Searching for a place to do your graduate studies is a challenging process that involves them interviewing you, but also you interviewing them! This will be your home for 4–5 years, and you want to make sure it’s a good fit intellectually, socially, and personally for you. Below are some questions to think about asking as you meet with grad students and faculty at prospective institutions.

**For Potential Faculty Mentor**

- What are the projects that are active in your lab?
- Which projects are you recruiting a student for?
- What kind of work do these projects entail? [how much lab work vs. field vs. computer; day-to-day and year-to-year plan/expectations]
- What is your philosophy on mentoring?
  - How often do you meet with student individually?
  - How often does the group meet?
  - Do you consider yourself a hands-on or hands-off mentor?
- How much independence is expected/encouraged in project design?
- How are students supported (research stipend vs. teaching expectations)?
- How much of the year is the support? (many places are 12 months, but some don’t cover summer)
- How collaborative is the department? Your lab?
- Is the culture here more cooperative or competitive?
- How many classes are required?
- What are your expectations for working hours, working in the evenings/on the weekend, working at home?
- What do you do to encourage work-life balance?
- How often do students attend conferences?
  - Are they encouraged/required to present?
  - Which conferences does the group typically attend?
For the Grad students

- What do you think about [professor you're interested in]?
- Is your lab a good one to join?
- Is the culture here more cooperative or competitive?
- Why did you choose this program?
- Is the program supportive of people switching labs?
- Does the program do anything in the beginning to help new students to transition into grad school?
- How much do grad students TA?
- Is there any sort of training for people who want to be better TAs or to go into teaching?
- Is the program supportive of "alternative careers"?
- What do you think of the classes? (Were they valuable, did you learn a lot, did they take a lot of effort, etc?)
- Are there any nightmare professors to avoid and why are they seen that way? (A nightmare for one person could be a great fit for another, depending on personality/needs/expectations)

Grad Life

- What do grad students do in their free time?
- Do most students have a good work/life balance?
- What kind of social events do people in the program tend to do?
- Do grad students in this program hang out with each other?
- Does the program do anything in the beginning to help grad students to bond with each other?
- What kind of resources does the program offer (e.g. for mental health, career development, learning new skills, etc.)?
- Does the program check in with grad students even after the first few years?
- Are most grad students in relationships or single?
- Do any grad students you know have kids?
- Do social events tend to be clique-based or is everyone welcome?
- Are there a lot of international students in the program? If so, are they welcomed by domestic students?
- What do you wish you had done to prepare for grad school?
- What kinds of questions should I be asking professors whose lab I'm interested in?