March 2014

Dear Prospective Graduate Students,

Thank you for your interest in my research group. I will be considering Graduate student applicants for the 2014/15 academic year. Please read this entire letter before emailing me. The focus of future graduate student projects in my lab is centered on understanding the detoxification mechanisms (detoxification enzymes, efflux transporters, microbes) of herbivores that permit feeding on toxic diets. We address this topic using different species of small mammals, particularly woodrats. Techniques and approaches used in this work include small mammal trapping, cloning sequencing, gene expression and activity assays.

Prospective applicants should read the following papers to get a sense of our current research efforts (see links to full article on our site):


Applicants interested in this area are encouraged to contact me by email. Please include a CV, statement of career goals and research interests. Please note that the other projects on disease ecology and stable isotopes have come to a close and I will not be accepting students in this area.

**Disclaimer:**

I thoroughly enjoy working with graduate students; however, I am among a group of faculty concerned about the glut of PhDs being produced. I am wary to accept any graduate student without full disclosure about the future prospects as academics. Currently only 14% of Ph.D.s in Biology land tenure track jobs in academia, roughly 1 in 10 (See article from Nature). It's not that 90% are poorly trained; it's just that we have been training too many PhDs for years now. This scenario is unlikely to change over the next decade.

Ph.D. training is highly specialized training geared towards a career in academia. Our department is trying to broaden the Ph.D. training to make our graduates more marketable for other positions that require this type of rigorous scientific training. Before applying to graduate school, applicants should seriously consider whether they are willing to commit the next 8 years (critical training years) to become a scientist given the prospective job situation. While it is true that individuals with Ph.D.s are smart enough to do many other jobs, what you should ask yourself is, do you need to train as a Ph.D. for such a position?

A few suggestions if you think you are interested in joining my lab:

Read the suggested pdf about graduate school in general along with several of the papers from our lab (pdfs are given under publications); contact my graduate students to see what the lab is like (emails on our web site). In addition, you will need to submit an application through the Biology Department; the deadline is January 2015 [http://www.biology.utah.edu/graduate/index.php](http://www.biology.utah.edu/graduate/index.php)