

## **Mac Stelioff: GRE Strategies<sup>1</sup>**

October 6, 2013

Mac Stelioff sat down at his computer and noticed a message from ETS announcing that his official GRE<sup>2</sup> scores were ready. He started to click on the link and then paused. Mac had taken the test at one of the many Testing Centers where the exam was now administered electronically and his unofficial score on the two multiple choice sections, available at the completion of the test, had been disappointing.<sup>3</sup> Now, ten days late, this official report wouldn't really change anything except to provide his score on the third analytical writing section. "Oh well," he thought to himself as he clicked through to the site, "I guess I should know the final numbers."

Mac was just starting the fall quarter of his senior year at UC Davis. The summer had been mild for the central valley, with only a few days reaching into triple digits in the small northern California city, and Summer Sessions had kept him busy. During Session I Mac took biological psychology and advanced animal behavior and during Session II he completed intermediate micro and macro economics. He used the remaining time, just two weeks of summer vacation, to study for the GRE, an important component of the graduate school application he intended to submit to psychology departments at a number of California universities.

Psychology had been a passionate interest since his teen-age years and Mac was excited to pursue research in a collaborative academic setting. He had an established mentoring relationship with a faculty member at UC Davis and had also worked on a graduate student's research projects. His future goals included tackling questions about human

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<sup>1</sup> This case was prepared for use as the basis for class instruction and discussion by Sylvia Sensiper, PhD, Director of the Guardian Professions Program, Office of Graduate Studies, UC Davis. The following have provided funding for the GPP: The Stuart Foundation, the May and Stanley Smith Charitable Trust, The California Wellness Foundation and the University of California Office of the President.

<sup>2</sup> The GRE is a required standardized test for many graduate school programs. The test aims to examine general skills in quantitative reasoning, analytical writing, verbal reasoning and critical thinking.

<sup>3</sup> Mac received a verbal score in the 70 percentile and a quantitative score in the 65 percentile.

behavior, particularly in the area of choice and decision-making, and he had already been in communication with faculty members at UCLA and UC Irvine.

Mac got up from his desk, glanced out the window, and considered some of his options as he watched what was going on in the courtyard at the Lexington Apartments. This had been home for just over a year and he really appreciated the opportunities he had found at UC Davis, even though it hadn't been his number one choice when he transferred from community college. He knew that graduate school application deadlines varied, but that most were at the end of December and he was already deeply immersed in a full course load of work for the fall quarter. Did he even have time to take the GRE again? And could he actually get an appointment? Other students would also be rushing to take their tests before the application deadlines and it might be difficult.

"I've already been through so much," Mac thought to himself, "I don't want some math equations and vocabulary to stand in the way of going to graduate school." Still, he wasn't certain whether re-taking the test was necessary and wondered exactly what he should do.

## **Growing Up**

Mac's parents divorced when he was young and as with many families, the situation became complicated. Finally, when Mac was seventeen, he was moved into a group home. He had always wanted to live with his grandparents, so once he emancipated, he went to live with them in Santa Clarita, California.

## **Moving Forward and Finding a Mentor**

Once Mac was settled in southern California, he immediately set about making up for lost time. He had excellent GED scores, placing in the top 1% in science and social studies and in the top 4% in reading comprehension and analytical writing. He also got his drivers license. He then began to explore various educational and career routes that he thought might be his future.

A career in law was a consideration, so Mac signed up for a paralegal course to help him understand the field. He also enrolled in a certificate program for mental health workers at Pacific Clinics, thinking he might be able to get a county job and get a better feel whether this was a good career direction. At the same time, Mac started attending the local community college in Santa Clarita, College of the Canyons, and one of the first classes he took was a psychology course called Learning and Behavior.

