Choosing Up a Thesis Lab

Rachel Care, PhD
Program Manager, OCPD
rachel.care@ucsf.edu
Every student gets five free and confidential counseling appointments per academic year. Come talk to us!

Rachel Care, PhD
Counseling topics:
- Choosing your thesis lab
- Managing your mentorship
- Difficult conversations
- Choosing your postdoc

Linda Louie, PhD
Counseling topics for MIND/GSICE students:
- Career exploration
- Finding internships
- Preparing for internships

Laurence Clement, PhD
Counseling topics:
- Exploring faculty positions
- Planning an academic career
- Inclusive mentoring
- Inclusive teaching

Michael Matrone, PhD
Counseling topics:
- Exploring diverse careers
- Designing a job search
- Applying, interviewing, and negotiating for diverse jobs

This timeline is a suggestion for when to use OCPD’s resources for your maximum benefit. Annual programs are shown in all years in which they are appropriate. Post it in your office, lab, or common space!

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Choosing a Thesis Lab part of Manage Up

This timeline is a suggestion for when to use OCPD’s resources for your maximum benefit. Annual programs are shown in all years in which they are appropriate. Post it in your office, lab, or common space!
What makes a good decision?

When you know:

- Your preferences and goals
- Your options
- The factors influencing you

A good decision is an informed decision.
What makes a bad decision?

When you:

- Don’t know what you’re looking for
- See it but don’t recognize it
- See it and ignore it

A bad decision is avoidable!

More on this at bit.ly/OCPDrotations
# Choosing a Thesis Lab

## Part of Manage Up

## A good decision is an informed decision

### Preferences and goals

What do you need to be productive and achieve your goals?

### Know your options

**Part 1:** Lab vital signs  
**Part 2:** How close is each lab option to your ideal?  
**Part 3:** Understand the lab

### Influences and process

What other factors are influencing you?  
How do you make decisions?

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Know what you’re looking for

Recognize it

Don’t ignore it
# Choosing a Thesis Lab

## Preferences and goals

What do you need to be productive and achieve your goals?

## Options

- **Part 1**: Lab vital signs
- **Part 2**: How close is each lab option to your ideal?
- **Part 3**: Understand the lab

## Influences and process

What other factors are influencing you? How do you make decisions?

## Determine which lab is the best fit for you

Feel good about your choice
Determine which lab is the best fit for you

Preferences and goals

What do you need to be productive and achieve your goals?

Options

Influences and process
What are your goals for your PhD?

There are no established learning outcomes for graduate programs

Scientific

Professional
or career

Personal

Why UCSF? Why this graduate program? Why now?

Don’t know where you’re headed? Make the next best decision
What are your goals for your PhD?

THINK

What’s one goal you have in each of those categories?
What everyone needs to be productive

Frederic Herzberg Theory of Motivation (1968)
- Learn & grow in the job. Use one’s skills in challenging and interesting work
- Self-Control, recognition (autonomy)
- Advancement
- Supervisor-supervises
- Relatives-associates
- Work environment
- Company policies
- Job security
- Salary/benefits

Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1943)
- Self Actualization
  - Achieving one’s potential, being creative, serving a cause, contributing to society
- Self Esteem
  - Prestige, self-respect, competence, self confidence, sense of self work
- Belonging
  - Friends, affiliation, affection, relationships, love
- Safety
  - Both physical (security, shelter, protection, law and order, health insurance, plans, secure job) and psychological (freedom from fear or anxiety)
- Physiological
  - Basic survival needs such as food and water

Choosing a Thesis Lab part of Manage Up

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What do you need to be productive?

THINK

Think of a previous lab experience you’ve had.
What’s one thing that helped you be productive?
What’s one thing that got in your way?

WRITE

1. Go to bit.ly/OCPDthesislab (capitalization matters)
   a. Under “Materials”, download “Preferences, Options, and Influences Tool”
   b. Go to “Preferences” tab
   c. Fill in column labeled “Your ideal” with answers to the questions in the yellow boxes
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part of Manage Up

A good decision is an informed decision

Preferences and goals

What do you need to be productive and achieve your goals?

Trust what you know about yourself

This is not the place to look for challenges

Options

Influences and process
A good decision is an informed decision

Preferences and goals

What do you need to be productive and achieve your goals?

Options

Part 1: Lab vital signs

Influences and process
PIs are actually three things

- Trainer
- Supervisor
- Advisor
### Training goals
- Teaching scientific knowledge
- Training on technical skills
- Developing scientific thinking
- Developing scientific leadership skills

### Lab productivity goals
- Hiring, promoting, terminating
- Managing performance, behavior, productivity
- Allocating resources, assigning projects
- Authorizing sharing of products and data

### Personal, career, professional goals
- Career development
- Psycho-social support

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**PIs are actually three things**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Cares about</th>
<th>Responsible for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Career development, Psycho-social support</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Supervisor role has biggest impact on your productivity

1. Set expectations and take baseline assessment
2. Teach/train and delegate effectively
3. Give positive, corrective, and evaluative feedback continuously
4. Recognize progress and reward achievement
5. Articulate and enforce consequences
6. Manage conflict
7. Provide support

Seven Responsibilities of a Supervisor

Assess your professional relationship with your PI

Assessment tool at bit.ly/OCPDsupervisor
Lab vital signs show during role conflict

Role conflict

- Handle conflict
- Manage change
- Communicate
- Make decisions

Trainer

Supervisor

Advisor
How are the lab’s vital signs?

