

Applying to Clinical Internships: Insider Tips for Maximizing Your Success



Expert Panel:

- **Ric Steele, Ph.D., ABPP: *Selecting Internship Sites***
 - Professor of Psychology and Applied Behavioral Science, Director of Clinical Training, University of Kansas.
- **Mitch Prinstein, Ph.D., ABPP: *Personalizing your APPIC Essays***
 - John Van Seters Distinguished Professor, former Director of Clinical Training, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
- **Rhonda Sena, Ph.D.: *Internship Selection Criteria***
 - Director of Internship Training, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Semel Institute/UCLA
- **Laura Mufson, Ph.D.: *Internship Selection Criteria***
 - Professor of Medical Psychology (in Psychiatry), Director of Training (Child Track), Columbia University Medical Center, NY State Psychiatric Institute
- Moderators: **Brian Chu, Ph.D. (Rutgers University)**, Communications Chair, and **Leigh Spivey (UNC)**, SCCAP Student Advisory Committee Co-Chair

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Selecting Internship Sites

Ric Steele, Ph.D., ABPP

Professor of Psychology and Applied Behavioral Science, Director of Clinical Training, University of Kansas

Selecting Sites



“What is the best method of researching both the fit and quality of a particular site?”

“What am I looking for in a site?”



Selecting Sites

“What is the best method of researching both the fit and quality of a particular site?”

“What am I looking for in a site?”

- What am I looking for in a running shoe?
 - *Fit and Function*
 - *Name brand is less important than how it works*





Selecting Sites

Specific **training and long term career goals** should guide internship site selection

STEP 1: A priori articulation of goals

- *Build upon and expand* your doctoral training experiences
- Functionally related to your *long-term professional goals*



Selecting Sites

Specific **training and long term career goals** should guide internship site selection

STEP 1: *A priori* articulation of goals

- *Build upon and expand* your doctoral training experiences
- Functionally related to your *long-term professional goals*

STEP 2: Identification of potential sites

- APPIC (<https://membership.appic.org/directory/search>)
- CCaPPTC (<http://www.ccapptc.org/>)
- SCCAP list (<https://sccap53.org/resources/student-resources/training-program-database/>)
- *Previous interns* from your program



Selecting Sites

STEP 3: Evaluation of Potential Sites

- Look for specific rotations, experiences, or populations that **match your training goals**





Selecting Sites

STEP 3: Evaluation of Potential Sites

- Look for specific rotations, experiences, or populations that **match your training goals**
 - Consider your **prior exposure or experience**
 - May suggest readiness for additional training
 - Limited experience may enhance your fit
 - Also consider your **long term career goals**
 - Rotations may be cool... but they may not be important (*for you*)





Selecting Sites

STEP 4: Narrow list to manageable number

- Select sites that have **best match** with training and career goals
- Use training goals and career goals to frame application materials
 - Exposure, Experience, and Expertise



Selecting Sites

STEP 4: Narrow list to manageable number

- Select sites that have **best match** with training and career goals
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“What if I am drawn to sites that are not a good match for my training goals?”



Selecting Sites

“I have heard that geographic location should be a primary consideration when selecting sites, due to the importance of developing a long-term professional network. How much weight would the panelists recommend placing on geography when selecting sites?”

DOI: 10.1002/jclp.20664



Selecting Sites

“I have heard that geographic location should be a primary consideration when selecting sites, due to the importance of developing a long-term professional network. How much weight would the panelists recommend placing on geography when selecting sites?”

- Callahan, Collins, and Klonoff (2010) found that
 - Applicants who were geographically restricted **submitted fewer applications**
 - Applicant who were geographically restricted **were offered fewer interviews**
 - They did not, however, differ in match outcome (Match/ No-match)
- **Geographic restriction is problematic if it results in the applicant submitting fewer applications.**
- **Anecdotally, I am not convinced that location has much impact at all on your career trajectory.**

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Personalizing the APPIC Essays

Mitch Prinstein, Ph.D., ABPP

John Van Seters Distinguished Professor, former Director of Clinical Training, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill



Essays – General Issues

- **Time Consuming!**
- **Writing Style**
- **Remember your (fatigued) audience**

Objectives:

1. **Honest description of your goals**
2. **You are a *unique* psychologist**
3. **You are matched to *this* site**