The class was taught by Professor Rebecca Shephard and Mac would often stay after to ask questions and talk. "That kind of psychology only focuses on external stimuli and observable actions in response to stimuli and ignores everything that is going on internally," Mac said. "I was really interested in intrinsic motivation and I talked with Professor Shephard about those issues a lot." Mac's interest was fueled by his reading of *The Lucifer Effect*, a recounting of the work of psychologist Phillip Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment. In 1971, Zimbardo recruited twenty-four healthy college students to participate in a simulated prison for two weeks. Students were randomly assigned to play

the role of either a guard or an inmate, but after only six days, the experiment was shut down because the guards quickly began to exhibit sadistic behavior.<sup>4</sup> Seeing the world from a psychological researcher's point of view was eye opening. "I realized after reading the book that psychology held many of the answers to human behavior that I was trying to figure out."

Mac did well in the Learning and Behavior class and shortly after, became a Teaching Assistant for Professor Shephard through the federal work-study program. At about the same time he began to think that neither law nor counseling would be satisfactory career directions.

### **Engaging in a discipline**

Mac's interest in psychology continued to grow as he worked as a TA for Rebecca Shephard and received invaluable mentoring. He also participated in many psychology department related activities that helped further his understanding of the discipline. The first conference he went to was a meeting of the American Psychological Society (APS) in Boston, a conference he almost missed because he couldn't attend the Psi Beta meetings due to his work schedule. "I talked with the advisor of the club and pointed out that I was helping with the bake sales and fundraising and thought I should be allowed to be a part of the group that went to the conference," Mac said. "But she claimed I technically wasn't a member because I wasn't attending the regular meetings." When Mac and a friend went to the conference without any school funding, paying out of pocket for the airfare and splitting the cost of a room, his enthusiasm and perseverance cemented his reputation as a dedicated student. "I was a psych nerd or groupie," Mac said. He eventually became president of Psi Beta, and tutored students who were having difficulty with psychology.

Mac's first research project was for a methods course during his first full semester at COC. His team investigated the effects of color on taste perception by using four samples of vanilla ice cream, coloring three to resemble common ice cream flavors, pink (strawberry), blue (blueberry) and brown (chocolate), and leaving one sample its natural color of white. The control group, who tasted the various samples with their eyes closed, reported correctly that all the samples were vanilla. But the participants in the experimental group, who tasted with their eyes open, all reported flavors that were consistent with the colors of the ice cream!

Next Mac initiated a project in conjunction with Phillip Zimbardo's Heroic Imagination Project (HIP), a curriculum for high school students that draws on insights from the famous prison experiment with abusive behavior, but instead helps students to act heroically or altruistically in situations that might otherwise lead to anti-social behaviors.<sup>5</sup> To implement the curriculum, Mac organized a team of two faculty advisors and seven students and proposed the project to a local high school. The successful effort resulted in a poster at the Western Psychological Association (WPA) in San Francisco in 2012 that

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<sup>4</sup> (<http://www.lucifereffect.com/>)

<sup>5</sup> <http://heroicimagination.org/welcome/>

Phillip Zimbardo actually attended. Just the year before at the same WPA annual meeting in Los Angeles, Mac had met Zimbardo and got his autograph. When Zimbardo attended the poster session in San Francisco, Mac was excited. “I like to say that the first year I went to the WPA meeting I saw Phillip Zimbardo, and the second year he saw me,” Mac joked.

### **Transferring to a Four Year University**

Mac’s career explorations in the fields of law and mental health had helped him realize that neither profession was right for him and now, as he began to be more and more engaged in his academic pursuits, he began to think a career as a professor might be a good fit. “Professors are in mentorship positions and they have cohorts of students they are influencing. It has all the benefits of helping people without the drama of being a lawyer or psychologist,” Mac said. As he thought more about this possibility, it began to influence the kinds of decisions he made as he prepared to transfer from community college to a four-year university.

Mac applied to UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UC Santa Barbara and UC San Diego, using the TAG agreement that is available to community college students at seven UC campuses.<sup>6</sup> His first choice was UC San Diego and when he received his acceptance (it was the first of the campuses to respond), he completed the statement of intent to register, paid his \$100 deposit and purchased a UCSD sweater.

