

Minutes of GPC meeting, Monday, November 27<sup>th</sup> 2006  
Chaired by Elizabeth Hulme ([hulme@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:hulme@fas.harvard.edu)) and Gerard Hilinski  
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### **Proposed Change to Rotation System:**

Greg Verdine has proposed a change to the rotation system to bring CCB more in sync with the MCB department. This change would allow CCB students to choose between 4 and 8-week rotations.

**Prof. Greg Verdine** explains his rationale for this proposed change: A significant fraction of CCB faculty members draw students from other programs like Chemical Biology, Molecular and Cellular Biology and Biophysics. All three of these programs provide options for their students to do longer rotations (longer than 4 weeks). In the CB program students usually do three rotations, one for their entire first semester, one for their second semester and one for the summer.

In MCB students do 3 rotations of 8 weeks each (but have the option of doing 4 week rotations as well).

CCB students are at a selective disadvantage for rotation slots because faculty members prefer to take the longer rotator, especially for the otherwise unproductive 2<sup>nd</sup> rotation period (exams etc.).

The NIH MCCB training grant is up for renewal this year. This grant funds 18 students per year. 9-13 of these go to CCB students each year. The program was designed to foster collaborations by allowing students to rotate in the other department (CCB vs. MCB). Now the rotation systems are out of sync causing an impediment to CCB students rotating in MCB. In MCB students decide between 4 and 8-week rotations after discussions with mentor.

If the rotation system is changed students who opt for longer rotations might risk not getting into their lab of choice because their lab-joining date will be later than that of their colleagues. Therefore the faculty has an obligation to make students aware of this risk, but also to go out of their way to not penalize students. This system is not a problem in MCB, where lab-joining is spread out over December, January and February.

Questions and comments:

**Karen Ruff:** Will students be allowed to change their mind about the length of their rotation during the rotation? If they start an 8-week rotation can they stop after 4.

**Prof. Greg Verdine:** That should be avoided since the rotation lab has made an effort to accommodate the student.

**Mary Rozenman:** Students already feel stressed about rotations and group joining, it might be problematic if this change introduces additional competition into the system.

**Karen Ruff and Mike Fuerstmann:** This does not sound like students will actually have a choice. It will be up to the professors to choose how long they want students to rotate.

**Prof. Cynthia Friend:** The department should hand out a list at the beginning of the year showing which professors prefer which length of rotation.

**James Whitfield:** This would be helpful for rotating in other departments where students get rejected because 4-week long rotations are not worth the time it takes to train the rotation student.

**Prof. Andrew Myers:** There may be room for unfairness and the GPC and faculty should think about how to avoid this before this system is finalized.

### **Prof. Cynthia Friend asks students for input:**

Prof. Cynthia Friend asks the GPC to compile a list of what courses graduate students think are good and bad and what courses the department should offer that are currently not being offered. Any suggestions and comments about the current advising structure are also encouraged.

### **Fieser Graduate Student Lectureship:**

It was announced that the honorarium will be a book grant of \$200. A formal introduction and advertising of speakers is preferred. The series should be started with 6 graduate students. It was decided to not extend the series to postdocs. Postdocs currently have a lecture series where they can practice jobtalks.

Nomination forms will be handed out to all graduate students in the department. Each student can nominate one graduate student from within their group and one from outside of their research group. These nominations will be due December 15<sup>th</sup>. Karen Ruff has volunteered to organize the nominations and the committee that will count them. The final list of speakers should include at least two physical chemists, two organic chemists and two chemical biologists.

### **Special GPC meeting:**

A special meeting was planned to discuss the proposed changes to the rotation system so that a report can be given to the faculty before the next faculty meeting. This GPC meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> at noon.