

Graduate Admission Essay

As a sophomore at the University of Hawaii, I registered for a graduate infectious disease microbiology course. That class focused my intellectual endeavors on expanding my knowledge of the complex interactions between pathogenic microbes and mammalian immunity. As soon as course schedules were published, I would immediately call professors to beg entry into their graduate courses. I continued advanced coursework in immunology, tropical medicine, infectious disease epidemiology, medical microbiology, and pharmacology. After several years of studies, a professor realized my interest and aptitude and allowed me a chance to work in her lab. In my first research experience, I learned cell culture of malarial parasites, but more than that, I was immersed in the culture of graduate school: attending seminars from visiting scientist, collaborating on research methods and participating in journal clubs.

I graduated with a BS in microbiology, and began a pharmacology research rotation. The investigation of differences in human and malarial detoxification enzymes began to expand into a graduate thesis. My application to the doctoral program highlighted a grave error I made during my undergraduate education; I focused heavily on research and graduate courses, neglecting to maintain an acceptable GPA in certain other areas of coursework. This, compounded with poor course selection early in college, precluded my admission. I was disheartened, however I continued researching.

I worked as a dive instructor during college, and while I continued pharmacology research, I opened a small SCUBA shop in Honolulu to support myself. The complexity of small business ownership soon dominated my time and distracted me from my education. Over the next few years, although the shop thrived, I found myself longing to return to scientific research.

I knew a MS would bolster my record and put me back on track. I read papers on adjuvants, which I found poignant because these drugs are at the crux of the pharmaceutical modification of host and pathogen interactions. I was elated when I was accepted to the MS program at Indiana State University.

I was once again immersed in the culture of graduate school and was afforded a myriad of research opportunities. While completing my thesis, I was privileged to work with animal models. Additionally, I gained institutional approval to establish influenza viral cultures. My thesis focused on the effects of emulsions in vaccine adjuvant formulations.

After earning my biology MS, I took a position teaching high school science which allowed me to continue researching as an ISU educational affiliate. I am working to characterize how adjuvants modify immune responses to infectious diseases and cancer. During the past year, I participated in mentoring high school students as they learned vaccinology research and presented their findings. I am using this year to continue adjuvant research and finish publications. Ultimately, I am happiest and most productive when working in a research laboratory setting. I am applying for graduate studies in pursuit of a doctorate to allow me to advance my career and continue researching the interactions of microbes and immunity.

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