

"I wish I would have known..."

From Bates College Visiting Professor in Psychology, Alex Borgella

1) **Research Department Faculty:** Whether you're entering a M.A. or a Ph.D. program (in research psychology specifically), make sure you identify and learn about a professor or researcher you'd like to work with in the program you're looking into. If you can, schedule a time to talk with her/him about her/his advising style and see if you jive with it. For example, my advisor was a pretty approachable, yet a "hands-off" type of person when it came to research. I was allowed to explore and find out exactly what I wanted to study under his wing, but not necessarily in his research program. I requested one-on-one hourly weekly meetings with him to discuss research, teaching, and even my personal life in some situations, but he would have been perfectly fine if I only needed 30-minute meetings twice-a-semester (some of my colleagues in grad school actually chose the latter option and turned out fine). It's all about finding someone who either works the same way you do or someone who is incredibly adaptive. TL;DR (Too Long, Didn't Read) -- attitude toward work is a very important quality to look for in an advisor.



2) **Environment:** Research the climate in the department you're applying to work in. It's so important. Talk with current and previous grad students if you can. Is it competitive? Is it a large state school or a small liberal arts college? How will either of these options affect the research you're planning on doing?

3) **Financing:** Look into how funding is appropriated where you're planning on applying. You probably already know by now that your salary likely isn't going to be stellar in grad school. Getting funded for research, teaching or conference travel is important, and everyone wants it. Are people in the department competing for resources? This competition has the potential to affect students in the department and how they interact with each other and their advisers.

4) **Summer Funding:** Are there summer funding possibilities specifically? At the institution/department I attended, summer research funding was applied for and was very competitive, and I didn't get it every year. Summer funding can potentially afford you the possibility to conduct research with minimal teaching commitment, while also potentially helping you with living expenses.

5) **Research:** Join research organizations. If you're a psychology major, join and find divisions of APA (there are around 60!) that represent your interests. I'm certain there are organizations like this for every discipline. They help with putting new and exciting research in your hands and connecting you with researchers in your field (i.e., potential collaborators!).

6. **Why academic psychology?** The short, simple answer: I was never really interested in being a clinician or the clinical research side of psychology (e.g., health disparities), but I was always interested in the psychology of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. Most of the empirical research in that domain is nestled in social psychology, so I became especially interested in that route.

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