

# APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL: REACHING OUT TO POTENTIAL ADVISORS



## WHY?

- There are numerous reasons why a prospective student might consider reaching out to a potential advisor during the application process. You may want to check to ensure whether they are accepting new students, learn more about their current research, or learn more about the program of interest prior to applying.
- Another added bonus of reaching out to a potential advisor is that it shows eagerness, and it is an opportunity for faculty to learn more about you **before** they see your application. Potentially, this can make you stand out in a stack of applications!

## BEFORE REACHING OUT

- Check to see if the information you are looking for can be found elsewhere. For example, faculty often post on their website whether they are accepting a new student, or the program website has the answers to your questions. Emailing a redundant question may lead you to be perceived as someone who doesn't do their research.
- Read about the program and the research they are conducting. Read/skim recent research papers, faculty websites. Dive into the program website (e.g., program handbook) to learn more about its structure or the application process.

## WHAT TO SAY?

- It's common to reach out to advisors to ask specific questions or even ask for a brief meeting.
- Include information about **who you are** and **why you're interested** in the program. You might even consider sharing your CV!
- Remember, your email may be their **FIRST** impression of you! Be sure to be respectful and use proper email etiquette (e.g., clear subject, appropriate greeting, signature).
- Keep it short and sweet - they get a lot of emails!

## WHAT IF THEY DON'T RESPOND?

- Faculty researchers vary in their responsiveness to prospective graduate students. Remember, they receive numerous emails a day and have several other priorities (e.g., teaching, research, advising current students). Some are very open and eager to hear from prospective students. Others simply may not have the time to respond, no matter how eager they may be. If you don't hear back - this is **not** a reflection on you!
- Consider reaching out to **current graduate students** in the program to answer your questions. Often, graduate students love talking about their experiences and are more than happy to answer your questions. Sometimes, they'll even share their applications!

## AND IF THEY DO?!

- Cheers! And take a deep breath. That wasn't so bad, was it?
- Hopefully, they answered your questions or responded that they are open to a short meeting with you.
- Be sure to **thank them for their time**.
- If they give some advice, take it! Reach out and connect to their graduate students if they offer. Consider including some of the shared points of the discussion in your application.
- **Reflect** on their response and what it means for your interest in the program or your application.