

*The pursuit of knowledge for society.*

## **Caitlyn Blake-Hedges**

**College of Medicine**

**PhD, Biomedical Sciences**

### **FSU as the Number ONE choice to pursue a graduate degree**

When I visited the program, I could tell that everyone wanted me to be there and they were interested in me joining their team. The faculty and students were very welcoming, and the research was exciting and interesting.

### **Motivation to pursue a graduate degree**

I have always loved science and discovering new things. I knew that I wanted to expand on the knowledge and skills I learned in my undergraduate career. I also always liked the research projects I worked on outside of my studies. I knew that the time and effort spent on research in graduate school was something I would enjoy, and that I could focus on a specific topic of interest, as opposed to the broad set of knowledge you learn during undergraduate studies.

### **Importance of research and work**

My research focuses on developmental biology and the problems that can arise in the early embryo. There are ranges of developmental disorders that affect the brain specifically, including microcephaly, which is one of the focuses of my lab. I really enjoy learning the basic science of how an organism develops and hope that my work can lead to creative ways that will help solve developmental issues and help society.

### **Advice for anyone considering graduate school**

Talk to current graduate students in your field of interest. Reach out to and make connections in advance of applying with the programs you are interested in. Once you understand what graduate school and the programs you are interested in are all about, it is much easier to show your interest so that people want you to join their program.

### **Accomplishments during graduate career**

I represent the College of Medicine as a member of FSU's Congress of Graduate Students (COGS). This student organization serves as a voice for graduate students. After Hurricane Michael, I led a donation drive in the College of Medicine and delivered supplies and money to the victims with fellow Congress of Graduate Students representatives. I joined the student committee of one of my professional societies. This helps me network with people in my field, as well as provide great opportunities for students to learn about career options, outreach projects, and other opportunities in our society. I helped establish a Florida symposium

With a biomedical science focus to connect FSU students with students and faculty at other Florida institutions. I received the Bryan Robinson Endowment Grant to fund my research and placed third in my department at the 3MT competition hosted by FSU's Graduate School. I have also written multiple blog posts about graduate school and the struggles that graduate students sometimes face (for example, [here](#) and [here](#)).

### **Career aspirations**

I currently envision myself pursuing a career in science policy after I graduate. I love all aspects of science and explaining it to people in a helpful way so that everyone can understand it. I am involved in several scientific outreach projects that show people how fun science can be, especially those that do not have much exposure to science. I also enjoy advocating for science.

