

Minutes of GPC meeting, Wednesday, December 6th, 2006
Chaired by Elizabeth Hulme (hulme@fas.harvard.edu) and Gerard Hilinski
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Special GPC meeting:

This 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. After the meeting the discussion was summarized in a letter to the faculty as follows:

December 11, 2006

To whom it may concern:

On November 27th, Professor Verdine and Tony Shaw came to a meeting of the Graduate Student and Post-Doc Council (GPC) to discuss some potential changes to the current CCB rotations system. The GPC met on December 6th to discuss the proposed program.

We agree with Professor Verdine that the proposed changes will be beneficial to students who wish to rotate in groups outside of CCB, such as labs at HMS or in the MCB department, and will also help students rotating within CCB to make more informed decisions; however, we have a few suggested modifications, which we believe would improve the proposed program. Of particular concern to us are the proposed changes to the group-joining day. Attached please find our comments and suggestions.

We would like to thank the faculty for requesting our feedback on the proposed changes to the rotations system. We believe the opportunity to rotate in different groups is extremely valuable to incoming graduate students, and we support the ongoing efforts of the department to improve the group-joining process.

Sincerely,

The CCB Graduate Student and Post-Doc Council

Graduate Student and Postdoc Council (GPC) comments and suggestions for proposed change to rotation system (as discussed during special GPC meeting on Wednesday, December 6th, 2006)

The proposal Greg Verdine presented to the GPC on November 27th was as follows:

- Each student must do at least 3 rotations.
- For each rotation, the student has the option of spending 4 or 8 weeks on this rotation. The length of the rotation will be decided in consultation with the rotation advisor.
- Students may not join a lab until they have completed all three rotations, independent of the length of the rotations. This means the first possible date for a student to join a lab will be later if the student elects to complete some number of 8-week rotations.

After discussing this proposed new rotation system, CCB students expressed concern that G1s who opt for longer rotations will be at a disadvantage because they will not be allowed to join groups until several weeks after their colleagues. Students agreed that this would increase the stress associated with rotations and the lab joining process. To minimize this stress, the GPC proposes the following modifications to the proposal:

- The first possible date to join groups will not depend on the length of a student's rotations. It will remain in the week of Dec. 15th for all G1s. This means that some students might be only in their second rotation on the first possible group joining date. Therefore:
- The number of mandatory rotations would be reduced to 2. Students must either complete 3 4-week rotations or one 8-week and one 4-week rotation before joining a lab. Students will retain the option of continuing rotations after this date.
- We recommend that students receive a handout during orientation that states which professors have a strong preference for 4- or 8-week rotations so that the students can plan their rotation schedule accordingly. We believe that the choice of how long a student will spend rotating in a certain lab will depend strongly on the respective faculty member. Therefore, the students should be aware of faculty members' preferences (if any), in order to make informed decisions about where they want to rotate and when. Students will communicate with professors before their rotation begins to decide on the length of the rotation. We suggest that whether the rotation is 4 or 8 weeks long, students again meet with professors after 4 weeks to discuss their progress. In extreme cases, if an 8-week rotation student feels that, after 4 weeks, the lab is not a good match, and he or she is no longer considering joining the lab, the student may decide to shorten the rotation to 4 weeks. We do encourage students to take their 8-week rotations seriously, and this "opt-out" option would only be meant for special cases.

We feel that these changes to the proposal will improve the fairness of the system for CCB students who decide to extend one or more of their rotations to 8 weeks. We would be happy to discuss the proposal further; please feel free to contact us with questions.

The Graduate Student and Post-Doc Council