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Graduate Admission Essay

As a sophomore at the University of Hawaii, I registered for a graduate-level infectious disease microbiology course. This class focused my intellectual endeavors on expanding my knowledge of the complex interactions between pathogenic microbes and mammalian immunity. As soon as course schedules were published every quarter, I would immediately call professors to beg entry into their graduate courses. I continued my advanced coursework in immunology, tropical medicine, infectious disease epidemiology, medical microbiology, and pharmacology. After several years of studies, one particular professor realized my interest and aptitude and offered me the opportunity to work in her lab. During my first research experience, I acquired a wealth of knowledge about cell culture of malarial parasites. More than that, however, I found myself deeply immersed in the culture of graduate school: attending seminars from visiting scientists, collaborating on various research methods, and participating in journal clubs. I thrived in this environment, and it inspired me to...

In {YEAR}, I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in microbiology and started a pharmacology research rotation. Investigating the differences in human and malarial detoxification enzymes eventually expanded into a potential graduate thesis for me. I applied to a PhD program to take my research to the next level, but my application highlighted a grave error I made during my undergraduate education – I had focused too heavily on research and graduate courses, neglecting to maintain an acceptable GPA in certain other areas of required coursework. I was not accepted into the PhD program, which was disheartening, but I was determined to continue my research work, and I have stayed completely focused on this goal over the past year.

During college, I worked as a dive instructor, and while I continued to pursue my pharmacology research, I opened a small SCUBA shop in Honolulu to support myself financially. The complexity of running a small business soon dominated my time and distracted me from my education. Over the next few years, the shop eventually thrived, but I found myself longing to return to scientific research.

I recognized that pursuing a Master's program would bolster my record and put me back on track. I read papers on adjuvants, which I found poignant because these drugs are at the crux of the pharmaceutical modification of host and pathogen interactions. I was elated when I was accepted to the MS program at Indiana State University. Once again, I was immersed in the culture of graduate school and was afforded a myriad of research opportunities. While completing my thesis, I was privileged to work with animal models. Additionally, I gained institutional approval to establish influenza viral cultures. My thesis focused on the effects of emulsions in vaccine adjuvant formulations.

After attaining my Master's degree in biology, I accepted a local high school teaching position that allowed me to continue my research as an ISU educational affiliate. Currently, I am working to characterize how adjuvants modify immune responses to infectious diseases and cancer. Over the past year, I have also enjoyed mentoring several high school students as they have participated in vaccinology research. I am leveraging this year to continue my adjuvant research and to finish a number of publications. Ultimately, I have discovered I am happiest and most productive when working in a research laboratory setting. Hence, I am applying for graduate studies in pursuit of a doctorate degree to allow me to advance my career and continue researching the interactions of microbes and immunity.

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