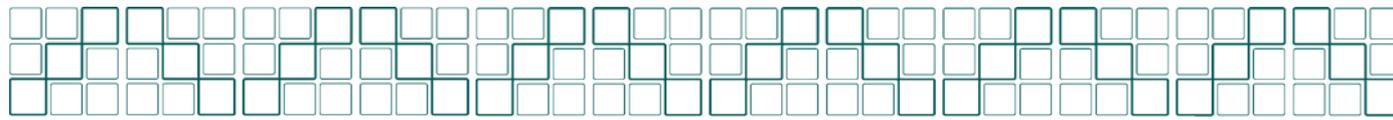

Picking the Ph.D. Program That is Perfect for You

Dr. Sharon L. Milgram, milgrams@od.nih.gov





Critical First Questions

- Why do I want to go to graduate school?
- Where do I see myself in the future?
- What kind of graduate experience will I need to reach these goals?



What Type of Program

- Ph.D. and other doctoral programs
 - Umbrella, interdisciplinary or department-based
- MD/PhD
 - MSTP or non-MSTP
- MPH
 - With a variety of sub-disciplines
 - <http://www.whatispublichealth.org>
- Professional Science Masters
 - For careers at the interface of science and management
 - <http://www.sciencemasters.com/>



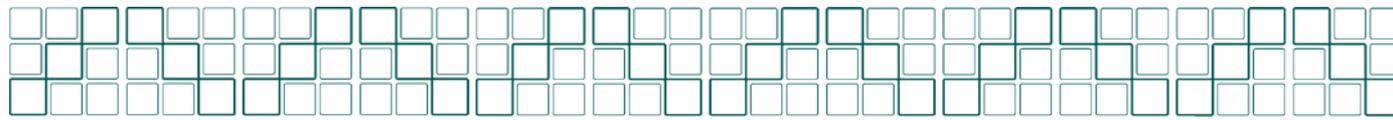
Am I Ready?

- Academic preparation
- Research skills
- Ability to read and comprehend research papers
- Communication skills - verbal and written
- Time and stress management skills
- Interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence
- Maturity and willingness to sacrifice
- Finances



Things To Consider

- Structure of the program
 - Mentor selection process
 - Required coursework
 - Teaching requirements
 - Stipend and other compensation
- Focus on teaching, mentoring, and career development of graduate students
 - Coordinated programs to help you develop professional skills
 - Internship and training opportunities
 - Strong leadership and oversight of your graduate experience
 - Attention to controlling time to degree
 - Teaching opportunities and pedagogy training
 - Access to career counseling resources



Things To Consider II

- Diversity of the students, faculty, and broader communities
- Career goals and outcomes of past and current students
- Geography and cost of living
 - Distance from family
 - Needs of partner and kids
 - Access to things you enjoy
- Program climate, morale, and student satisfaction



Evaluating the Quality of the Department & Institution

- Funding record
 - NIH: <http://report.nih.gov/award/index.cfm>
 - Training grants to the institution & individual students
- Publication record
 - Quality, not just numbers
 - Students doing the writing & publishing as 1st author
- Awards
 - Both students & faculty



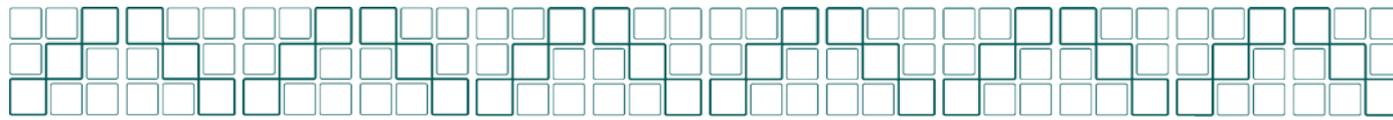
Institutional Training Grants (T32/IGERT)

- A grant to a university to develop or enhance predoctoral [or postdoctoral research] training opportunities in biomedical or behavioral research
- Application process varies widely
- For programmatic information:
 - <http://www.nigms.nih.gov/Training/InstGrantLists.htm>
 - <http://www.igert.org/>
 - <http://www.cancer.gov/researchandfunding/cancertraining/outside/ci/T32/grants>



