Medical Scientist Training Program

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The UIC College of Medicine offers a select number of students the opportunity to work toward both the MD and PhD degrees in an integrated fashion. The objective of the program is to train students for careers in academic medicine and research. Students admitted to this highly competitive program participate in the medical school curriculum and pursue original doctoral research projects in the laboratories of the university’s graduate faculty.

The first two years of the program are used to complete the M-1 and M-2 years of the medical curriculum. Students enter “at large,” that is, without affiliation to a particular graduate department. During this time, they may explore research opportunities in any academic department of the College of Medicine and selected graduate departments throughout the university. After admission, the students complete three rotations through the laboratories of various potential advisors before a choice is made. A series of lunchtime seminars designed for M1-M2 MD/PhD students provides an overview of opportunities for research. An ongoing series of dinner seminars is presented to MD/PhD students in all stages of the program by the faculty and invited physician-scientists from various academic health science centers. These seminars enhance the students’ general knowledge and help to develop new approaches toward the investigation of problems in biomedical research. A series of student Grand Rounds seminars presents topics in new frontiers in understanding and/or treatment of important clinical problems, with particular emphasis on the interface between basic science and medicine. Each presentation is given by a pair of students who divide the discussion between clinical aspects and latest research findings of a medical condition of their choosing. These seminar series, along with the annual research day and other gatherings with faculty, serve to bring together trainees and preceptors and expose the students to the area of research being explored at UIC and the faculty doing the research.

The choice of a permanent thesis advisor and graduate department take place by the end of the second year. Students in the graduate phase of the program work side-by-side with PhD students in the basic sciences and meet all departmental requirements for the PhD degree. Original publications and presentations at national biomedical science meetings are often accomplished.

For the PhD phase of the program, students may associate with one of the six basic science departments of the College of Medicine (see descriptions in this section), with the Neuroscience program, or with one of many program-approved departments across the university. During the three to four years of PhD studies, MSTP students keep their clinical skills sharp by participating in a Clinical Connections component. In the final two years of the program, MD/PhD candidates rejoin other medical students to complete the medical school clerkship requirements. Third- and fourth-year clerkships include medicine, surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, neurology, and psychiatry, among other disciplines.

Graduates of the program have routinely gained admission to the most competitive residency programs at many of the premier academic institutions in the country, including the ever-growing number of physician-scientist residency programs.

Admission Requirements

Application to the program requires submission to the MSTP office of:

1. the Medical Scientist Training Program application form, which is available on the program’s website: http://www.uic.edu/com/mdphd;
2. application (via AMCAS) for UIC College of Medicine admission as a MD/PhD (preferred) or MD student.

The MSTP office will then obtain copies of the applicant’s letters and COM Supplemental Form from the COM Admissions Office. Applicants may also request one or two additional letters of recommendation, which focus on the applicant’s research experience, to be sent directly to the program office. The MCAT examination, which is required for COM application, is accepted by the MD/PhD program in lieu of the GRE examination. Students should apply in the autumn of the year preceding admission to provide the fullest opportunity for consideration, since a rolling admissions procedure is used. A personal interview with the MSTP’s own Admissions Committee will be scheduled for each applicant under final consideration for admission.

Application to the program is normally made at the time of application to the College of Medicine. However, candidates will also be considered during their first two years of medical training in the UIC College of Medicine. Admission to the program requires acceptance by the Admissions Committees of both the MSTP and the College of Medicine. Criteria for admission to the program include academic excellence in premedical and other subjects, prior research experience, potential for independent and creative research, and commitment to a career in academic medicine. Prior laboratory work concentrating in biology, chemistry, physics, biophysics, or behavioral sciences is necessary in preparing for study in the MSTP. The admissions policy is flexible enough to accommodate those students who have already identified the field in which they wish to carry out research as well as those who are still undecided about their areas of research specialization. Admission to the Medical Scientist Training Program is open to U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

Degree Requirements

Students in the program complete requirements of the College of Medicine for the MD degree and requirements of their chosen research department for the PhD degree. They must complete and submit their PhD dissertation and complete its defense before returning to the medical curriculum for the M-3 and M-4 years.