Then, a couple of days later, he received an envelope from UC Davis and opening it up, discovered he’d received the Regents Scholarship which ensured a ‘full-ride.’ Mac was both excited and confused as he now had to decide between the school he had determined was his first choice and a loan-free college education.

Mac first consulted with Rebecca Shephard who, coincidentally, had done her undergraduate work at UC Davis. She praised the school and community, and even made note of UC Davis’ famed arboretum. He also talked with Julie Jacobson, a part-time professor and counselor who he had gone to for academic counseling. Mac then conducted his own research, looking online to compare the course offerings in the two Psychology Departments. Mac liked the ‘harder’ side of psychology and noted that UC Davis had a number of good mathematics courses integrated with their psychology degree which would help him learn how to apply quantitative reasoning to psychological phenomenon. But his uncle’s girlfriend was the most straightforward. She simply pointed out the number of newspaper articles about the current expense of college and the amount of loans students generally took out. UC Davis’s offer would allow Mac to finish his college education without debt.

In the end, Mac accepted the Regents Scholarship at UC Davis.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/transfer/guarantee/>

## Settling in: life in northern California

Mac found that Dr. Shephard's view about the Davis campus was true: perhaps more than any other UC campus there is a 'college town' feel and most people are associated with the university in some way, either as a student, alumni, staff or professor. Mac liked the environment and moved into the Lexington Apartments with ease, a transition that was facilitated by the university and the fact that he had already registered for classes. Over the summer he had completed a number of math classes through the online platform Khan Academy, teaching himself trigonometry and precalculus.<sup>7</sup> This enabled him to place into the highest calculus track and enter his preferred major, Psychology with an emphasis in mathematics.

Mac also knew he wanted to be involved in research and that these opportunities might lie outside of his regular classroom work. He began emailing professors to see what kind of possibilities he might uncover, but he met with limited success until he started including in his email his status as a Regents Scholar. That stimulated more interest, but real assistance stemmed from his involvement in the Guardian Scholars Program (GSP), a support program for former foster youth that had been founded at UC Davis in 2007.

Mac had been contacted when he first arrived at UC Davis by Valeri Garcia, the program advisor, and he had taken advantage of the networking, workshops and social events provided by the program. He had also participated in organizing the California Youth Connection (CYC) chapter at UC Davis.<sup>8</sup> Valeri was able to provide some additional assistance with Mac's calculus classes and also helped him find academic guidance. Through the GSP Mentors Program, Mac met Keith Widaman, a professor in the psychology department who took a real interest in developing his enthusiasm for the discipline and cultivating his academic capabilities.

Professor Widaman met with Mac every couple of weeks to discuss his future plans and had him sit in on his graduate classes. This helped Mac get a sense of the graduate school environment and develop a comfort and ease with that level of intellectual engagement.

Dr. Widaman also helped Mac pursue his research interest in resilience by allowing him access to a large longitudinal data set on Mexican American youth. Mac used this data set as his project for MURALS, a mentorship and research program for students from disadvantaged backgrounds that is designed to provide students with a supervised research opportunity.<sup>9</sup> "The MURALS program has workshops on professional development and you also get together with other students to talk about your research," Mac said. "Some students have professor mentors that are away on sabbatical or with whom they disagree and it helps you hear about a range of projects and ways of doing

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<sup>7</sup> The Khan Academy is a nonprofit that provides free world-class education for anyone. <https://www.khanacademy.org/>

<sup>8</sup> CYC is a youth led organization that empowers young adults and helps them advocate for change and improvement in the foster care system. <http://www.calyouthconn.org/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://success.ucdavis.edu/programs/murals/>

research. It's a support group that is also meant to help you figure out what you are doing next."

Mac's interest in decision-making also led him to ask the TA for his game theory class if he needed any assistance with his research. Mac helped him with some initial review and basic research until his funding came through and then became a collaborator on one of the graduate student's projects.

