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Life on top—working at the Rockefeller University, New York

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The Rockefeller University was founded in 1901 as The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research and is located in New York City. With its 69 scientist heads of laboratories, it provides cutting edge research in interdisciplinary biomedical fields, such as biochemistry and structural biology, immunology and microbiology, human genetics, neuroscience, and mathematical biology. Rockefeller University's scientists have discovered fundamental tenets of science like the origin of blood groups, the molecular basis of genetic heredity, and developed therapies for heroin addiction and AIDS. Overall, 23 of its scientists have won the Nobel Prize; currently, six of them still work on campus.

Last year of college: all the applications for the graduate programs in sciences have been handed in. The interminable waiting process to hear whether the school of your dreams will welcome you has started. After all the tests you have passed, the exams you have taken, and the extracurricular activities to boost your resumé, you start daydreaming what it would be like to

join the perfect graduate school, and like adding ingredients to some good gourmet food, you keep hoping that the recipe will turn out delicious.

Would not it be wonderful to have a fair amount of labs led by famous professionals, recognized in their field and winners of the world's renowned awards (maybe even the Nobel Prize); a small enough program so that you can receive the best training and get lots of attention and a nice group of people to work with, drawn from the best institutes from all over the world and working toward the same goal? Let us add to this an international community all around so that you could learn how to deal with people coming from different backgrounds and immerse yourself in a multicultural environment; a pinch of extra-curricular activities to do – when not entangled in a thesis project – to keep up with the artistic inner-self; and maybe even a place where people can unwind when work becomes really too much. Make it 'happy hour' three times a week, work can produce quite some stress!

Oh! Let us not forget to include a salary for the graduate students, so that you do not have to

worry about applying for fellowships and running out of money to complete your thesis, and so you can focus solely on the scientific part of it. It would also be great to have the money independently from the lab you join, so that professors have one less salary to pay and students can change labs freely. Maybe even a small budget in addition, so that attending conferences and buying scientific books do not have to interfere with activities such as eating and paying the bills. . .

Since we are daydreaming, why should we stop here: let us put the school in the middle of a city that also offers cultural events, theaters, museums, sports games, and why not, fashion and delicious food. It would not be a negative thing if the students also had an opportunity to 'live the city', besides living IN the city. So why not giving them a small amount of money to enjoy cultural activities and place students' housing right in the middle of the city, would not that be great? We have pretty much the recipe for the perfect graduate school: let it simmer for about five years, check annually to make sure everything is in place and add a grain of salt to taste.

The Rockefeller University in New York City has all of the above, and more. It is difficult to think that, after all the efforts made to be accepted into a graduate school, you will have to leave one day.

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