Blurb we used for emailing MEEC-goers:

**Applying for or starting graduate school this year?**

**Don’t know what to expect?**

**We can help!**

MEEC will be hosting a graduate student panel discussion for undergraduate students interested in attending graduate school. This is an excellent opportunity to learn the ins and outs of the application process, visiting schools, and what grad school is really like from current M.S. and Ph.D. students from various institutions.

**Where:** River Campus Building (?)

**When:** Saturday, 12:45 – 1:30 PM

More detailed blurb in the MEEC pamphlet:

Applying for and beginning graduate school can be an overwhelming, scary experience and it can be hard to know what to expect. If only you could get advice from someone who has done it before… well, now you can! We will be hosting a graduate student panel discussion for undergraduate students interested in attending graduate school. This is an excellent opportunity to learn the ins and outs of the application process, visiting schools, and what grad school is really like from current M.S. and Ph.D. students from various institutions. We hope to ease nerves and give focus to those who are beginning their graduate journey.

Summary of the panel itself:

Questions I asked:

1. Why did you decide to go to graduate school?
2. Should you contact professors or their students before applying to a program?
3. What makes someone a strong applicant: grades or research? Both?
4. Visiting schools can be overwhelming-- what things are important to pay attention to?
5. What is a stipend? Do all programs offer stipends?
6. What surprised you most about the transition to grad school/being a grad student?
7. What is a typical day like for a grad student in biology? (time management)

EXTRA:

1. Would you recommend taking time off in between graduate school and undergrad?
2. If you’ve taught before, what was your first TA experience like?
3. What are some of the typical expectations of a graduate student?

Answers tended to be a bit overwhelming (perhaps slightly negative?)—So I might ask a few more questions about personal growth in grad school, benefits of grad school, etc. The panel discussion was 45 minutes long- the first half I asked my prepared questions, and the second half was a Q&A session. I would say that there were ~40 attendees. About 10 students stayed afterwards to ask the panelists additional questions.

Panelists were pretty diverse:

Brent Stoffer  
University of Cincinnati  
PhD in Biological Sciences (received his M.S. before attending Cincinnati)  
 [stoffebm@mail.uc.edu](mailto:stoffebm@mail.uc.edu)

Cassie Wesseln  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
PhD in Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology (straight from undergrad)

[wesseln1@illinois.edu](mailto:wesseln1@illinois.edu)

​Isaac Ligocki

Ohio State University

PhD Program (BA in Biology from Wittenberg University, followed by 3 years of teaching high school in Florida before enrolling at OSU)

[ligocki.3@osu.edu](mailto:ligocki.3@osu.edu)

Emily Weigel

Michigan State University/BEACON Center

PhD Program

[emilygweigel@gmail.com](mailto:emilygweigel@gmail.com)

Jessica Davis

University of Dayton

MS, Ecology (2nd year)

[jgldavis@gmail.com](mailto:jgldavis@gmail.com)

Email I sent to panelists:

*Hello panelists!*

*I wanted to get in touch with some details about our panel. As you know, the panel will consist of grad students and we want to offer our advice about applying for and beginning graduate school. The panel will be held on* ***Saturday from 12:30pm-1:15pm at River Campus in room N1650****. The room is set up in theatre style with a capacity of ~350, so we’ll have plenty of space (we will have access to microphones as well).*

*I (Christie) will be moderating and I will start the panel by asking you to tell the audience your name, your institution and your current year in grad school. I will have some questions prepared to present to the panel (e.g. What are the major differences between graduate school and undergrad?). I'm not necessarily going to go straight down the line and have each of you answer every question—panelists can jump in whenever/take turns appropriately. I envision doing this for 20 minutes or so, and then having a Q&A session until our time is up.*

*I ask that you arrive about 15 minutes early if possible. It would also be great if you could stay for a few minutes afterwards to answer any additional questions. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns!*

*Thanks and I’ll see you soon,*

*-Christie K*