UNIVERSITY of LOUISIANA LAFAYETTE

Ray P. Authement College of Sciences

Department of Biology

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Université des Acadiens

Dear potential applicant:

Thank you for your interest in the graduate program in Biology at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The intent of this letter is to help facilitate your application to our program.

GRADUATE DEGREES

We offer three degrees in our graduate program: doctoral, thesis masters, and non-thesis masters.

(1) Doctoral degree (PhD) in Environmental and Evolutionary Biology. Admission is highly competitive and is dependent on both student credentials and the ability of our department to provide stipend support. This degree is most suitable for applicants pursuing a career in research. Applicants to the doctoral program who do not have a MS degree are expected to have substantial research experience.

(2) Master's degree (MS) in Biology. The MS in Biology can be pursued through a *thesis* or a *non-thesis* option. Students starting in one option may switch to the other with the approval of the Graduate Studies Committee.

> **(2a) Thesis Master's**. The thesis option is strongly recommended for students seeking a career in research, including students who will eventually seek a doctoral degree.
>
> **(2b) Non-thesis Master's**. The non-thesis option is for students seeking a terminal degree and a career that does not have a research component. This option is coursework intensive and will allow students to take a wide diversity of graduate classes. Following this letter is a short description of the two MS degree programs.

To be admitted to graduate study an applicant must meet the basic requirements of the Graduate School (*e.g.* have the equivalent of an undergraduate degree in biology or a related field), and have the support of the Department of Biology faculty. We consider your application using a portfolio approach, weighing all aspects of your package. Applicants without much training in biology should consider taking additional course work prior to seeking admission. Graduate courses can be taken prior to admission to the program through the Graduate School's Entrée program (http://gradschool.louisiana.edu/graduate-degrees/nondegree-programs/entrée).

IDENTIFYING A PROSPECTIVE ADVISOR

As part of your application, **you are required to identify a prospective graduate advisor** from our faculty **who will support your application** (unless you are applying to the MS non-thesis option, which does not require an advisor *a priori*). This would be the faculty member with whom you would conduct your research. The likelihood that you will be successfully admitted and receive funding will be substantially enhanced if you have established a relationship with a potential advisor, so we encourage you to start this communication early in the application process. For your assistance, at the end of this letter are the names, research interests, and e-mail addresses of graduate faculty and adjunct faculty who may have an interest in considering new students. I strongly encourage you to visit our department web site for more information on their research programs. You are also encouraged to contact *only* the faculty members with whom you share a close research interest; mass e-mails sent to all faculty members rarely result in the applicant identifying an advisor. **Please inform the Graduate Admissions Coordinator by email (BiolGradProgram@louisiana.edu) once a faculty member agrees to serve as your Advisor.**

APPLICATION MATERIALS

Application materials to all University of Louisiana at Lafayette Biology Graduate Programs should be **submitted directly to the UL Lafayette Graduate School**.

Please DO NOT email documents to the Biology Graduate Admissions Coordinator unless you are specifically asked to do so.

The Graduate School collects and makes available to our program all of your documents). All necessary Graduate School forms for applying to the program can be downloaded from the Graduate School, or via the online application portal. You do NOT need to wait until all application documents are ready to begin your online application. Rather, we recommend you begin the online application as soon as you know you are interested in the program so that we know you are planning to submit a full application; your required documents can be submitted later as you get them (but by the deadline).

- **Application for Graduate Admission**
  The Graduate School online application portal: http://gradschool.louisiana.edu/apply

  Note that you must first create (and "submit") an application before you will be permitted to upload various necessary documents. To create your application, you will be asked to enter personal and background information and to certify three questions, and sign and date the application; you can pay the application fee at this time or pay later. *You must click on the Submission button to create your application*. Note this "Submission" is just the start of your application, not the final step. Once the application is created in this way you will have access to additional screens that allow you to request letters of reference, upload your CV, assistantship or fellowship applications, etc., once you are ready to do so (that is, you can gradually add additional documents and information over time once you have created your application).

- **Applications for Fellowships and Assistantships**

Please fill out applications for fellowships and assistantships *even* if you have alternative funding.

- **Letter of Reference form**

  You will need 3 letters of reference from people who can comment authoritatively on your academic accomplishments, work or internship experience, and/or potential for success in graduate studies (college faculty who have a graduate degree make good letter writers since they are familiar with the demands of graduate school. Letters are sent directly to the Graduate School by your references via the application portal. We prefer they include a personalized letter along with the standardized Graduate School form.

