

Co-Mentor Policies **Department of Microbiology & Immunology**

The purposes of a MCRO co-mentor are to provide (i) familiarity with the MCRO Ph.D. program and (ii) additional mentoring when the advisor is not as available as normally expected (e.g. due to leadership responsibilities, health, sabbatical, etc.). The advisor and student must both agree that a MCRO co-mentor is desirable. It is not the purpose of a co-mentor to mediate disputes between an advisor and student (dispute resolution is the responsibility of the Director of Graduate Studies and the committee Chair).

A co-mentor position is not the same as a co-advisor arrangement, in which a student is shared between labs. The co-mentor has no financial responsibility for the student, and research will not be conducted in the co-mentor's lab. The advisor retains primary responsibility for decisions about research direction, etc. The co-mentor does not provide close supervision of laboratory work.

It is desirable for a co-mentor to be part of the thesis committee. A co-mentor can also serve as committee Chair.

The primary advisor remains responsible for reading and approving the thesis prior to distribution to the committee. The advisor must participate in the final defense. However, the circumstances that lead to appointing a co-mentor may also cause the advisor to miss some committee meetings. It is more important that the student meet with their committee on a regular basis to get feedback than it is to wait until the advisor can participate. In the absence of an engaged advisor, it is prudent for the committee to meet every six months instead of once a year. The Student Services Specialist will send a copy of the committee meeting report to the primary advisor for any meeting he/she misses.

A monthly meeting between student and co-mentor is prudent as a reality check to ensure things don't get too far off track. The co-mentor should also be in regular contact with the direct laboratory supervisor of the student. This will ensure that (i) the co-mentor has a full understanding of student progress and performance (i.e. not only from the student perspective) and (ii) efforts/recommendations of the co-mentor and lab supervisor are coordinated and not working at cross-purposes. As the project matures, the student may become more independent and require less frequent meetings with the co-mentor.

An initial meeting should be held between the student, the MCRO co-mentor, the MCRO Director of Graduate Studies, and the student's faculty research supervisor (not their formal advisor) to make sure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities.