Resources some of our current students used while they were applying:
- https://lucyblogs.wordpress.com/2018/08/02/all-about-phd-applications/
- https://jef.works/blog/2018/02/26/phd-program-interview-and-application-tips-and-advice/
- https://www.affordablecollegesonline.org/college-resource-center/how-to-create-a-standout-graduate-school-application/

BISB specific tips

What is the admissions committee looking for
- Evidence of ability to research independently/maturity
  - Innovation, motivation, independence, self accountability
  - Basically if you are left alone will you take the initiative and do independent research
  - Alternatively: if you get stuck on research project or have to completely repeat the last month of work (because *someone* ordered the wrong antibodies) would you give up or just keep working
- Evidence of ability to succeed in quantitative courses
  - The admissions committee wants students who will be able to succeed in their course work, the quantitative courses are the most common way to get tripped up
  - Ability to succeed is usually shown through your coursework
  - The committee particularly likes some computational/cs background
  - If your transcript is lacking in quantitative courses or you have low grades you should address these issues in some way, such as highlighting projects you have done, workshops or on the job training that is not on transcript

Faculty of interest
Your application will be reviewed by at least 3 faculty members, they try to assign at least one of those faculty members to be from those you said you would be interested in working with, as well as when making assignments for interviews during the interview weekend - so you should list faculty that would appreciate your background as well as being someone you would like to work with

Statement of purpose
- What to include in your statement of purpose https://grad.ucsd.edu/admissions/requirements/statement-of-purpose.html
- Listen to all the advice you can read elsewhere: this is about your scientific background/career story
- Can spend a little bit of time to address any issues elsewhere such as a low grade
  - Frame it as having the ability to overcome challenges. This can help show that you will be able to persevere when issues in a project inevitably arise
  - Do NOT say: 'I didn't take school seriously and now I do'
- Have at least 1 person read your statement of purpose

Letters of recommendation

- You may asked for letters already but if not: do so now
- After your recommenders have agreed provide them with
  - Your transcript
  - List of schools you are applying to (with any details they may need to submit)
  - Anything in particular you would like them to highlight
    - Such as your ability to research independently or quantitative ability
    - This is particularly important if they have not written many letters for grad school
  - Once you get in send a thank you letter

Additional Educational Experience

It is recommended that you use this as an opportunity to create a more complete picture of yourself and elaborate on what you bring to the table as a person beyond what was included in the statement of purpose which is usually more academically focused

What should I do if I have...

- … no computational background or poor grades in quantitative courses
  - One major concern for reviewers is the ability for students to succeed in the coursework (particularly the computational courses)
  - If you do not have the coursework to demonstrate this try to address the issue in other ways, such as any projects that might highlight having a background or the ability to learn quickly and pick up new skills
- … no biology background
  - This is less of a concern to the reviewers, although you may want to address in your statement of purpose why bioinformatics rather than purely quantitative
- … a low GPA
  - Use the statement of purpose to give context for issues you may have had
  - For example if you worked full time and had less time for coursework
  - Do not say: 'I did not care about school and now I do'
  - Do not worry too much about overall GPA if relevant coursework has good grades
- … low GRE test scores
  - Do not include the scores, reviewers for Fall 2021 applications cycle are told to not be concerned if there are no scores
- … no research experience
  - Get recommendation letters from a set of people who can speak to your ability to solve problems, be innovative, think and work independently (such as you might do in some jobs or volunteer roles), your motivation and technical abilities (such as success in course work)