

# Katie Thompson

PhD in Statistics, 2013

**Previous Education:** B.S. in Mathematics and B.S. in Biology, University of Kentucky

**Hometown:** Crestwood, Kentucky

**Current Job:** Assistant Professor, Department of Statistics, University of Kentucky



## **Why did you choose Ohio State for your graduate degree in statistics?**

There are many excellent statistics programs, but after visiting Ohio State, I was drawn to the comradery among both the students and faculty. During my visit, students were proud of their community. This was evident in what they said about their community and how they interacted with each other and with faculty members. That support among students and faculty definitely stood out and led to my own success at Ohio State!

## **What was your research focus during your graduate program?**

During my graduate program, my research interests included the application of statistical methodology to biologically-relevant topics in statistical genetics. Specifically, my work focused on developing statistical methods to identify genetic influences on quantitative traits, such as blood pressure or cholesterol levels.

## **Describe a memorable moment during your graduate program.**

Oh my, there are so many! In the winter of 2012, we held a two-week rock-paper-scissors tournament with students and faculty. This included a full bracket with specified match days. It turns out there are even theoretical books with information about improving your chances of winning at rock-paper-scissors! The tournament ended with cookies and hot chocolate in the conference room to watch the final round. Ohio State is place where we worked hard but we also had fun around the department!

## **Describe your current job and how your time in the program prepared you for a career in your field.**

Currently, I am a tenure track faculty member (Assistant Professor) in the Department of Statistics at the University of Kentucky (UK). The focus of our department at UK is a mix of teaching and research, and Ohio State prepared me well for this setting. Specifically, I teach both undergraduate and graduate students, continue statistical genetics research, and collaborate with researchers across campus.

In statistics courses at Ohio State, we learned about both the foundations of statistics, but also had opportunities to take elective courses and participate in journal clubs according to our interest. For example, I was able to take special topics classes in statistical genetics and phylogenetics. This was a great foundation to my research with my advisor, Laura Kubatko. Being able to start my research early gave me time to develop as a researcher before I continued this work at UK.

In addition to my own coursework, I had the opportunity to teach undergraduate students in a variety of roles at Ohio State. I started as a recitation instructor for introductory statistics, and then progressed to teaching more advanced content as an independent instructor. This left me highly prepared for teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate levels at UK. The Department of Statistics at Ohio State trained me in a variety of ways to be highly successful in my current position!

## **Do you have any advice for prospective students or is there anything else you would like to share?**

To prospective students, one thing I would say is make sure to choose a program that is a good fit specifically for you. Statistics is a great field to enter right now, and there are many excellent programs that will prepare you well for your career. So, when visiting departments, I suggest talking to current students and asking lots of questions about aspects of graduate school that will make you thrive and succeed most!