For Department Website:

Social Personality Area Doctoral Applicants: Profile of Competitive Applicants

The Social-Personality area faculty carefully review all submitted materials provided by applicants. Strengths in some domains may offset weaknesses in other domains, but all of the attributes listed below are important. Based on past experience, competitive applicants to our program typically have:

- **Relevant research experience.** Doctoral students spend much of their time conducting research. Thus, it is expected that applicants have had multiple semesters of research experience prior to submitting application materials. This experience should reflect an applicant’s general research interests and/or skills that have been developed. Most applicants acquire research experience as research assistants in faculty laboratories and/or through the completion of supervised research projects for honors theses.

- **Identified specific members of the social-personality faculty with whom they would like to collaborate.** It is in an applicant’s interest to contact faculty members in advance to determine if they will be accepting students. Beyond this, be prepared to proactively engage with faculty members by reading some of their recent articles and by asking questions about the types of research they are currently conducting.

- **Excellent quantitative, verbal, and writing skills.** These skills are demonstrated by above average GRE scores, as well as appropriate coursework (e.g., rigorous courses and high grades) and relevant experience (e.g., writing sample).

- **Performed well in statistics and research methods courses.**

- **Received advice during the application process from faculty members, graduate students, or advisors who understand the application process.** This includes gathering advice on professional websites about how to write a compelling personal statement and what to include in a CV.

- **Letters of recommendation from individuals who are able to comment in an informed and specific manner on relevant interests, experience, and abilities.** An applicant should be honest with letter writers about any weaknesses (e.g., low GRE scores, poor statistics course grade, limited research experience) so they can potentially provide supplemental context that might offset any perceived weaknesses.