### **Finding the Future**

Dr. Widaman was a good sounding board for his graduate school ambitions and suggested Mac apply to UC Irvine, but Mac also knew he needed to find information on different programs on his own. Although class work and research projects took much of his time, he made use of many opportunities to find out about various psychology graduate programs.

During his first quarter at UC Davis, Mac was involved in the Regents Scholars Society. When he found out the annual conference was at UCLA, he made plans to go, notifying a professor with whom he'd been emailing that he would be in town and had an interest in seeing his lab. (See **Exhibit A**) Mac followed the professor's suggestion to stop by and was able to watch an experiment on how glucose might negate a traumatic stress disorder: mice were shocked and then received a dose of glucose. Mac reacted strongly to 'the poor mice,' a response that made it clear that working with live animals was not a research route he wanted to pursue.

Mac conducted a lot of web searching to find graduate programs that fit his interests. One good way to go about this was to see where the authors of articles that intrigued him were based, and in this way, he came up with a list of programs to apply to. "I picked Stanford, UC Berkeley and UCLA because they are top ranked psychology programs overall. I applied to UC Irvine, University of Indiana and UC San Diego because I liked the programs. I also applied to UC Davis."

Mac also reached out to other faculty to inquire about their labs and to express his interest in their work.<sup>10</sup> When a professor from UC Irvine asked for his curriculum vitae, Mac sent it along, receiving another email back asking if he had any programming experience. Mac had taken a Java class and knew he'd be learning Stata and SPSS in some upcoming statistics classes, but he still decided to find out what kind of program was used in her lab. When the answer turned out to be MATLAB, Mac made sure that Coursera offered courses in that language so that he could effectively answer the email by detailing his already existing programming experience, what he would learn in upcoming classes, and also state that he was interested in learning MATLAB, knowing that he could easily do so online. (See **Exhibit B**)

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<sup>10</sup> Many graduate school applications have a place where you can notate the professors you have contacted or if you have come to campus for a visit.

## **What to do about the GRE?**

Mac was confident in his research abilities and knew he could create a compelling application that showcased his passion for research and his commitment to psychology. But he wasn't clear how much the GRE scores would play a part in any given admissions committee's decision. Mac had done his homework by researching online the statistics of incoming students for those accepted to the psychology department at UC San Diego, his number one choice, and the only school on his list that published its GRE averages. The average verbal score was 83.9% with a standard deviation of 18.3 and the average quantitative score was 84.9% with a standard deviation of 8.1. Mac's GPA was currently 3.81 and the average for department's accepted students was 3.8 "All the universities I was applying to were about the same caliber so I figured they would have similar applicants," Mac said.

As Mac thought more and more about re-taking the GRE, he decided it might be worthwhile to take it again, if he could ensure he would do better. But when was he going to find the time?

## Exhibit A: Correspondence with Faculty at UCLA

**From:** Mac Strelieff [<mailto:macstrelieff@ucdavis.edu>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 01, 2013 9:42 AM  
**To:** Grijalva, Carlos; Grijalva, Carlos (GDNET)  
**Subject:** UCLA Psychology

Hi Professor Grijalva,

I'm Mac Strelieff, an undergraduate at UC Davis involved in the Guardian Scholars Program here. Karen Ravago gave me your email and suggested I contact you about UCLA's graduate program in psychology.

I was a teaching assistant for two years at College of the Canyons, and the professor I worked under taught a class on learning & behavior. I loved everything to do with that approach, but haven't been able to find much like it at UC Davis. I looked through the graduate courses offered at UCLA and was excited to see things like instrumental conditioning and basic motivational processes.

Motivation, emotion, and choice/judgment/decision-making are my main interests, particularly as they relate to maladaptive choices like substance abuse or, alternatively, to resilience. At Davis, I am earning a BS in Psychology with a mathematics emphasis and a minor in economics. My economics minor will mostly consist of classes on choice/decision making. I'm also taking courses through [coursera.com](http://coursera.com); one by Dan Ariely at Duke University on behavioral economics and another by a UPENN Professor on "gamification," which has been used to make healthy, prosocial behaviors more fun and engaging.

