

Mini-Rotations Program for Incoming M.S. and Ph.D. Biology Students

The goal of the Mini-Rotations Program is to allow new graduate students who are undecided on which lab to join for their thesis/dissertation research to get exposure to faculty research programs during the first semester of the M.S. or Ph.D. program. Students will select three labs to experience on three scheduled rounds as detailed below. During a Mini-Rotation, the student will interact with the selected lab in the recommended formats: (1) meet one-on-one with the faculty member, (2) meet with the other students in the lab (lunch, shadowing, etc.), and (3) attend at least one formal lab/group meeting. It is not necessary that the student engage in a bench research project during the mini-rotation and the rotating student should not be working for other graduate students, but rather shadowing multiple lab members to get an overview of the work in the lab. Ultimately, the student and advisor will determine whether the lab would be a good fit for both mentor and mentee during the mini-rotation. Faculty will be polled by the Head of Research & Graduate Studies prior to the start of the semester to determine whether they are (1) accepting new graduate students, (2) not currently accepting graduate students but participating in mini-rotations as a potential committee member or collaborator, or (3) opting out of the mini-rotation program (i.e. sabbatical, already on too many thesis/dissertation committees, etc.). Students will be provided this faculty list during orientation. Students may opt out of the mini-rotation program if the student has already chosen an Advisor/Committee Chair (i.e. applied to work with a specific faculty member, being paid on a grant, already familiar with the faculty/research, etc.).

Student Selects Mini-Rotations Labs

During the first two weeks of class, new students will finish lab safety training and submit a Mini-Rotations Selection Form. On the Mini-Rotations Selection Form, students identify and get signatures from three biology faculty that are potential advisors for their graduate research. If the student has already identified an advisor, then the student should list the identified faculty member and select two additional faculty members that they could collaborate with and/or who could be a future Advisory Committee Member. There is some flexibility in the number of rotations the student requests.

Fall 2026 Schedule for Mini-Rotations Program

Timeline: 1st–2nd week of classes (Aug 24–Sept 4, 2026)

Due: Submit Mini-Rotations Selection Form by Friday of 2nd week (Sept 4, 2026)

Mini-Rotations Round 1

Students will spend the first 4 weeks in Mini-Rotation 1

Timeline: 3rd–6th weeks of first semester (Sept 8–Oct 2, 2026)

Mini-Rotations Round 2

Students will spend the next 4 weeks in Mini-Rotation 2

Timeline: 7th–10th weeks of first semester (Oct 5–Oct 30, 2026)

Mini-Rotations Round 3

Students will spend the last 4 weeks in Mini-Rotation 3

Timeline: 11th–15th weeks of first semester (Nov 2–Dec 4, 2026; minus Thanksgiving break)

Student Selects an Advisor/Committee Chair

Students will consult with the biology faculty member they are interested in selecting as their Advisor/Committee Chair and together complete the Advisor Selection Form.

Timeline: 15th–16th weeks of first semester (Dec 1–11, 2026)

Due: Submit the Advisor Selection Form by the end of the first semester (Dec 11, 2026)