

Letter from Dr. Stafford to prospective applicants:

Thank you for your interest in my research program at the Marine Mammal Institute, Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Sciences at Oregon State University. I receive many e-mails each year from prospective students inquiring about opportunities to undertake graduate studies in my research group. Although I try, I am not always able to reply to them all. I encourage students who wish to pursue research opportunities to send me a well-thought out email which includes a CV and a statement of research experience, interests, skills, and career goals. Please take the time to introduce yourself, your background, where you work or study, and why you are writing me.

The most important component of the FWCS application process is identifying a faculty member who will sponsor your application. What is unique about this program is that students do not apply 'blindly' to the department, rather, they identify a faculty member with whom they want to work. This is the person (e.g., me) who will ultimately be responsible for providing you an offer of acceptance but all prospective students will have to meet Departmental and OSU Graduate School admission requirements. It's impossible for me to make any promises until I know the status of my research grants. Also, I do not accept new graduate students every year.

The profile of the applicant that I am interested in recruiting includes a strong quantitative background, clear, goal-oriented thinking, responsibility in the timely completion of tasks assigned, and an ability to work independently and communicate clearly, both in writing and face to face. The field work I undertake (and in which I involve students) often involves spending long periods (weeks to months) in very close quarters in remote regions. Therefore, a willingness to learn, an openness to different opinions and cultures, and a sincere desire to work as part of a team and foster a welcoming and collaborative environment are all valued skills.

Generally, all incoming students have some funding guaranteed. This funding either comes from research grants that I have obtained, or from a fellowship or grant that you might have been awarded (common sources for graduate students are the NSF graduate research fellowship, NOAA Nancy Foster, NASA, and the DOD). Oregon State University and the Marine Mammal Institute also have a number of fellowships. I encourage you to apply for any graduate research fellowships for which you are eligible before you apply to graduate school. Please note I will not take on a student without having a secure funding plan and appropriate datasets and/or field projects to enable a research project.

I am committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in our field, in the lab and in the classroom. I believe Black Lives Matter. Everyone deserves the right to safely explore and appreciate our incredible natural world, regardless of race, economic background, or gender identity.

International students with a funded scholarship from their country should contact me to determine the suitability of their funding source to our programs according to the Graduate School's admission requirements

Interested undergraduate students are welcome to contact me about capstone projects, internship opportunities, or independent study. I may not always have a project available, but it never hurts to ask.

Interested postdocs are encouraged to apply to external fellowship opportunities and/or discuss the joint preparation of research proposals with me to support post doc salaries. I am only able to fund post docs (i.e. pay salary, benefits and miscellaneous expenses) if I have an existing grant that covers these costs.