I will be at UCLA for the 2013 Regents Scholar Conference, May 3rd - 5th. If there will be someone available to talk about graduate school at UCLA or research in psychology this weekend, please let me know.

Lastly, if there is anything regarding graduate study in psychology at UCLA that I should know before applying, please let me know.

Thank you for offering your email, and I hope to hear back soon!

Mac.

**From:** Grijalva, Carlos  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 01, 2013 10:22 AM  
**To:** Mac Strelieff  
**Cc:** Minor, Thomas R.; Wassum, Kate  
**Subject:** RE: UCLA Psychology

Hi Mac,

Thank you for your message. I am sorry to say that I will not be available during your visit to UCLA later this week. Given your interests, I would suggest that you try to get in contact with



Professors Tom Minor and Kate Wassum. I have copied them on this message. You may also want to check the Psychology Department roster for other faculty members whose work you might find close to your interests. <http://www.psych.ucla.edu/>

Best wishes,  
Carlos

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Carlos V. Grijalva, Ph.D.  
Associate Dean, Graduate Division  
Professor of Behavioral Neuroscience  
Department of Psychology  
8641 Franz Hall, Box 951563  
University of California Los Angeles  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563

Phone: [310-825-8277](tel:310-825-8277) (Psychology); [310-206-2281](tel:310-206-2281) (Graduate Division)  
Fax: [310-206-5895](tel:310-206-5895)  
Email: [grijalva@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:grijalva@psych.ucla.edu) (Psychology)  
Email: [cgrijalva@grad.ucla.edu](mailto:cgrijalva@grad.ucla.edu) (Graduate Division)

**On Wed, May 1, 2013 at 10:24 AM, Minor, Thomas R. <[minor@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:minor@psych.ucla.edu)> wrote:**

Dear Mac,  
I'll be happy to meet with you when you visit.  
Cheers,  
tom

Thomas R. Minor, Ph.D.  
Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience  
Department of Psychology, Brain Research Institute,  
and the Integrative Center for Learning & Memory  
Campus Box 156304  
UCLA  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563  
[310-825-3611](tel:310-825-3611)  
[minor@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:minor@psych.ucla.edu)

Stress and Motivated Behavior Institute  
Neurobehavioral Research Laboratory  
VA Medical Center  
385 Tremont Avenue  
Mail Stop 129  
East Orange, NJ 07018  
[\(973\) 676 1000 x 1810](tel:(973)6761000x1810)  
[thomas.r.minor@us.army.mil](mailto:thomas.r.minor@us.army.mil)  
[thomas.minor@va.gov](mailto:thomas.minor@va.gov)

**On Wed, May 1, 2013 at 11:15 AM, Strelhoff, Mac <[strelhoff@ucdavis.edu](mailto:strelhoff@ucdavis.edu)> wrote:**

Hi Tom,

I'll be arriving Friday night around 10:30-11:00pm and staying until around 11:00am on Sunday. Is there a time within that range that would work for you?

There may be a little variability regarding the time I leave on Sunday, but the program is over at 11:00am and Davis is a bit of a drive from Los Angeles so most of the drivers want to leave early.

Let me know what times work for you,  
Mac.

**On Wed, May 1, 2013 at 11:45 AM, Minor, Thomas R. <[minor@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:minor@psych.ucla.edu)> wrote:**

Mac,

Attached is a map indicating the location of Franz Hall and pay parking

Thomas R. Minor, Ph.D.  
Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience  
Department of Psychology, Brain Research Institute,  
and the Integrative Center for Learning & Memory  
Campus Box 156304  
UCLA  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563

[310-825-3611](tel:310-825-3611)  
[minor@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:minor@psych.ucla.edu)

**On Wed, May 1, 2013 at 3:30 PM, Strelhoff, Mac <[strelhoff@ucdavis.edu](mailto:strelhoff@ucdavis.edu)> wrote:**

Hi Tom,

Saturday at 8am would be great. Near the entrance to Franz Hall by the inverted fountain? I remember seeing that when I toured UCLA about a year ago.

