



Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology Training Program

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

ROTATION INSTRUCTIONS

Overview

During the first semester, incoming students rotate in three laboratories for a period of four weeks per rotation. Rotations allow students to gain a vast amount of knowledge about research in the Program. This knowledge will allow them to better choose a thesis lab for completion of the PhD degree.

Selecting Lab Rotations

- Review each faculty trainer's lab research. See the Faculty Directory on the MCP website: <https://molpharm.wisc.edu/faculty/>
- Attend faculty trainer talks during Orientation Week, where each faculty trainer will discuss research being conducted in their lab.
- Identify faculty trainers of interest for possible fall lab rotations.
- Note questions to ask each faculty trainer.
- Arrange a time to meet with each faculty.
- Students are advised to meet with at least six faculty trainers before deciding on three lab rotations.
- Notify Program Coordinator of your rotation choices by the second Friday in September.

Thoughts when choosing a rotation:

- Think about what research areas are of most interest to you.
- Find out how many other students are going to rotate, and how many spots are available.
- Be willing to consider rotations that are a bit different and will give you different experiences. You might be surprised by what you like.

Communicating with prospective mentors:

- Send the faculty member an email introducing yourself and request a meeting.
- Join the meeting on time, and know what the laboratory works on. You should have read at least one recent paper from the lab. You should be able to answer the question: "Why are you interested in my lab?"

Selecting a Final Thesis Lab

- Upon completion of three lab rotations, the student will identify their final thesis lab choices in order of preference.

- Rotation lab choices may be finalized any time during the last week of the third lab rotation.
- Complete the Choice of Thesis Lab form (to be sent to you in early December) and return it to Program Coordinator by the second Friday in December.
- After the thesis lab is chosen, the student will begin working in their new lab on January 1, but can begin earlier in December if desired and mutually agreed upon with the Student and PI.

Thoughts when choosing a lab for your thesis:

- Ask other students what their experience is in that lab.
- Don't ignore red flags; if something is a problem for many students, it is likely to be a problem for you; if the general tone of the lab is negative, you will probably be impacted.
- Trust your gut.
- Everyone is different, so there is no one lab that works for every student.
- Know yourself, and what you want. Choose a lab that has a good publication record. If you know that you will burn out without a good life/work balance, choose a lab in which that is achieved by the members of the lab.
- Make sure the project is likely to be successful. Discuss a project with the mentor, avoid vague ideas with vague read outs, or incremental changes. For example, a weak project would be one in which you are determining the mechanism for a 10% change in a cellular process.
- Make sure the topic is interesting to you and the project is important to the field.