

Prospective Graduate Students

Thank you for your interest in considering the Olden Research Lab for conducting your graduate studies at the School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, University of Washington. I am always on the look-out for sharp, motivated, and hard-working students who have a passion for the conservation of freshwaters and their inhabitants. Hopefully you have spent the time to peruse my research interests and read a couple of my recent publications. From this you will notice that my research interests focus on issues related to the conservation of freshwater organisms, communities and ecosystems in the face of environmental change. Not interested in saving the world from the unquenchable thirst of humans? No worries...I just want your help. The fact is you can work on any number of projects.

By applying to work with me you will have the opportunity to join a dynamic lab filled with a great group of graduate and undergraduate students working together as a cohesive unit. Quite simply, we play hard and work even harder!

Just the facts...

I typically accept one or two new students a year (commonly this occurs in the Fall), depending on funding availability, my research plans, the particulars of the student (that's you!), and my current level of commitment to other students and activities. Are you still interested? If so, please send me an e-mail with the following information: (1) curriculum vitae (or résumé), (2) copies of transcripts, (3) summary of research experience, and (4) statement of research interests.

What should you do and what are your chances?

The most important component of the application process is identifying a faculty member who will sponsor your application. This is the person who will ultimately be responsible for providing you an offer (given that you meet certain admission qualifications). SAFS requires all incoming students to have at least 4 quarters of funding guaranteed, but I prefer to only accept student if I have at least 8 quarters of support arranged. This support comes from my own research grants, or any fellowship that you might have been awarded. A select number of the highest ranking applicants are typically offered a 2-year scholarship/fellowship. It is important to note that SAFS receives far more qualified applications than we can possibly hope to admit, which makes the application process very competitive.

What should you expect from me as an advisor?

Quite simply, I am not a cookie-cutter. Therefore, I avoid supervising a large number of graduate students. The truth of the matter is this isn't fair to you or me. As an advisor it is my responsibility to provide you with the resources and professional connections (or at least point you in the right direction) needed to ensure that you meet your career goals. I recognize that the needs of graduate students are not all the same. Some students prefer hands-on supervision, others prefer no supervision, while still others (and I would hazard to say, most students) fall somewhere between these two extremes. For this reason, I do not supervise all graduate students the same way. Together we will find the right balance. At the end of the day, I strive to make you a complete ecologist with the essential scientific and communication skills required for a successful and rewarding career in academia, government, non-profit, public sector or wherever you want to be.

What do I expect from you as a graduate student?

I expect you to be hard working and passionate about your research. No, I really mean this. As a student in the Olden lab, you can expect to write grants, publish your work in peer-reviewed journals, create and deliver presentations at local and national meetings, interact with other faculty and graduate students across campus, and have one heck of a fun time doing it. Graduate school involves any number of sacrifices, and I anticipate you to make these when required. Do I expect your graduate research to consume every aspect of your life? Definitely no. Do I expect you to be committed to and excited about your work? Absolutely yes!

Undergraduate research opportunities

There are several ways that serious, enthusiastic students can get involved in my lab and gain valuable research experience. These include volunteer opportunities, paid assistantships, and capstone projects. If you are interested, please email me (olden@u.washington.edu) and tell me about your background, the relevant courses you have taken, and the kinds of things you're interested in.

Am I a good advisor?

Great question. As someone contemplating graduate school, you have a lot to consider in choosing an advisor, a lab, and a university. Given this, I understand your need to find out as much as possible about me, SAFS and the University of Washington before applying. Let me be the first to tell you that choosing an advisor and a graduate program is a difficult decision. I suggest that you contact my current or former graduate students to help decide if I am the right advisor for you.

Is graduate school for you?

This is tough question, and one that I asked myself some time ago. I recommend the following resources.

Questions to ask when thinking about pursuing a Ph.D. (scroll-over link: <http://www.phd-survey.org/advice/advice.htm>)

Choosing a graduate school (scroll-over link: <http://www.princetonreview.com/grad/research/articles/find/choose.asp>)

Do you have questions me?

Please feel free to contact me or our graduate programs coordinator. You can also go to the department webpage for more information (<http://www.fish.washington.edu/graduates/index.html>).

Still interested?

If you are interested in joining the Olden Research Lab, then fire me an e-mail at olden@u.washington.edu. I hope to hear from you.