I am also easy to spot, about 6'1" with brown hair and big glasses.

Seems like the conference events will be in Haines Hall, so getting to Franz Hall should be no trouble at all. We're being hosted by Regent Scholars at UCLA, so I'll probably be staying on campus.

Mac.

**On Thu, May 2, 2013 at 5:00 AM, Minor, Thomas R. <[minor@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:minor@psych.ucla.edu)> wrote:**

OK Mac, see you there and then

Thomas R. Minor, Ph.D.

Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience  
Department of Psychology, Brain Research Institute,  
and the Integrative Center for Learning & Memory  
Campus Box 156304  
UCLA  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563

[310-825-3611](tel:310-825-3611)  
[minor@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:minor@psych.ucla.edu)

**On Monday, May 6, 2013 at 9:49 PM, Strelhoff, Mac <[strelhoff@ucdavis.edu](mailto:strelhoff@ucdavis.edu)> wrote:**

Hi Tom,

Just wanted to thank you again for taking the time on Saturday morning to meet with me.

Washington University and Swarthmore do appear to be good matches for my interests. Though, I also agree with what you had said about looking for a degree that will guarantee employment (preferably in academia) after I graduate. So I'm going to work on getting a "wet" lab position for next academic year, and still plan on applying to UCLA.

Also, I had the opportunity to observe a rat during some of its trials. It was the first time I saw that in real life, and pretty exciting, although a little depressing because he didn't do so well... Turns out he didn't consume much glucose when it was available to him. The experience definitely made the research more gripping.

Thank you,  
Mac.

**On Fri, May 10, 2013 at 4:59 AM, Minor, Thomas R. <[minor@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:minor@psych.ucla.edu)> wrote:**

Mac,

Thanks for stopping by. I look forward to seeing your application next year

Cheers, Tom

Thomas R. Minor, Ph.D.  
Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience  
Department of Psychology, Brain Research Institute,  
and the Integrative Center for Learning & Memory  
Campus Box 156304  
UCLA  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563

[310-825-3611](tel:310-825-3611)  
[minor@psych.ucla.edu](mailto:minor@psych.ucla.edu)  
[thomas.r.minor@us.army.mil](mailto:thomas.r.minor@us.army.mil)

## **Exhibit B: Correspondence with Faculty at UC Irvine**

**On Nov 10, 2013, at 9:49 AM, Mac Strelhoff <[macstrelhoff@ucdavis.edu](mailto:macstrelhoff@ucdavis.edu)> wrote:**

Hi,

I'm Mac Strelhoff, a Regents Scholar at UC Davis finishing a BS in psychology with a mathematics emphasis and a minor in economics which entails a course on decision making and another on game theory.

I have read some of the articles by Jerome R. Busemeyer on models for decision making, and using those models to better understand decision-making deficits in clinical populations. That is exactly the kind of work I would love to do as a graduate student.

I recently found your lab at UC Irvine and it seems like the ideal graduate destination for me.

Please let me know if you will be accepting graduate students for your JDM lab during this application cycle.

Thanks,  
Mac.

**On Mon, Nov 11, 2013 at 11:48 AM, Jennifer Trueblood <[jstruebl@uci.edu](mailto:jstruebl@uci.edu)> wrote:**

Hello Mac,

Thank you for your interest in my lab. Can you please send me a CV?

Best,  
Jennifer

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Jennifer S. Trueblood  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Cognitive Sciences, University of California, Irvine  
Phone: [949-824-1761](tel:949-824-1761)  
[jstruebl@uci.edu](mailto:jstruebl@uci.edu)  
<http://www.socsci.uci.edu/~jstruebl>

**On Nov 11, 2013, at 4:59 PM, Mac Strelhoff <[macstrelhoff@ucdavis.edu](mailto:macstrelhoff@ucdavis.edu)> wrote:**

Hello Jennifer,

Thank you for the reply. I have attached my CV in pdf format. Let me know if you have any questions or would like more elaboration on any of the experiences that I mention in the CV.