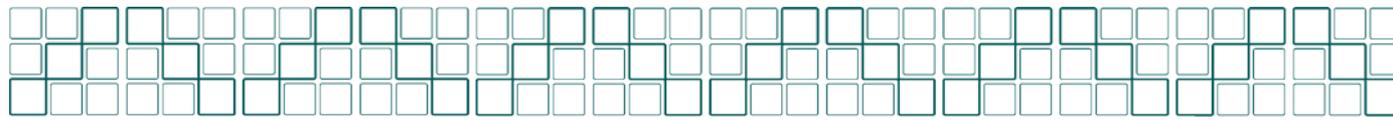
Drilling Down To Your Scientific Interests

- Scientific resources
 - Quality of the research space
 - Core facilities
 - Access to important patient populations
 - Possibility of doing fieldwork
 - Access to experts in areas that are important to you
- The number of potential mentors doing what YOU want to do?
 - You will want to know about their funding, publication record, tenure status, **and** mentoring history
 - Remember Institutions and Departments have strengths in some research areas and not in others



Remember To Consider:

- Reputation of the school AND program
- Specific research areas that interest you
- Institutional/departmental culture
- How mentors are selected
- How current students are progressing
- Teaching opportunities
- Opportunities for professional & career development
- Appreciation for diversity
- The geographic area
- The cost of living



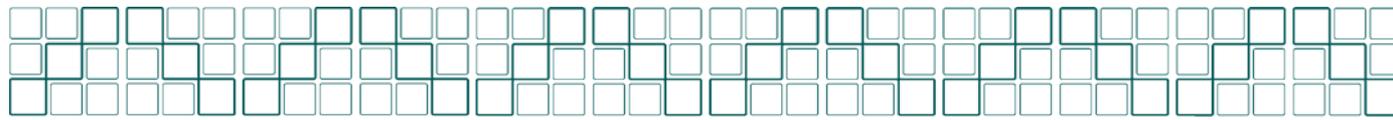
To Learn About Schools and Programs

- Use your mentors (but remember their potential biases)
- Use the web
- Use the NIH Alumni Database
- Do NOT use US News & World Reports rankings



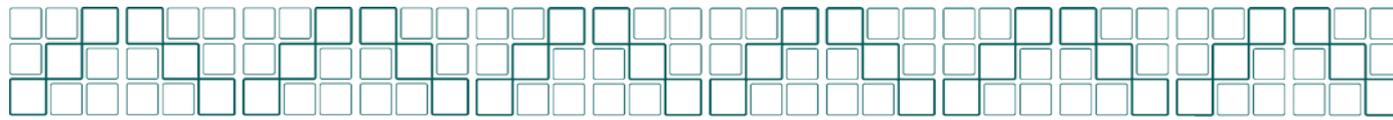
People You May Communicate With

- Director of Graduate Studies
- Program Administrators
- Individual Faculty
- Students in the program



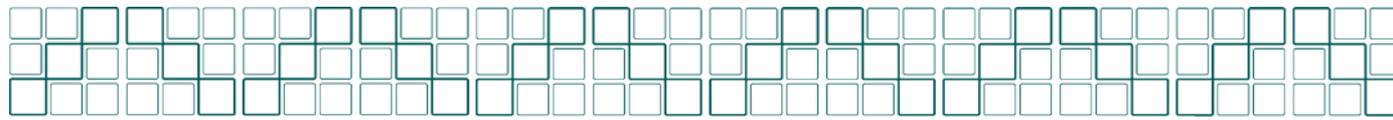
The Admissions Committee

- 5 - 15 members depending on the size of the program
- Chaired by Program Director or a Director of Admissions
- Applications are read in advance and discussed at a meeting
- Some, but not all, use rolling admissions
- Program Directors often have some discretion



What We Evaluate

- Academic record
- Research experience
- Research statement
- Standardized test scores
- Recommendation letters



Letters of Recommendations

- Three - four are required
- Typically submitted on-line
- From mentors and teachers who **KNOW YOU WELL**; not from personal/family friends or non-educational employers
- Ask far in advance and provide details



Resources

- More OITE grad school application process workshops coming this Fall (and prior videocasts)
- Meet with OITE staff or career counselors
- Find programs in your ICs
- Recent articles on PhD training:
 - http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2012_09_07/caredit.a1200100
 - <http://www.lifescied.org/content/10/3/239.full>