- **Proof of Immunization**

  Proof of Immunization is *not required* as part of your application.

  If you are admitted, then Proof of Immunization *will be required before you can attend UL Lafayette*, and possibly before you can schedule classes. Immunization requirements may be found here: https://studenthealth.louisiana.edu/immunizations/vaccine-screening-requirements .

- **Official transcripts** and **GRE scores**

  Academic transcripts and general GRE test scores should be submitted **directly to the Graduate School** in accordance with their instructions:

  Academic Transcripts: https://gradschool.louisiana.edu/admissions/official-transcripts

  General GRE Test Scores: https://gradschool.louisiana.edu/admissions/gre-gmat-toefl

  GRE scores are not *required* for admission to our graduate programs. However, if you have taken the GRE and feel your scores are a strong element in your overall application package, e.g. 50th percentile or higher in verbal or quantitative sections, then we encourage you to submit them.

  Likewise, the Biology Subject Area GRE test is **not required** for admission. If you have subject area scores, then we encourage you to submit them. Subject area scores will only be used in the admission decision process when they strengthen the student's application. Our institution test score code for the GRE is 6672. If asked to list a departmental code, you can leave the department code blank or enter 0000.

- **Optional, but recommended**

  A CV or Resume and a Statement of Interest. There are no specific requirements for the Statement of Purpose. Most applicants describe how they came to be interested in biological research, and specifically, in the research of their prospective faculty advisor, and what their goals are. Please save these materials as PDF files and **use your family name as the start of the filename (i.e., Smith_CV.pdf)**; do not use a compressed file format (e.g., .zip). These files should be uploaded to the online application portal.

Questions about submission of **application fees, transcripts, letters of reference, or your immunization form**, or any issues with the online application portal, should be directed to the Graduate School (Gradschool@Louisiana.edu or 337-482-6965). It is a good idea to monitor the status of your application through your online account. Some applications are never sent to our program for review because letters of reference are not received or the student fails to arrange transcripts from all of the academic institutions they attended. We encourage you to inform the Graduate Admissions Coordinator by email (BiolGradProgram@louisiana.edu) when you believe you have completed your application. Remember, if you are applying to the doctoral program or the thesis track of the MS program, you must inform the Graduate Admissions Coordinator of the name of the faculty member who has agreed to work with you if you are admitted.

STIPEND SUPPORT

Students are typically supported through one of three mechanisms.

(1) Fellowships provide stipend support with little or no teaching commitment. University doctoral fellowships (UL) have a stipend of $20,000 for each 9-month academic year, with a duration of 3-4 years. No teaching is required in the first or last years of these fellowships; during intervening semesters students are required to teach one laboratory section. UL fellows can earn additional income during the summer as teaching or research assistants. Other fellowships administered by the Graduate School are occasionally available to doctoral and MS students; applicants should fill out the fellowship application form to be considered for all available fellowships for which they qualify. All fellowships include a waiver of tuition and most fees (although a fee of approximately $200 is required of all US students, including fellowship students). Students requiring additional time in the program, beyond the duration of their fellowships, are usually funded as teaching or research assistants.

(2) Teaching assistantships are available to both doctoral and MS students; availability is limited and preference is given to doctoral program applicants. Current target stipends are $19,000 for MS students and $20,000 for doctoral students; however, this number may vary slightly from year to year. Teaching loads usually consist of one or two laboratory sections per semester; an effort is made to keep teaching commitments as light as possible to provide the students with more time for their research. At their request, advanced doctoral students are sometimes assigned to lecture sections. TA stipends are for 9 months; students can earn additional income during the summer as teaching or research assistants. All teaching assistantships include a waiver of tuition and most fees (although a fee of approximately $200 is required of all students, including TAs).

(3) Research assistantships are paid from the grants of their primary graduate advisor; the stipend level is dictated by the specific grant and can be discussed with your prospective advisor. Most, but not all, research assistantships include a waiver of tuition and fees.

Scholarships. Our program also has available a limited number of Board of Regents Support Fund Endowed Superior Graduate Student Scholarships. These scholarships are awarded as an additional

enhancement to our Fellowships, Teaching Assistantships and Research Assistantships. They range from $3,800 to $6,900/year and are used to support research and academic or professional experiential opportunities.