Thanks,  
Mac

**On Mon, Nov 11, 2013 at 6:02 PM, Jennifer Trueblood <[jstruebl@uci.edu](mailto:jstruebl@uci.edu)> wrote:**

Hi Mac,

Thanks for sending your CV. Do you have any programming experience? If so, what languages can you program in?

Best,  
Jennifer

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Jennifer S. Trueblood, Assistant Professor  
Department of Cognitive Sciences, University of California, Irvine  
Phone: [949-824-1761](tel:949-824-1761)  
[jstruebl@uci.edu](mailto:jstruebl@uci.edu)  
<http://www.socsci.uci.edu/~jstruebl>

**On Nov 11, 2013, at 10:36 PM, Mac Strelhoff <[macstrelhoff@ucdavis.edu](mailto:macstrelhoff@ucdavis.edu)> wrote:**

Hi Jennifer,

I have experience with Java and a little data analysis experience with R. I will be taking a course on C, and another on agent based modeling using Java in the spring. I am also interested in learning Matlab. I found courses on machine learning and financial engineering offered through [coursera.org](http://coursera.org) that use Matlab, but have only been watching their video lessons as a hobby. The courses offer free Matlab licenses to students, so it would not be difficult to gain experience with Matlab if it is necessary. Which languages are usually used for your research?

Mac.

**On Tue, Nov 12, 2013 at 1:32 PM, Jennifer Trueblood <[jstruebl@uci.edu](mailto:jstruebl@uci.edu)> wrote:**

Hi Mac,

Thanks for the additional information. Most people here use Matlab. Of course, knowing other languages is usually very helpful.

We start evaluating applications in January. Please feel free to mention in your application that you have contacted me. I look forward to reading your full application.

Best,  
Jennifer

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Jennifer S. Trueblood, Assistant Professor  
Department of Cognitive Sciences, University of California, Irvine  
Phone: [949-824-1761](tel:949-824-1761)  
[jstruebl@uci.edu](mailto:jstruebl@uci.edu)  
<http://www.socsci.uci.edu/~jstruebl>

**On Tue, Nov 12, 2013 at 10:52 PM, Mac Strelhoff <[macstrelhoff@ucdavis.edu](mailto:macstrelhoff@ucdavis.edu)> wrote:**

Hi Jennifer,

In that case, I will take advantage of the coursera assignments to gain some experience in Matlab before attending graduate school. Thank you for the information. I will mention you in the application.

Thank you,  
Mac.

**From:** Mac Strelhoff <[macstrelhoff@ucdavis.edu](mailto:macstrelhoff@ucdavis.edu)>  
**Date:** Fri, Jan 10, 2014 at 4:29 PM  
**Subject:** Re: Decision Making and Graduate School  
**To:** Jennifer Trueblood <[jstruebl@uci.edu](mailto:jstruebl@uci.edu)>

Hi Jennifer,

To learn Matlab, I decided to replicate course assignments from my regular courses in Matlab. So by the end of this quarter I will be able to do regressions and ANOVA techniques in Matlab, and by the end of next quarter I will be able to do some agent based modeling in Matlab. I will also work through the assignments from a machine learning course offered through Coursera which covers regressions, neural networks, and other important techniques involved in machine learning within a Matlab, Octave, or FreeMat environment.

I am enrolled in two stats courses but both give assignments in R, so I don't think I will have experience in SPSS as mentioned in the personal statement I submitted, but I will have a bit of experience with R.

Lastly, the project I mention involving the long shot bias has been replaced with a study of factors that may influence risk preference in skilled Texas Hold 'em poker players.

Hopefully this is good preparation for the JDM Lab at UC Irvine!

Thanks,  
Mac.