

Molecular and Cell Biology (MCB) Department at the University of California Berkeley

MCB Grad Network (MGN)

1st year event summary

Very early during 1st year in the Fall, but not during orientation, the MGN hosts a panel discussion to introduce itself and cover a host of relevant topics during a 1-hour event. Again, in the Spring, another panel is held. Panelists are recruited from the MGN itself as well as from the general department student body ranging from 2nd through 6th years and representing all five divisions. An MGN member will assist as an MC and facilitator to keep the panelists moving through the topics and make sure that any audience questions are fielded and addressed. Panelists are provided topics that will be covered prior to the event so that they have time to reflect upon their own experiences and formulate some advice.

Introduction to the MCB Grad Network

The MGN started in 2014 with a group of MCB grad students who realized that we are often each other's best resources for success. We formed the MGN to organize events (like this one!) where we can share our experiences and things we've learned that helped us succeed in grad school, particularly to facilitate knowledge sharing between older and newer grad students. Members of the MGN are always available to for advice or information on how to get access to the resources that you may need to ensure a happy, healthy, and productive graduate career. Our official mission statement is: "The MGN exists to build and provide sustained access to resources for Molecular and Cell Biology graduate students' complete success."

General topics covered during 1st year Fall panel discussion:

- Selecting rotation labs
- The purpose of rotations
- What to do during your rotation
- What NOT to do during your rotation
- Graduate courses and how they are different from undergraduate
- Developing healthy habits
- Optimizing your own work-life balance
- Imposter syndrome
- Vacation time
- Fellowships and reference letters
- Retreats and networking
- Balancing fun and professional deportment

General topics covered during 1st year Spring panel discussion:

- Selecting your thesis lab
- Lab environment, culture, composition, and diversity
- Picking the Principal Investigator that is best for you
- Funding situation and stability
- Communication style and constructive feedback
- Expectations for projects, independence, extra-lab activities like teaching
- Lab meetings: style, frequency, sub-group meetings?
- Work-life balance: encouraged, discouraged, does it meet your personal needs?

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Survey: emailed out to the class using Google Surveys

- 1) Did you attend? [yes or no]
- 2) Did you find the panel useful? (i.e. Would you recommend it to future first years?) [yes or no]
- 3) What did you find useful about the Pre-Rotation Panel? Do you have any suggestions on how to improve it? [Free response]
- 4) Is there anything that wasn't discussed that you wish had been? [Free response]