Essay 1 - Autobiographical

- **What kind of autobiography?**

Suggestions:

- 1. Tell a story**
- 2. State your goals**
- 3. Don't be too modest!**
- 4. Do not restate the CV – “walk us through the CV”**

- **Most common error: Discussing decision to enter graduate school, rather than activities *during* graduate school**





Essays 2 and 3

- **Avoid the “right answers”**

Suggestions:

- 1. Discuss your beliefs**
- 2. Use case examples to illustrate a unique point, not as filler**
- 3. Re-read your essay, and ask yourself:
“What info in this essay will help convey my unique identity; what will differentiate me as an applicant?”**





Essay 2

- **Most Common Error:**

Writing the essay in a way that sounds like a final exam in your Therapy class, rather than expressing your own personalized opinions, feelings, and impressions

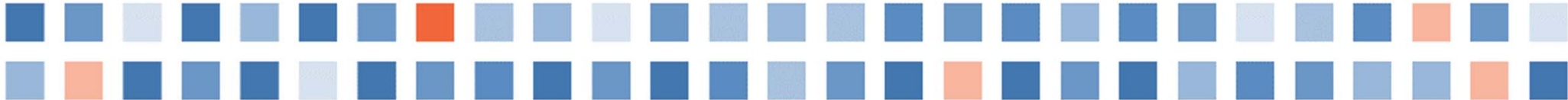


Essay 3



- **Most Common Error:**

Simply listing your experience with non-White, non-Male clients, rather than discussing what multiculturalism means to you and where you think the field is going.



Essay 4



- **This was your major task in grad school; don't blow it off!**
- **Describe a research *program***
- **Talk about your ideas, not just your responsibilities**





Essay 4

- **Most Common Error:**

Sounding like you are applying for a RA position (discussing your responsibilities on projects), rather than sounding like an independent scientist (discussing your ideas and findings).



CRITERIA FOR APPLICATION REVIEW

(UCLA SEMEL INSTITUTE
PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM)

Rhonda Sena, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences

UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior

Director, Psychology Internship Training



Type of Program

- Ph.D. or Psy.D.
 - If Psy.D., we look for some training in research
 - Clinical and research focus with children and adolescents
 - Specified area of interest but not too narrowly focused in one area



Clinical Experiences

- Minimum 1000 hours
- Experience with children and adolescents
- Prefer variety of experiences and that the majority of experiences are outside of research protocols
- Prefer experience with a variety of treatment approaches-not just one approach (DBT, CBT, MI, PCIT, IPT-A, for example)
- Prior inpatient experience is not necessary



Assessment Experience

- Amount and kind of assessment experience varies by track (Pediatric Neuropsychology is most specific about amount and types of assessment preferred)
- General child track-preference of quality over quantity of assessments
- Preference that the majority of experiences are outside of research protocols



Research Experience

- We value research experience
- We prefer applicants who have published or obtained grants, but this is not a requirement
- We value quality of journals, 1st authorship over quantity of publications



Letters of Recommendation

- We put a significant value on letters of recommendation
- Letters should be from supervisors/advisors who know you well



Fit with Internship Site

- Consider if your experience makes you a good candidate
- Consider what is important to you in your internship experience

Think of yourself as as the chooser!

- Considerations
 - Community setting vs hospital-based setting
 - Urban vs rural setting
 - Diversity of faculty, staff, patient population
 - Outpatient vs inpatient setting
 - Exposure to mentors
 - Opportunity to do research
 - Breadth of training vs depth of training



Selection Process

- Faculty are paired in initial application review and rate:
 - Letters of recommendation
 - Clinical experience
 - Assessment experience
 - Research experience/area of research
 - Experience/interest in working with diverse populations
- The top approximately 50% of applications are then reviewed by a group of faculty specific to each track
- Approximately 75% of these applicants are invited to our Open House/Interview



Open House/Interviews

- We offer two dates in January for Open House/Interviews with a schedule as follows
 - General orientation with Director of Internship Training
 - Orientation with Track Directors
 - Meeting with faculty who will discuss their clinical and research interests
 - Lunch with current interns
 - Interviews with 2 faculty members
 - Question and answer session with the Director of Internship Training