- **Handle conflict**
  Think of any issues that have come up between you, lab members, with the PI, or with another lab.

- **Manage change**
  Think of how the lab dealt with new university policies and practices (as well as lab members' needs and availability) due to COVID-19, or changes in project direction, funding, equipment availability.

- **Communicate**
  Think of routine communications and special communications (emergencies, world events, important lab news): When do they happen? How? What tone is used? What is talked about/not talked about?

- **Make decisions**
  Think of hiring decisions, assignment of authorship, responsibilities, or project ownership.
Four vital signs of a lab

WRITE

1. Go to the “Options” tab on the Excel sheet
2. Fill in what you’ve experienced of the four vital signs for the labs you’ve rotated in
   a. Think of an example for teach
   b. Did it work for you? How did it feel?
A good decision is an informed decision

Preferences and goals

What do you need to be productive and achieve your goals?

Options

Part 1: Lab vital signs

Influences and process

Believe what you see

Believe what you hear from lab members
Choosing a Thesis Lab part of Manage Up

A good decision is an informed decision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Options</th>
<th>Influences and process</th>
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**LATER**

**Part 2: In the “Preferences” tab:**
- a. Fill in the columns for each lab you rotate in
- b. Compare each one to your ideal

**Part 3: In the “Options” tab:**
- c. Fill in the “Data you need” column for each lab
- d. Get answers for any box left blank
### Preferences and goals

What do you need to be productive and achieve your goals?

### Options

**Part 1:** Lab vital signs
**Part 2:** How close is each lab option to your ideal?
**Part 3:** Understand the lab

### Influences and process

What other factors are influencing you?
How do you make decisions?

### Determine which lab is the best fit for you

### Feel good about your choice

*A good decision is an informed decision*

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part of Manage Up

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Consider the other factors influencing you

- Being conflict-avoidant
- Afraid to look like you don't know
- Fear of change
- Your values
- Fear of disappointing (yourself or someone else)
- Imposter syndrome
- Beliefs you have
- Desire for prestige
- Your personal goals
- Desire for prestige
Consider the other factors influencing you

- Fear of change
- Being conflict-avoidant
- Afraid to look like you don't know
- Your values
- Imposter syndrome
- Desire for prestige
- Your personal goals
- Beliefs you have
- Other people's expectations of you (peers, PIs, etc)
- What your mentors want you to do
- What your partner or family need from you
- What other people have told you about the lab
- Time limitations
- What other people have told you about the lab
- What other people have told you about the lab
- What your partner or family need from you
- Fear of disappointing (yourself or someone else)
Consider the other factors influencing you

1. In the “Influences” tab:
   a. Identify the internal and external influences you feel
   b. Decide how much you want that to weigh in your decision
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Consider your decision-making style

Data-driven
Intuitive
Early-starter
Independent
Systematic
Associative
Pressure-prompted
Crowd-sourcing

Reflect on when you feel most in-tune with yourself
Consider how you made other big life decisions

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Consider your decision-making style

THINK

1. Think of previous decisions you’ve made and when you feel most in-tune with yourself.
2. Decide what your decision-making style is.
3. Think of one thing you’ll do as part of your decision-making process.
### Preferences and goals

What do you need to be productive and achieve your goals?

### Options

**Part 1:** Lab vital signs
**Part 2:** How close is each lab option to your ideal?
**Part 3:** Understand the lab

### Influences and process

What other factors are influencing you? How do you make decisions?
Dear Diana/Dr. Prince,

In person: Thank you so much for meeting with me. By email: I hope you’re well.

I wanted to let you know that I decided to join Bruce Wayne’s lab. I wanted to let you know as soon as I decided.

Thank you for allowing me to rotate in your lab. I appreciated the opportunity and learned a lot.

Thank you again.

Regards,

Peter

More sample language at bit.ly/OCPDrotations
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No lab is perfect: Own your decision

Make a strategy to manage the things that you don’t love about your lab

- Don’t pretend they’re not there!
- Engage your Community of Magnificent People
  - Current and past lab members
  - Classmates, other PIs, staff (like me!)
  - People in your field, wider world

Set boundaries that will keep you healthy
Develop your strategy in a counseling appointment
Reach out to other lab members to ask for advice
Learn how to find and manage mentorship with OCPD programs
Set a standing quarterly meeting with a mentor that’s not your PI

(within reason)
Choosing a Thesis Lab

Resources from this workshop

Now what?

Pick **at least one** of these things:

- Set aside time to complete the “Preferences” and “Options” tabs
- Identify something you need to learn about a lab
- Open up one of these resources to follow up on
- Tell a friend about one of these resources or what you learned
- Make a counseling appointment

**Manage Up**

**Conducting Successful Rotations**

(bit.ly/OCPDrotations)

**Choosing a Thesis Lab**

(bit.ly/OCPDthesislab)

career.ucsf.edu/appointments
career.ucsf.edu, search “timeline”

Assess your professional relationship with your PI

(bit.ly/OCPDsupervisor)

bit.ly/OCPDsupervisor

TAKING THE QUIZ!