FUNDING & ADMISSION DECISIONS

Funding and admission decisions are not based on any one criterion. We consider GPAs, past research experience, and letters of reference. Furthermore, the enthusiasm of the faculty advisor for having the applicant join their research program is an important component of our decision process. Funding and admission decisions are made by ranking applicants; offers of admission and stipend support are made to applicants with the highest ranks. Therefore, an applicant's chances of funding are difficult to determine until the composition of the applicant pool has been established. We rarely admit doctoral students to the program who we cannot fund through one of the mechanisms described above; Master's students may be admitted without stipend support, *i.e.* self-funded. If a promising applicant cannot be funded in one funding cycle, we will, with their permission, consider them for funding and admission in future semesters. Such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The Graduate Admissions Coordinator and your prospective advisor are the best sources of information concerning questions you may have about funding.

WHEN TO APPLY

Biology program target dates ***are earlier*** than the Graduate School deadlines.

<u>You Want to Start in the Fall Semester</u>
Initial offers of fellowships and teaching assistantships are made to applicants in March of each year for the following Fall semester. ***You are encouraged to have completed the full application process by February 1st*** to ensure full consideration for funding.

<u>You Want to Start in the Spring Semester</u>
Initial offers of fellowships and teaching assistantships are typically made in late October or early November for the following Spring semester. ***You are encouraged to have completed the full application process September 15th*** to ensure full consideration for funding.

February 1st and **September 15th** are **target dates.** We have found that if applicants attempt to complete their applications by those target dates, then they will have sufficient time to rectify any problems with their applications by the time the department starts to make decisions on funding and admission. **Students missing the target dates are still encouraged to apply.** Additional funding for student support does become available throughout the year and will be assigned to unfunded students who have been admitted to the program.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about admissions documents and the application portal, you should contact the Graduate School. If you have questions about the Department of Biology graduate programs, please do not hesitate to contact the Graduate Admissions Coordinator.

Best wishes and we look forward to revie wing your application materials!

Sincerely,

Dr. Yi-Hong Wang
Associate Professor
Biology Department Graduate Admissions Coordinator

Phone: (337) 482-5705
Email: BiolGradProgram@louisiana.edu

INFORMATION ON THE TWO MASTERS OF SCIENCE TRACKS OFFERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

The Master of Science program has a thesis and a non-thesis track. The thesis track is recommended for students interested in pursuing additional graduate training and careers in research. The non-thesis track is recommended for students seeking a terminal graduate degree for a career that does not require research experience and for those interested in future study at a professional school. Students admitted under one track may switch to the other with the approval of their Advisory Committee and the Graduate Studies Committee.

Thesis Track

A candidate for the degree of Master of Science must present acceptable grades for a minimum of 30 hours of courses approved for graduate credit, including not more than 6 hours devoted to thesis (BIOL 599). Of the 24 non-thesis hours, at least 18 must be from courses in the Department of Biology. At least 12 of the non-thesis hours must be in courses at the 500-level or above, including 2 hours of the Graduate Seminar in Biology (BIOL 551/552). Students will also take 1 hour of Colloquium in Biological Science (BIOL 550) each semester they are in residence and have stipend support from the department; this course does not count toward the credit hours required for the degree. A research thesis is required of all students in this track. Students must also take a final examination that consists of a public oral presentation and defense of your thesis research.

Non-Thesis Track

A candidate for the degree of Master of Science must present acceptable grades for a minimum of 36 hours of courses approved for graduate credit, including not more than 3 hours devoted to Advanced Problems (BIOL 560, 561, and 564). Thesis hours (BIOL 599) cannot be applied to this requirement. At least 30 hours must be from courses in the Department of Biology. At least 18 hours must be in courses at the 500-level or above, including 2 hours of the Graduate Seminar in Biology (BIOL 551/552). Students will also take 1 hour of Colloquium in Biological Science (BIOL 550) each semester they are in residence and have stipend support from the department; this course does not count toward the credit hours required for the degree. At least 3 hours of graduate course work (approved by the major advisor and Graduate Studies Coordinator) must be in an area of physical science or mathematics outside of biology. Students are required to pass written and oral comprehensive examinations conducted by the student's Advisory Committee.

Applicants and newly admitted students should inform the Graduate Admissions Coordinator (BiolGradProgram@louisiana.edu) regarding which track they will initially pursue. Admission procedures are the same for both thesis and non-thesis tracks, except that applicants will not be considered for the thesis track until they have identified a faculty member willing to supervise their thesis research. If a thesis advisor has been identified, the student should notify the Graduate Admissions Coordinator.

