

Student Profile

Will Stafford – Logic and Philosophy of Science PhD Program



Your Time at UCI

What made you decide to pursue a graduate degree?

Love of the subject. Existential fear of spending the rest of my life at a desk completing tasks I don't understand the point of. I really wanted a job that was creative and productive. Graduate school offers training for careers like that and allows you to do your own research--that is, be creative and productive--at the same time.

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

UCI offers one of the only programmes in the world which specialises in logic and philosophy of science. Coming here gave me the opportunity to move from a setting where I could really only talk to my master's advisor about my work to one where there are multiple graduate students and faculty members I can turn to. The US PhD system also allows more time for the development of skills and more opportunities to gain teaching experience. Plus, you can't beat the weather.

If you are conducting research, how would you explain your research and its significance to your grandparent?

Unsuccessfully. I would say I am interested in the justification of foundational systems which we normally just take for granted, such as logic and mathematics. I like clever ideas other people have had to justify these systems. My work relates to one such programme which tries to show that the rules of logic are true by the definition of words like 'and', 'or' and 'not'. I want to see if this can be expanded to a notion of truth.

What are your hobbies/passions outside of research?

I wouldn't say I have hobbies or passions per se. To unwind I like to read, either non-fiction or sci-fi. Hanging out with friends is also a common pastime. The department also has an active board gaming scene.

Reflections

What advice do you have for a new graduate student in your program?

Don't worry if you feel overburdened in your first term. Most people do, and they do fine afterwards. It can be difficult to make the transition to graduate school. There is a really great community here and you should feel comfortable reaching out to us old-timers with questions or for help.

Career

What do you see yourself doing in five or ten years?

I hope to have a research and teaching position at a university because I really enjoy what I am doing and hope to be able to continue it. However, even if that isn't possible I'm sure I'll be making good use of a lot of the skills I've learnt here.