Interviews

- Two 30-minute interviews on Open House day
- In-person interview is not required, but is preferred
- Interviews are rated on:
 - depth and breadth of clinical training
 - maturity and poise
 - exposure/interest in working with diverse populations
 - ability to conceptualize relevant issues
 - research potential
 - advocacy potential
 - ability to work well the faculty and staff
 - clinical acumen



Final Ranking Process

- Final ranking is based on review of
 - Clinical experience
 - Assessment experience
 - Research experience
 - Letters of recommendation
 - Experience/interest in working with diverse populations
 - Interviews
 - Overall fit with our program

Criteria for Application Review

(Columbia University/NY Presbyterian Internship Program)

Laura Mufson, Ph.D.

Professor of Medical Psychology in Psychiatry, Columbia University

Director of Training in Child Psychology, Columbia University Irving Medical Center/New York Presbyterian Hospital



What type of program attending

- Ph.D. or Psy.D.
- Clinical or Counseling or School Psychology
- Generalist Program or Child Track
- Research focus on child or adolescent or adult psychology
- Exposure to and/or training in empirically supported psychotherapies



Clinical Experiences

- Total # of hours – should be greater than 500/preference 700 or more
 - # of hours of psychotherapy: > 400
 - Length of treatment: short-term and/or long term therapy
 - # of hours of assessment: >200
- Types of patients treated
 - Child and adolescent
 - Adult
 - Diverse patient populations – ethnicity/race/SES/urban/rural/LGBTQ
- Type of treatment experiences
 - Individual vs group vs family therapy
 - Empirically supported psychotherapies: CBT, DBT, PCIT, IPT-A, MI, CPP, Brief dynamic therapy



Clinical Experiences

- Assessment Experience
 - Intellectual functioning, achievement, personality, neuropsychological assessment
 - Must be more than semi-structured research interviews such as ADIS, K-SADS
 - Preference for completion of 5 full test batteries



Clinical Experiences

- How many externships completed?
 - Minimum of one externship working with children and/or adolescents
 - Prefer experience with both children and adolescents
- Types of settings for therapy and assessment
 - If hospital-based internship, preference for at least 1 hospital externship or residential treatment center experience or outpatient experience with population of comparable severity
- Must have clinical experiences that are not only within research protocols
- Training/experience in risk assessment and child protective services



Recommendations

- From supervisors who know clinical work with more than just one patient
 - At least one should be a therapy supervisor
- If possible from a supervisor who saw trainee's work in a similar or comparable setting
- From an academic advisor who can speak to:
 - Ability to get work completed on timely basis,
 - Writing skills
 - Interpersonal skills
 - Clinical skills



Ability to Fit with Internship Site

- Therapeutic orientation?
- Learning interests ?
- Patient population?
- Environment?
 - Urban hospital or CMHC setting?
 - Minority population?
 - Middle class population?
 - Exposure to trauma and other stressors?
 - Open to case management work in service of therapeutic goals?
 - Interest in learning how to adapt EBTs to diverse communities



Selection Process for Interviews

- Applications are assigned readers – 1 supervisor and 1 training director review each application
- Applications are rated on:
 - recommendations,
 - types and number of patients treated,
 - assessment experience,
 - inpatient and outpatient hospital experience or RTC,
 - progress of dissertation,
 - overall impression as a graduate student,
 - therapeutic orientation match with the site,
 - environment/setting/population match and strengths and weaknesses of applicant.
- Invite approximately the top 30% of applicants to interview



Interviews

- Interview Day: Half day
 - General orientation with Director of Training – 1 hour
 - 2 interviews (45 minutes each):
 - 1 with Training Director or Coordinator or Clinical Service Leadership
 - 1 with a Psychology staff/supervisor familiar with the program and a member of the various internship rotations
 - Meet with 2 current interns for intern perspective on the program



Interviews

- Interviews are rated on:
 - Case presentation;
 - Insight on strengths and weaknesses;
 - Experience with at-risk situations
 - Proficiency in short-term EBTs and long term psychotherapy
 - Neuropsychological assessment;
 - Interpersonal skills;
 - Match with program orientation and training goals
- Ranked based on interview ratings and re-review of the application by training leadership.

Audience Questions and Answers

Leigh Spivey, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

SCCAP Student Advisory Committee

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