

Justin Dyer: Experienced Researcher

Because of his involvement in a mentored research experience, senior, Justin Dyer, may know more about how former prison inmates are adjusting to family life than most professional sociologists.

The experience has also guaranteed him a full-ride doctoral fellowship after he graduates from BYU.

When Dyer first approached Dr. Day and told him he wanted to be a professor, "He said 'Okay,' and kind of let me know that I really had no idea what I was talking about," says the student. "I knew that you did some research but I really had no idea."

By getting directly involved in the research, Dyer found that he really did want to become a professor. As an assistant project manager he has seen all of the different sides of research and has gained incomparable experience—experience that is helping him in the present and will benefit him in the future.

"My coursework has become almost an appendage to this research," he says. "I have been able to do much better in my coursework because I am able to take what I learn there and apply it directly to what I do here. I learn about research methods and it applies directly to here. I learn about the different concepts and theories and I am able to apply it directly here. So I have context for all my classes now, and I have a much better feel of what a more full academic experience can be like."

"You learn how to learn, you learn how to write, you learn how to think. You do that in your classes but applying that in this situation brings it all to life."

While he admits that neither his grade point average nor his GRE were exceptional, it was his research experience that got him accepted into the doctoral program at Illinois next fall. "Nobody talked about my GRE score. Nobody talked about my grades. They weren't interested in that. They were interested in my experience."

With a cutoff grade point average of 3.75, Dyer didn't apply for the fellowship. However, the university admissions board entered his application in the running anyway and he ended up receiving the distinguished award.

"Maybe you're not a straight A student. Maybe you don't do as well on multiple choice tests as you like. Maybe you have those brain freezes. This experience will put you way ahead and set you apart if you don't have the 4.0 or if you don't do perfect on the GMAT or the GRE."

"This will give you that experience, and also it helps you prepare for that test. It's helped me prepare."

--Michael Hooper



Justin Dyer leads a discussion with students preparing to conduct prison interviews in London. The leadership and research experience he has gained under Dr. Randy Day was important in being admitted to graduate school and receiving the college's highest fellowship.