

For Prospective Students:

1. I am generally able to take one to two new graduate students each year. However, forest ecology is a popular research area and I routinely have 2-4 times as many applicants as positions. For this reason, if your academic record is marginal (i.e., below minimum application standards), save yourself the application fee.
2. I encourage you to get your application materials in well before (15-December) the deadline (15-January)—this allows sufficient time for all of your letters and transcripts to arrive here and get incorporated into your file.
3. My preference, and that of most faculty, is for PhD students. However, if you are interested in an MS, I still encourage you to apply (I have had many MS students in the past), just recognize that I give preference to PhD students during the application & selection process.
4. The opportunity exists within the department to transfer [seamlessly] from the MS to the PhD program; however, the process needs to be established before the end of the first year. There are many more scholarship and fellowship opportunities available to you as a PhD student.
5. If you are accepted by the Graduate Committee, I strongly encourage you to visit my lab and the department. You will spend anywhere from 2-6 years here and it is imperative that you and I have good chemistry and that you like your work environment. Being miserable is to no one's advantage.

For Current and Prospective Students:

My Expectations of You:

1. I expect my students to anticipate a career in biology. Do not go to graduate school if you do not know what else to do with your life. Success is purpose driven. If you have no purpose for being here, you will not be successful.
2. With goal #1 in mind, I expect that each student be willing to commit to acquiring the tools necessary to be successful. Minimally, I consider these to be a laptop computer and a digital camera. Become proficient with both.
3. The metrics of science are: (a) grants, (b) publications, and (c) scientific presentations. These are the metrics on which you will be judged within the field and influence everything from letters of recommendation to the job you get. I expect my graduate students to produce in all three areas. I do *not* have a strong expectation that you will have any products in the first year of study. This year is largely devoted to coursework, proposal preparation, comprehensive exams, etc. After the first year I expect...
 - a. PhD students should *minimally* produce one peer-reviewed publication per year, submit three grants, make two presentations at scientific meetings. PhD students must also submit a major grant (e.g., NSF Fellowship [in first year only], NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant [any year], EPA STAR, etc.).
 - b. MS students should minimally produce one peer-reviewed publication, submit two grants, make two presentations at scientific meetings.
 - c. NOTE: These are minimums! My experience has been that to get the post-doc or job *you* want...double these numbers.

4. Learn to work as a team. Experience suggests that you will be more productive if you work together than in isolation. Help each other in the field. Read each other's manuscripts. Listen to each other's presentation. Critical thinking is an important skill to grasp in the sciences.
5. Become involved in professional societies. There are many reasons for doing so, but subscriptions to journals and networking are perhaps the two most important. Consider the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Ecological Society of America, American Institute of Biological Sciences, the Torrey Botanical Society, Natural Areas Association, etc. Many of you may also wish to join a secondary or tertiary taxon or discipline specific society as well (e.g., the American Bryological and Lichenological Society, IAWA, Tree-ring Society , etc.)
6. Join ECOLOG-L (ecology listserv). This will keep you abreast of what is going on, important meetings, workshops, job opportunities, etc.
7. Build your curriculum vitae (CV). This is the primary document used by biologists to seek employment. It is fundamentally different than a resume (which only stresses work history). Get involved in service activities that benefit the local, department, university and/or professional community.
8. Make and maintain your own webpage (via OAK; I will provide a link). There is a growing professional need to acquire this skill set and you should advertise to others what you are doing and provide contact information.

Your Expectations of Me:

It is a two way street, albeit my role as your mentor is more streamlined and less explicit. Simply put, I am here to be your advocate. I will promote you, your research, the successful completion of your degree, and your ultimate employment.

1. First and foremost, you should expect access to me. I generally leave my office door open or askew to indicate that you can drop in for a quick question. If the door is shut, that's not a good time.
2. I am happy to provide weekly advising meetings if you would like. This is particularly effective in your first year of study when you are formulating your research ideas, assembling a committee, preparing a proposal, etc.
3. You should expect timely responses to drafts of proposals and/or theses, manuscript evaluations, etc. *Minimally*, you must provide me with 15 days though (this is the departmental minimum stated in the Graduate Guidelines). Teaching and research obligations often prevent me from a turnaround time as quick as I would like.
4. My agenda is available on the Oracle Calendaring System. If I am obviously in the field, at a conference, or elsewhere, you need to add this time to the 15 days above. Feel free to use Oracle to schedule appointments.
5. I will also do my best to assist you with grants and contracts. I will routinely make you aware of opportunities and file the appropriate paperwork to make it all happen.
6. While I do expect to be co-author on work that originates from the lab and/or uses lab resources, you as the writer should expect primary authorship (i.e., first author). This is your work and you should take pride in its publication. I will only switch order of authorship under [very] extenuating circumstances.

7. You should expect timely (within 2 weeks) letters of recommendation from me when seeking employment.

Closing Thoughts:

Graduate school can be (but need not be) a difficult transition for some students, especially those arriving from a small undergraduate liberal arts program. There is a major shift from a framework dominated by courses, to a more autonomous professional training atmosphere. Expectations are high; time management is critical. That said, my experience is that > 90% of graduate students rise to the challenge and are successful.

A more comprehensive version (with a slightly different slant) of what I have posted here can be found in a book that I suggest all new and prospective graduate students read. I do not agree with everything in it, but it is an excellent resource nonetheless (and was written by a biology graduate student):

Peters, R.L. 1997. Getting what you came for: The smart student's guide to earning a Master's or Ph.D. The Noonday Press, New York, NY. (Paperback, ca. \$12 new, \$5 used.)