

Why should I come here? Analyzing the content of online physics graduate program advertisements

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Slides



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Graduate education is important

Graduate admissions is the first step

Existing work on physics graduate admissions largely focuses on how applications evaluated and which aspects are prioritized

Posselt 2016, Potvin, Chari, and Hodapp 2017, Millet et al. 2019, Young et al. 2023

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Little work has examined how applicants select which programs to apply to

Posselt 2016, Potvin, Chari, and Hodapp 2017, Millet et al. 2019, Young et al. 2023



There are more than 250
institutions offering a
graduate degree in
physics

Applicants need to do
some filtering

Graduate applicants generally do not visit campus until after they have already applied

← Winter 2009, Marsden 2019 →

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Instead, they often rely on online material and recommendations from advisors

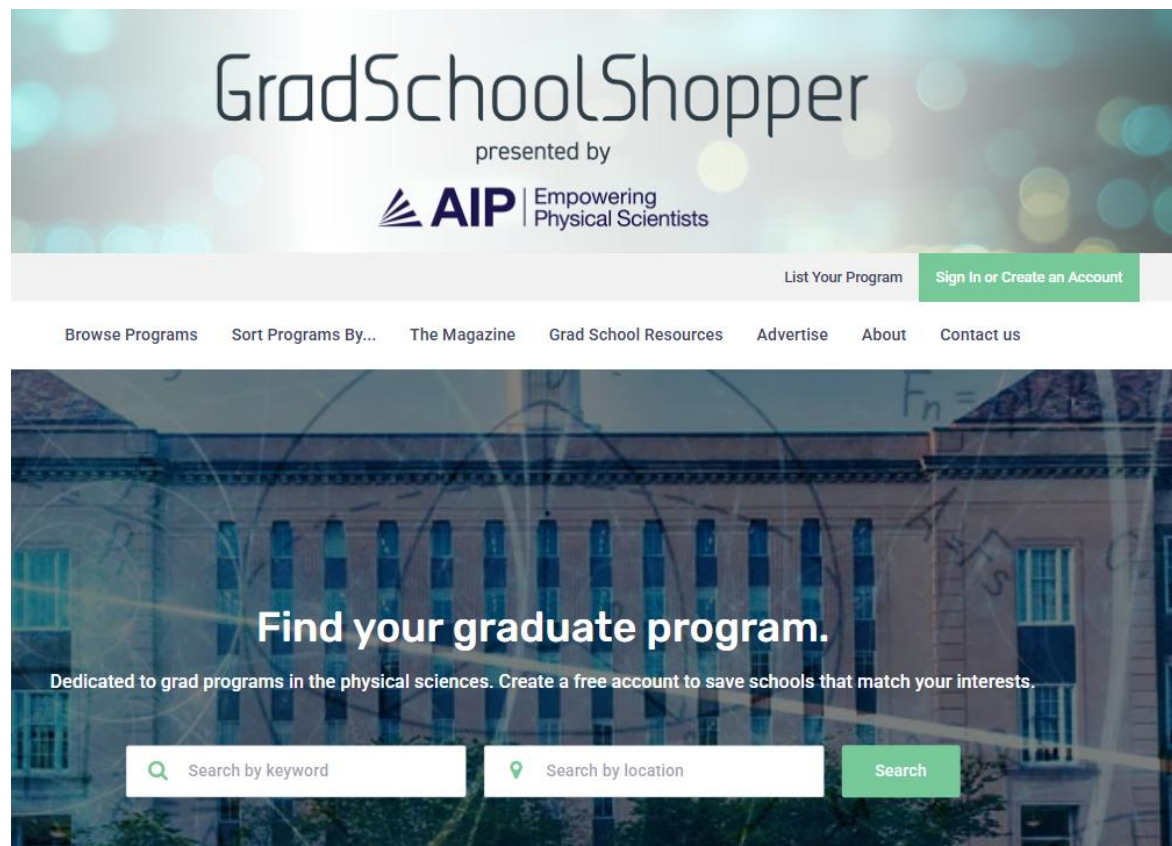
Winter 2009, Marsden 2019



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Goal: characterize the type of information communicated to applicants in online material

Use GradSchoolShopper data



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- Applicants often want to know what it is like to be a student in a program
- Look at department culture statements from GradSchoolShopper to infer this.

Winter 2009



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Use GradSchoolShopper data

- Applicants often want to know what it is like to be a student in a program
- Look at department culture statements from GradSchoolShopper to infer this.
- Found 54 U.S. physics graduate programs with department culture listings
- Analyze with content analysis

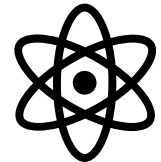
Winter 2009



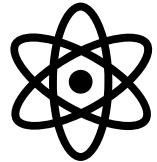
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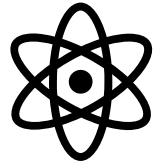
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 Values (48/54)



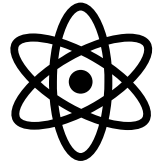
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 Local environment (30/54)

 Their reputation (16/54)



Most discussed: Research opportunities

- 43/54 listings
- Areas of research available
- Specific facilities
- Colloquia, seminars, and talks

Second: Positive atmosphere

- 37/54 listings
- Collegial
- Friendly
- Inclusive
- Frequent faculty-student interaction

Third: Departmental social events

- 31/54 listings
- Coffee hours
- BBQs, picnics, holiday parties
- Happy hours

Fourth: Student Organizations

- 24/54 listings
- Physics graduate student organization
- Women in Physics
- Outreach group

Fifth: Department size

- 20/54 listings
- Large department talked about opportunities available as a result of their size
- Smaller departments talked about personal interactions with students

Sixth: Favorable location

- 19/54 listings
- Nearby recreational opportunities
- Nearby major cities
- Local festivals/cultural attractions

Things that were largely absent

- Teaching/education



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- Cost of living/affordability

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- Teaching/education
- Cost of living/affordability
- Mental health

Sachmpazidi 2021

← Nicholas Young

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Stay tuned!

Takeaways

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 - their values
 - their opportunities
 - the benefits of their location
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- Statements revolve around four major topics:
 - their values
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 - their reputation
- Research and social opportunities are most common along with department atmosphere
- Limited discussion about teaching, costs, and mental health