Research Rotation Discussions
Trainee Materials

Learning Objectives:
Trainees will:
● identify potential research groups for rotation
● learn about good strategies for contacting potential research mentors
● learn about important considerations when choosing research groups for rotation

Generating a short-list of potential research groups for rotation
The goal of this activity is to identify your prioritized list of rotation mentors, and develop good strategies for securing a rotation opportunity with those mentors.

In considering which research groups to rotate in, complete the following:

1. I am interested in learning more about these scientific topics/methods:
   ● topic 1: ________________________________.
   ● topic 2: ________________________________.
   ● method 1: ________________________________.
   ● others: ________________________________.

2. These topics/methods are studied/used in the research groups of (search the departmental website and talk to trainee and faculty contacts for this information):
   ● mentor 1: ________________________________.
   ● mentor 2: ________________________________.
   ● mentor 3: ________________________________.
   ● mentor 4: ________________________________.

The mentors you are considering for your research group rotations could play an important part in your graduate training and professional development. Think about the mentors listed above and consider if you would potentially invite them to fill any of the following roles:

3. I would like to invite ________________________________ to serve on my thesis committee.

4. I would like ________________________________ to be part of my professional network.

5. I would like to ask ________________________________ for a letter of recommendation in the future.

6. I really enjoyed my interaction with ________________________________ during recruitment, seminar, class, etc.

The mentors that appear here are good candidates when considering your research groups for rotation. You can use this list as a starting point to choose your rotations and to be thinking about the various roles you will need faculty mentors to play during your graduate school career. Revisit

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this list because your answers may change as you acquire more experiences, get acquainted with the department, and take more classes.

**Contacting Potential Rotation Mentors**

Email is a good way to make initial contact with potential rotation mentors. By sending an email you give the mentor a chance to review your materials before responding. It is like the first step in an interview, so be sure it reflects your best effort and be sure there are no spelling or grammatical errors.

Use the following tips to draft an email to ask one of the mentors you have identified if you can meet to discuss a rotation opportunity in their research group. Bring your draft to class. Also, update your résumé/CV as it should accompany your email to the mentor.

Here are some things to consider when composing emails:

- Research mentors are very busy people, so keep it short and to the point (approximately one paragraph).
- Make sure your email has a “subject”. For example, you may want to reference the name of the lab or your interest in doing a research rotation.
- Address the email using the mentor’s official title (e.g. Professor, Dr.)
- Specifically refer to the mentor’s research, and what you find interesting about it. Be sure to use your own words and not to copy text from the research description on their web site.
- If you are interested in a specific project in the mentor’s research group, then clarify that.
- Be clear that you are looking for a research rotation, and specify which term or semester you would like to do the rotation.
- Highlight what you have to offer; what distinguishes you from other trainees (e.g. prior research experience, eager to learn, work you have published relevant to the mentor’s research).
- Show enthusiasm for the mentor’s research!
- Request that if the mentor is not able to take a rotation trainee for the term you asked for, that they recommend the terms where availability does exist.
- Make sure it is clear which graduate program you are a part of (if your institution has multiple graduate training programs).
- Ask for a face-to-face meeting to discuss the rotation further.
- It is advisable to include your current résumé/CV, and pdf’s of your research publications.


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