation.columbia.edu/resources/creating-undergraduate-cv>

(Make sure to look at the sample CV further down on this page)



You will need references.

The more you network, the better your chances are.

Start conversations

Volunteer and get involved

Interview I: The “informal” interview



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If you have ever been through a formal interview process, those skills will help:



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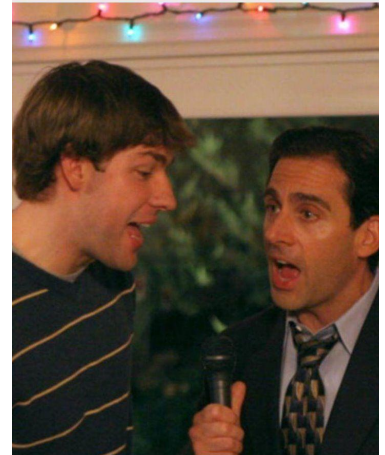
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DOs	DON'Ts
Be polite Be confident Be interested Be patient Be articulate Be yourself	Interrupt Be overconfident Be bored Talk too fast Be what you THINK they want



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ACTIVE LISTENING

Neutral and nonjudgmental, Patient (periods of silence are not "filled"), Verbal and nonverbal feedback to show signs of listening (e.g., smiling, eye contact, leaning in, mirroring), Asking questions, Reflecting back what is said, Asking for clarification, Summarizing



Remember



Interview II / Apply / Choose

The next phase typically involves 3 components

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Formal interview

- Prepare a presentation.
- Could be for the lab, plus other labs.
- Interview with lab members, possibly other labs
- Look sharp, bring your A game.

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Application

- Prepare an application that is submitted to the graduate school.
- Short research essay
- CV, transcripts, letters, etc.

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Choosing

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- Professor, lab culture, department culture, research topics, financial support...

Interview II / Apply / Choose

These could happen in any order!

1

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Interview II / Apply / Choose

Miscellaneous notes:

Use the interview process to find out:

What a professor's lab is like -- you will have a chance to talk to students, often in private.

Are people happy? Does the lab get along?

Do they feel appreciated and seen by their mentor?

What you can expect to be paid -- you do get paid as a graduate student, and tuition is typically covered. However, different institutions will pledge different levels of support, and have different strings attached.

You may need to get this info from grad students! Professors often have no idea what the trials and tribulations of their students are.

Dealing with rejection

It is possible that you may be rejected* at any point in the process

* Rejection includes but is not limited to statements of disinterest expressed in written (email), verbal (interview), or non-verbal (body language) communication. It may include soft rejections (e.g. “I don’t have the funds right now, but let’s keep talking!”) and outright ghosting.

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Every academic ever has a long list of rejection stories. It comes with the territory.

Be kind to yourself and practice self-care. Reach out and share your pain with others.

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😭 Dealing with rejection



😭 Dealing with rejection



Thank You!



I should do something else fun here and ask for questions.

Add links and resources.

Thank You!



Grad position postings:

Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution (CSEE)

<https://www.csee-scee.ca/category/jobs/grad-student/>

Ecological Society of America (ESA) hosts ECOLOG

<https://www.esa.org/membership/ecolog/>

<https://umaine.edu/ecologyandenvironmentalsciences/internship-resources/>

Thank You!



Sample emails:

(password is wr_apply_grad):

<http://jacobusinowicz.com/jacob-usinowicz/teaching-and-outreach/sample-emails-to-professors>

Thank You!



Scientific proposal writing:

<https://blogs.illinois.edu/view/6397/501277>

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03914-5>

The COMPASS Message Box approach

<https://www.compasscicomm.org/download-your-own-message-box-workbook/>

Thank You!



Funding:

This is a very comprehensive list!

<http://www.aerinjacob.ca/funding--awards.html>

Mitacs Accelerate - <https://www.mitacs.ca/en/programs/accelerate>

Thank You!



Academic CVs for undergrads:

<https://www.careereducation.columbia.edu/resources/creating-undergraduate-cv>

(Make sure to look at the sample CV further down on this page)

Thank You!



Scientific presentations:

General advice:

<https://ecologyforacrowdedplanet.wordpress.com/2013/06/13/how-to-make-a-killer-scientific-presentation/>

<https://dynamiccecolgy.wordpress.com/2015/04/27/how-not-to-start-your-next-ecology-or-evolution-talk/>

A bit old-school:

<https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1890/0012-9623%282007%2988%5B206%3ATFECIE%5D2.0.CO%3B2>