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Class of 2009

The Ph.D. Experience

During my days in Philadelphia, when asked by new acquaintances what I studied at Penn, my response was often met with the following exclamation: “A Ph.D. in marketing? I didn’t know that existed!”

Indeed, the stork does *not* drop Marketing professors, fully grown, trained, and wrapped in a soft blanket, at business schools’ doorsteps. Doctoral training in our field can be overwhelming, filled with austerities and uncertainties from the trivial (should I use Times New Roman or Comic Sans font for writing my idea paper?) to the meaningful (how should I position my dissertation relative to the existing literature?). Wharton’s marketing department not only provides unparalleled support to its students to help tackle these challenges, but also it makes the experience exciting and satisfying.



Navigating the doctoral process, a Wharton marketing student can look to a constellation of stars: the department’s world-class faculty and doctoral student colleagues. Wharton’s faculty advisors are some of the most accomplished and influential in the field. The department’s tremendous diversity plays out on many levels. When students are in early stages of investigating a topic they will often find that a faculty member has a paper in the area and has an open door within a few steps distance. Additionally, the variety of methodologies and theoretical areas fosters a welcome atmosphere for discussions and seminars. During the school year, I attended a different research discussion on Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays of each week (some weeks on Tuesday too!). Exposure to so many of the latest developments in the field and researchers from around the world broadens students’ understanding in ways that simply reading previously published work cannot. The other students also contribute to a rich course of study, both in seminars and through casual drop-ins in the cube-plex.

Wharton Marketing has been built to support research. The staff I interacted with most closely were those working for the Wharton behavioral lab—a one-of-a-kind facility with opportunities to conduct many types of behavioral experiments. The IT and administrative staff also do an amazing job, and the only discomfort Wharton students suffer is that which comes later from having been spoiled. The Ph.D. program is constantly evolving in light of changes in the field. During my time, the department introduced a number of initiatives, such as new courses, opportunities for feedback, and funding possibilities. Further, the Ph.D. program draws on resources unique to a school of such magnitude as Wharton and a University as storied as the University of Pennsylvania.

The decision to begin a Ph.D. in Marketing should not be taken lightly, as it takes a special level of enthusiasm and skills to thrive in the field. I congratulate anyone who has committed to this wonderful career choice, and I would encourage them to explore Wharton Marketing further.