**[Note: The text below is just a suggestion and needs personalized information for your program. You will most likely want to rearrange, shorten, lengthen, etc to fit your individual needs.**

**Email Jeff Steinbach (**[**jsteinba@email.unc.edu**](mailto:jsteinba@email.unc.edu)**) to request a spreadsheet outlining faculty service to BBSP (admissions committees and FYG service).]**

**The Biological and Biomedical Sciences Program (BBSP):** In 2007 UNC consolidated its graduate recruitment and first year training in the biological and biomedical sciences into a unified BBSP admissions/first year program. BBSP provides the mechanism through which students interested in any of the 15 participating PhD programs apply for graduate study. BBSP provides first-year PhD students with opportunities to explore different research areas (through research rotations and courses) before making a final selection of a dissertation advisor and graduate program. Yet, it in no way impedes direct tracking of students who enter with a defined interest in a research area or degree program. In short, students participating in the proposed **“XXXXXX”** program will be admitted to graduate school at UNC via BBSP and, at the end of their first year, will choose one of our training faculty as research advisor and they will choose XXXXXX PhD program.

**BBSP Admissions:** Evaluation of applicants and recruitment occurs through multiple admissions committees composed of faculty from the 15 PhD programs. The admissions committees are subdivided along broad scientific areas and applications are distributed to the appropriate committee based on information provided by the applicant. This information includes five research interest areas (selected from a list of 33) and a list of faculty members whose specific research is of interest to the applicant. Of relevance to our training program, the interest areas include x, y and z.The admissions committees evaluate the applications in depth, with at least two faculty assigned per application. Interview and admission decisions are made by individual committees in coordination with the BBSP Director (**Dr. Donita Robinson)**, keeping in mind the desired target number of matriculating students (~100 students for all 15 programs). Important to our efforts of recruiting outstanding students to our training program, many of our training mentors regularly serve on the admissions committees (**xxxxxx**).

**BBSP Recruitment:** Students are invited to one of four recruitment weekends (January-February). During these visits, applicants interview with five faculty members, primarily of their own choosing, and they interact with current students and faculty in social settings. These weekends are organized around research areas (e.g. XXX), thus allowing faculty to focus their recruitment efforts. Nevertheless, a student can visit UNC during any weekend and be assured to meet individually with faculty representing their research interest. Students admitted through any admissions committee or recruitment weekend may ultimately join the **“XXXXX”** program, but we anticipate that the majority of our students will come through during the “XXXXX” weekends. **The move to the BBSP admissions format has been extremely positive. Application number increased (850 in 2007/pre-BBSP and average >1000 post-BBSP), and long-time admissions committee members agree that applicant quality is better: higher GPA scores and stronger research experiences and letters of recommendation.** BBSP students are enthusiastic about the program, as seen by their active participation in the recruitment weekends.

**Applicant Statistics Summary**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Total Applicants** | **Offers Made** | **Total # of students accepting our offer (# incoming)** | **Acceptance Rate** |
| 2023 | 1789 | 276 | 99 (100) | 36% |
| 2022 | 1673 | 330 | 104 (101) | 36% |
| 2021 | 1603 | 237 | 91 (95) | 41% |
| 2020 | 1804 | 293 | 117 (106) | 42% |
| 2019 | 1711 | 274 | 95 (95) | 35% |
| 2018 | 1368 | 232 | 78 (78) | 34% |
| 2017 | 1275 | 220 | 91 (93) | 41% |
| 2016 | 1323 | 252 | 79 (79) | 31% |
| 2015 | 1162 | 221 | 80 (81) | 36% |
| 2014 | 1221 | 187 | 65 (65) | 35% |
| 2013 | 1217 | 230 | 91 (89) | 40% |
| 2012 | 1443 | 251 | 85 (86) | 34% |
| 2011 | 1149 | 250 | 84 (83) | 34% |
| 2010 | 1128 | 213 | 76 (74) | 36% |
| 2009 | 1086 | 202 | 86 (86) | 43% |
| 2008 | 1111 | 261 | 121 (122) | 46% |
| 2007 | 850 |  | 93 | 37% |

**BBSP First Year Activities:** The program for all first-year PhD students consists of the following.

First Year Groups (FYGs): During their first year, BBSP students are part of small (14-16 students), interest-based groups led by faculty members. Peer mentors (graduate students at different stages of their studies) are also assigned to each FYG. In this manner, all students have a constellation of faculty and peers who provide a supportive community for navigating the first year of graduate school before they join a degree-granting program. Groups build community interactions through social events. These mandatory FYGs meet once a week for 1.5 hours. Skill-building activities in the FYGs include scientific presentations by the students (four research seminars are presented by each student), logic/critical thinking/literature appreciation, and scientific writing. Responsible conduct of research training also occurs within the FYG setting. FYGs also provide the structure for advising (i.e. selection of research rotations and courses) and the initiation of scientific discourse (e.g. through oral and poster presentations). To help with advising, faculty members are provided with all the course requirement information for each PhD program. Some of our program’s training faculty participate as mentors in these FYGs (**XXXX**). Thus, even before students commit to a research program, they will be advised of appropriate courses and aided in the selection of rotations by mentors knowledgeable in departmental and training grant requirements.

Laboratory Rotations:All BBSP students are required to complete three ~10-week rotations. This is the mechanism by which students evaluate and decide upon a thesis laboratory and by which faculty evaluate and recruit students. At the end of each rotation, students present their rotation research to the UNC research community as a poster (rotation 1), literature review (rotation 2), or short talk (rotation 3). Students select a thesis laboratory in April after the third rotation. To support first-year students in their choice of laboratory rotations, information sessions are conducted by each PhD program before classes start in the fall.

Rigor & Reproducibility: BBSP students are required to complete lessons rigor and reproducibility within their FYG. They apply this knowledge to techniques used by UNC’s core facilities to cross-train their peers on how to interpret data generated by these techniques.

**BBSP Financial Support:** Funds for administration, recruitment and first-year support (i.e. stipend, tuition, fees, health insurance) come from intramural sources in the School of Medicine, the College of Arts and Sciences and from an annual “payback” mechanism in which each of the participating departments and centers contribute based on the number of students that matriculate in a particular unit. Once students join a lab at the end of their first year, they are supported by individual principal investigators or by training grants, such as the one we propose. The first-year financial support of students by BBSP is advantageous to our process of selecting students for the training program. It enables a competitive selection process to identify the best students for T32 support by taking into account performance from the first year of graduate school. It also allows us to support those students that are most interested in xxxxx *per se*, because second-year students have completed a year of graduate school and have decided on the area of research to pursue for their thesis work. With first-year support, even with the best of intentions, it is not always possible to make the most appropriate selections with respect to these two issues.