

QUESTION: Can you write something about the background of your PhD students, how you selected them, what makes a prospective doctoral candidate stand out against the pack, whether there is a huge academic gulf between knowledge and argumentative skills of your undergraduates and research students.

RESPONSE: Ah, this is an interesting question, and as I've thought about it I've realized that there are lots of things that I take for granted about the process of admitting students into our graduate program what would not be "common sense" at all to someone who is not deeply involved in the process. I've been admitting graduate students for 25 years now. (Occasionally I realize that I've never been out of school. After high school I went straight to college, which took me five full years; after college - in fact the next month, because I had to finish courses over the summer - I went into my MDiv program; after my MDiv program I went directly into my PhD program; and I started teaching at Rutgers while I was still finishing my PhD; I came to UNC four years after that, and have been here twenty-six years. So, well, I've been in school for the past 55 years.... Since school is so much of who I am and how I look at the world, I sometimes forget that that is, well, a bit unusual.)

To make sense of what we're looking for in graduate students, I need to say a few words about our graduate program. When I first came to UNC in 1988, the PhD program had only been in place for a couple of years. They had had a Master's program for some years before that, but the PhD - which is a *completely* different kettle of fish - had only just started. And the faculty was still in the process of working out exactly how it would be set up.

That in fact is why I wanted to come to UNC. It was known as...

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