Frequently Asked Questions

Question: When will I hear if my application has been accepted?
Answer: Since the application deadline is July 24, you will be notified in mid-to-late August as to whether or not you will be appointed or receive a fellowship. Your appointment or fellowship would start September 1, 2020 and run for 4 full quarters.

Question: Can I apply if I am not a U.S. citizen?
Answer: Yes! There are one-year university fellowships available for those who are not U.S. citizens.

Question: What is the benefit of having a training cohort?
Answer: Our program is all about collaboration and building relationships. Developing a cohesive cohort helps students build their network, learn about the vast career resources available to them, and practice communicating science.

One of the most impactful activities we have planned in the past includes a communication workshop where a facilitator creates fun, whimsical games for students to discuss their scientific research in an atmosphere that is casual and non-judgmental. This includes exercises to describe scientific research in 3 minutes, down to 2 minutes, and finally in 6 words!

One example of collaborative efforts is giving feedback to students in the run-up to their Qualifying presentation. One student presents his/her research and receives feedback on slides, pacing, and opportunities for improvement.

The cohort also provides a social network outside the lab with others who are interested in trans-disciplinary science, getting a job after graduation, and building a network of trusted colleagues and friends.

Rotations

Question: Due to the lockdown, my rotation has been virtual. Is it still ok for me to apply?
Answer: Virtual rotations are acceptable.

Question: I did not rotate in the lab of my secondary mentor. Is this OK?
Answer: We don’t require rotations in the lab of your secondary mentor. The intra-departmental rotations are meant to inform the selection of your primary mentor. The lab immersion with your secondary mentor should take place in alignment with the needs of your dissertation research project. Your secondary mentor needs to be in a complementary discipline.
**One-page statement**

**Question:** What should I include in my one-page statement?

**Answer:** You need to submit a statement regarding your commitment to the training program, discussing what coursework you plan to take. We want to know about you, and what you plan to bring to the program, as well as what you want to get out of it. You must be eager to learn; you do not need to be a straight-A student to qualify for this program. We want to ensure that you will be engaged with the program, and are really interested in this specific kind of training.

**One-page research project description**

**Question:** Should I include preliminary data in my one-page research project description?

**Answer:** Your research description is an opportunity to present your big ideas and explain why they are important. Preliminary data is not necessary since you only have one page. We are interested in seeing your research at a high level -- like a sentence summarizing the data itself. This portion of the application is basically your thesis. What approaches are you going to take that incorporate both chemical and biological methods?

**Transcripts**

**Question:** Do I need to submit an official transcript?

**Answer:** No. Transcripts do not need to be official but we do need your undergraduate and graduate transcripts.

**Question:** What if I haven’t taken CHEM416 before applying?

**Answer:** That’s OK. This course will be offered in Spring 2021.

**GRE scores**

**Question:** I didn't take the GRE because the program I applied to didn’t require it. Is that OK?

**Answer:** GRE scores are not a requirement. You can still apply. We assess applicants holistically, based on their record of achievement, drive and interest. We are strongly interested in applications from candidates from all demographic backgrounds.
**Primary and secondary mentors**

**Question: How should I choose a secondary mentor?**  
**Answer:** Thinking about a secondary mentor can be an obstacle for people; and it does not need to be! A second mentor is not like having a second boss. Your secondary mentor is someone you can go to for advice, or to brainstorm when you’ve hit a roadblock.

In the lab of your secondary mentor, you will learn new techniques and methods, collaborating with somebody in a complementary discipline. Having a secondary mentor, especially on your thesis committee, is another person in your corner that’s helping you navigate grad school!

**Question: What if one of my faculty preceptors is not on the list and would like to be a preceptor?**  
**Answer:** That faculty member would need to email Sheila Judge expressing his/her interest in becoming a preceptor in the program, along with a copy of his/her NIH biosketch. The program directors and leadership committee would then review the materials and approve the application.

**Question: What if my chosen preceptor does not work at the interface of chemistry and biology?**  
**Answer:** The criteria to become a preceptor in this program requires:

- Evidence of research (ongoing or emerging) that integrates chemical and biological approaches
- History of transdisciplinary collaboration (ongoing or emerging)
- Track record of student training (and/or adequate support and mentor training for early career faculty)
- Sufficient grant or institutional support (for junior faculty) to ensure support for trainee research project

**Question: Would it be ok to choose a research professor as my secondary advisor?**  
**Answer:** No. Secondary mentors must be tenure-track faculty who will sit on your thesis committee. Their role is not only to provide technical insight and training, but also to provide guidance in your development as an independent researcher.

**Question: Is it acceptable if I choose preceptors from the same department (e.g., biomedical engineering)?**  
**Answer:** No. Having preceptors from the same department does not serve the purpose of providing interdisciplinary training across chemistry and life sciences. They both approach problem solving from a similar perspective.