

# Applying to USC's Biokinesiology PhD program

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# First steps

- Determine why you want to do a PhD
  - Interested in research career
    - Academic research
    - Research careers in a government agency or industry
- Identify potential programs and mentors
  - Identify senior authors of papers you have read
  - Search for faculty by topic / interest area
  - Ask your professors to recommend potential mentors/programs

# Preparing your application: 2+ months prior

- Update your CV
- Reach out to potential mentors
- Craft a personal statement and request feedback from mentors, research faculty you have worked with
- Identify 3 potential people to write recommendation letters
- Request your official transcripts early (2 months prior to deadline is recommended)

# Application process: Important dates

- **November 1:** Deadline to submit application
- **January:** Interview day (in person or Zoom)
- **February:** Notification of decision
- **April 1:** Deadline to accept position

# CV/resume: Tips

- *Most important: Research experience*
  - Indicate the lab and your role, and briefly what you worked on
- *Technical skills, including equipment and software/ processing (e.g., MatLab, Vicon)*
  - Indicate level of proficiency (e.g., beginner/intermediate/advanced) for each
- *Any presentations and/or publications with full citation*
- *Clinical training and experience, if relevant*
- *Can include non-research/non-clinical positions including employment/volunteer/leadership*
  - Indicate your title and what you did in this position

# How to communicate with a potential advisor

- **Email: What to include**
  - Describe your research interests and why you want to do a PhD
  - Explain why the particular lab interests you (know what the lab is currently working on)
  - Attach your CV
  - Ask if they are open to meeting prior to the application deadline
  - Overall: Not too long!

# How to communicate with a potential advisor

## Meeting

- How to talk about your research experience
  - Explain the context of your work and key outcomes
    - What is the question and why does it matter?
    - What did you do?
    - What did you find?
  - What was your specific role in the research?
- Ask questions about the lab/program
- Ask if it is ok to reach out to a current PhD student in the lab

# Statement of purpose (personal statement)

- What are your professional goals or objectives?
- How do you plan to accomplish these goals?
- Why have you chosen to apply for admission to the PhD program in the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy?
- What is the area of your current/prior research?
- Which USC faculty member do you hope to conduct research with?
- How will this program facilitate the accomplishment of your professional goals?
- How do you feel you will contribute to the field of physical therapy and/or science of movement?



# Statement of purpose: Tips

- Length: 3-4 pages
- Describe how your qualifications and experience have prepared you for a PhD
- When you describe your current research experience, explain the context of your work, your specific role, and the key outcomes of your efforts

# Statement of purpose: Tips

- When you identify USC faculty members you are interested in working with, describe *why* you want to work with them
- Describe some of the potential research directions that you hope to pursue during your PhD
- Describe how working with the particular faculty member(s) will help you achieve your professional goals

# How to request letters of recommendation

- **Be thoughtful about who you ask for letters from**
  - Choose individuals who have personally observed you in action, especially in research settings
  - If you have a research advisor or co-author, ask those individuals for a letter (missing a letter from such individuals will raise questions)
  - Do not ask for letters from co-workers or fellow students—the writer should have a supervisory role

# How to request letters of recommendation

- Request letters well in advance of the deadline
  - Asking for a letter at the last minute will not result in a strong recommendation!
  - If the individual you request the letter from expresses some reluctance (e.g. “I am very busy right now.” or “I don’t really remember you very well.”), move on. That expression of reluctance may mean the individual would not give you a strong recommendation.

# How to request letters of recommendation

- Send your resume/CV and your personal statement to the letter writer
  - The more information the writer has, the better able they will be to include pertinent details in the letter
  - Remind the writer of specific things you accomplished as well as personal details about your interactions that might not be included in the resume

# USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy

## PROGRAMS

### *PHD PROGRAM IN BIOKINESIOLOGY*

#### CURRICULUM AND TRAINING **OUTCOME OBJECTIVES**

Outcome objectives for the PhD program in Biokinesiology include the following:

1. Proficient knowledge of the biological basis of healthy and disordered human movement.
2. A deep understanding of the existing research in a specialized area of Biokinesiology.
3. Attainment of strong technical and analytical skills to become an effective researcher in Biokinesiology.
4. Demonstrated ability to identify contemporary research questions in Biokinesiology to extend existing knowledge through original research.
5. Demonstrated ability to engage in a productive research career in a variety of employment settings.



#### **Application Deadline: November 1**

Admission will be considered for the fall semester only. Once completed, your application will enter the review process. You will be notified of our admission decision by the end of February. Students only are admitted to the PhD program if there is a strong match between a potential faculty advisor and an applicant's research interests. It is highly recommended you contact the faculty member(s) you are interested in working with prior to the submission of your application.

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and Physical Therapy

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