

MENTORING

An essential component of the MSTR degree program is the mentoring program. As previously stated, effective mentoring is critical not only for research training but also to allow the trainee to develop into an independent investigator. Mentoring requires that the primary mentor dedicate substantial time to ensure personal and professional development. A good mentor builds a relationship with the trainee that is characterized by mutual respect and understanding. Attributes of a good mentor include being approachable, available, and willing to share his/her knowledge; listening effectively; providing encouragement and constructive criticism; and offering expertise and guidance. We recognize the importance of these attributes and the significant time required to mentor effectively. For this reason, we have in place the MSTR mentoring program.

The program requires the establishment of specific milestones and the definition as to when these milestones should be accomplished within the training period. Examples of such milestones are 1) data acquisition and analysis; 2) preparation and submission of manuscript(s); 3) grant submission; 4) conditions regarding authorship; 5) mentor expectations of the mentee and; 6) mentee expectations of the mentor.

The Mentoring Committee

All students enrolled in the MSTR degree program have a Mentoring Committee. This is composed of the primary mentor and a programmatic mentor. The student may elect to have a secondary mentor(s) to be part of the committee. This mentoring committee functions as an ongoing monitoring group for the student's progress. Its members are faculty with expertise relevant to both the basic and clinical aspects of the student's research, and each is expected to contribute their expertise to fostering the student's research progress.

The primary mentor typically provides the direction for the research project and basic science components of training. They will also guide and instruct the student through the science writing and grantsmanship courses and towards independence and self-sufficiency in publication and in funding. The programmatic mentor supports the overall progress of the student through the MSTR program for both the completion of the curricular elements as well as the research project. Students may need additional support, such as a biostatistics or bioinformatics mentor to provide guidance in the development of the analysis plan at study inception and during the data analysis period in manuscript and thesis development. If possible, students should identify a resource within their professional network.

The student identifies the primary mentor prior to enrollment. The programmatic mentor is assigned to the student by the program director. The mentorship committee meets with the student at the commencement of the program, at the end of year one, and in advance of the thesis defense. The primary mentor is expected to discuss the mentoring compact with the student and set expectations at the beginning of the program and meet with the student on a weekly to biweekly basis. Additionally, the student meets with the programmatic mentor at the end of the fall semester of the first year and second year to ensure ongoing progress through the program. Additional *ad hoc* meetings may occur as required. The mentoring committee will hold a pre-graduation meeting two to four months prior to the student's thesis defense.