BIOLOGY GRADUATE FACULTY

James Albert: Fish evolution and biology, Amazonian biodiversity, jalbert@louisiana.edu

Loren Cassin Sackett: Evolution in small populations, conservation genomics, ecology and evolution of infectious diseases, loren.sackett@louisiana.edu

Andrei Chistoserdov: Environmental Microbiology, Biogeochemistry & Pathogenesis, andrei.chistoserdov@louisiana.edu

Suzanne Fredericq: Systematics, Morphology and Molecular Evolution of Red Algae, suzanne.fredericq@louisiana.edu

Mark Genung: Community ecology, plant-pollinator interactions, within-species variation, quantitative ecology, mark.genung@louisiana.edu

Emily Kane: Ecological and Evolutionary Biomechanics, Emily.Kane@louisiana.edu

Nicholas J. Kooyers: Plant ecological genetics and genomics, adaptation**,** plant evolutionary ecology, global change biology, Nicholas.Kooyers@louisiana.edu

Ritwij Kulkarni: Effects of Environmental Pollutants on the Immuno-Pathogenesis of Respiratory Infections; Role of Inflammasomes in Bacterial Urinary Tract Infections, ritwj@louisiana.edu

Paul Leberg: Conservation Genetics and Ecology of Birds, Mammals & Fishes, Leberg@Louisiana.edu

Sohyoung Lee: Glycan-mediated host-pathogen interactions, gastrointestinal infections, sohyoung.lee@louisiana.edu

Mirna Marinic: Using cell culture-based methodologies to study developmental and genetic basis of mammalian pregnancy, and evolution of placentation variations across eutherian mammals, mirna.marinic@louisiana.edu

Craig R. McClain: Marine biodiversity, body size and energetics, craig.mcclain@louisiana.edu

Brad Moon: Functional Morphology and Physiology, Muscle Function, Herpetology, BradMoon@louisiana.edu

Ian Patterson: Characterizing the transmission of viruses in mosquitoes, arboviruses, insectspecific viruses. Ian.Patterson@louisiana.edu

Thomas C. Pesacreta: Plant Cytoskeleton, Movements and myosin; microscopy, thomas.pesacreta@louisiana.edu

Daniel J. Povinelli: Evolution of Learning and Cognition in Primates; Theory of Mind, povinelli@louisiana.edu

Kelly Robinson: Biological Oceanography, Marine Zooplankton, Jellyfish Ecology, Climate Change & Variability, Food Webs, kelly.robinson@louisiana.edu

Karen M. Smith: Use of transgenic mouse models to investigate genes influencing nervous system development, karen.smith@louisiana.edu

Beth A. Stauffer: Biological Oceanography, Phytoplankton/Protistan Ecology, Coastal Water Quality Issues, stauffer@louisiana.edu

Yoichiro Tamori: Evolution of cancer cells, Yoichiro.Tamori@louisiana.edu

Melissa Toups: Sex-chromosome evolution, genome evolution, and polyploidy, melissa.toups@louisiana.edu

Francois Villinger: Immune response and vaccine development, francois.villinger@louisiana.edu (at the New Iberia Research Center*)

Yi-Hong Wang: Molecular genetics of Sorghum, biofuels development, yihong.wang@louisiana.edu

Andrea Westerband: Plant functional ecology and ecophysiology, population dynamics, invasion, andrea.westerband@louisiana.edu

Robyn A. Zerebecki: Wetland and coastal community ecology, within-species variation, biodiversity-ecosystem function, local adaptation, and eco-evolutionary feedbacks, robyn.zerebecki@louisiana.edu

BIOLOGY GRADUATE ADJUCNT FACULTY

Sherry Krayesky-Self: Microscopy, Diversity, physiology, and ecology between microalga and rhodolith (red-rock) forming macroalgae, sherry.krayesky@louisiana.edu

Beth A. Middleton: Wetland plant ecology, and wetland restoration, beth_middleton@usgs.gov

Guillaume Rieucau: Marine and estuarine behavioral ecology, fish collective behavior, predatorprey interaction, ecology of fear, grieucau@lumcon.edu (at Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON)*

*LUMCON and NIRC facilities are off main campus and will require personal transportation to reach them