

What I look for in a graduate student

Training graduate students is one of the most important and exciting parts of my job as a professor of psychology at UCLA. I am committed to working closely with each graduate student and to supporting all areas of their training, including research, teaching, clinical work (if applicable), and professional development. Many people ask me what I look for in a graduate student, so I decided to write down my thoughts on what makes for a successful graduate student in my laboratory:

1. **Excitement for science.** We are a research laboratory first and foremost. A passion for making novel contributions to science and advancing knowledge is crucial. I love finding out new insights on addiction and I have a passion for making these findings applicable and clinically relevant. Excitement for science helps us through the ups and downs of the scientific process.
2. **Commitment to addiction science.** Having a commitment to studying addiction is key to success because all the questions we ask revolve around addiction etiology and treatment. If you are committed to advancing addiction science, my lab is the right place for you!
3. **Strong work ethic.** I am fortunate to have amazing students who work hard. Graduate school is so rewarding but also challenging academically. I expect that students will be ready to work hard and will show independence in carrying out academic activities. I recognize that students develop new skills in graduate school so you will be asked to contribute in a developmentally-appropriate fashion. I am here to teach, mentor and support your independence.
4. **Collaborative nature.** I pride myself in running a laboratory that is collaborative and supportive. Each trainee is important to me and I look out for all of my students to the best of my ability. I look for students who will join us in our collaborative efforts and will bring a positive and supportive attitude to our laboratory. Students in the lab are seen as colleagues and collaborators. I value socializing as a lab too and enjoy getting to know each student as a person.
5. **Academic credentials.** In order to know that you have a passion for science you have to do science. In order to have a commitment to addiction science, you have to have some exposure to it. Work ethic is demonstrated through academic achievement. As psychologists we know that past behavior predicts future behavior. So I look for academic credentials as opportunities to assess the domains described above. Nobody's academic credentials are perfect! So do not be discouraged to apply.

What you can expect from me as a mentor

I take my job as a mentor seriously and I know that by coming to graduate school (or postdoc) in my lab, you are trusting me to support your academic training and professional development. You can expect several things from me as you join my laboratory: (1) weekly meetings: I do stay in close touch with each trainee; (2) ample research opportunities: I will involve you in many projects that match your interests and skill set; (3) funding support: While I cannot promise continuous funding to all students, I can assure you that your funding support is a priority to me and that I look for opportunities to enhance your funding sources during graduate training; (4) listening: I am committed to listening to all that is happening in your training, not just the research component. If professional or personal issues arise, I will listen to you and will do my best to work with collaboratively towards a solution; (5) cultural sensitivity: As a Latina scientist I know first-hand how important it is to be culturally sensitive. I am committed to diversity and I am continuously learning about it; and (6) a supportive environment: I strive to make the individual meetings and my laboratory as a whole, supportive and collaborative. I encourage collaboration, cooperation, and a positive attitude that is consistent with a growth mindset.