

Office of Research Education Policy -

Program faculty member who leaves the institution and associated students.

The Office of Research Education (ORE) and the School of Medicine (SOM) PhD programs work to ensure that all ORE PhD students have optimal PhD training conditions. Major challenges occur, however, when a student's PhD mentor leaves the institution, and the student has not completed the PhD requirements. Depending on the student's stage in her/his/their research and the program, the challenges will vary. ORE's policy regarding students whose mentors leave the institution is defined below. The guidelines below are to be considered as the minimal requirements and that individual PhD program may have additional ones. All PhD program faculty need to acknowledge and agree to this policy before accepting a student for PhD training.

1. Program Faculty member's responsibilities: We understand that there are stages in negotiation of a position at another institution that require confidentiality. However, once a Program faculty member begins to negotiate an option to leave CU-AMC (i.e., PI is negotiating an offer from a non-AMC institution), ORE policy requires the PI to immediately inform the student, the ORE Associate Dean, relevant Program Director(s) (PD), and, depending on the student's stage in the program, the student's PhD committee. This requirement has the best interests of the student in mind and also allows for appropriate thoughtful consideration and discussion of what is the best course for the student.

2. Student considerations

a) 1st year/rotating students: If a program faculty member is actively seeking a position at a non-AMC institution or is likely to leave the institution within a ~ year (i.e. has an offer or is negotiating an offer from a non-AMC institution), ORE policy does not allow the faculty member to mentor a rotation student while negotiations are on-going or if the faculty has received an offer. Also, the PD and student(s) need to know ASAP so that students rotate with training faculty who are CU-AMC faculty.

b) Students who have chosen a PI who is leaving the institution as mentor:

i) Students who have chosen a PhD mentor but not yet completed the comprehensive examination (pre-comp student). Until the program faculty member leaves the institution and the student's training path has been determined, the faculty member will remain responsible for the student's tuition, stipend and fees. ORE's strong recommendation is that a pre-comp student who has been in her/his/their mentor's lab for < 1 year (not including rotation time) will select a new mentor. The student might first consider other training faculty with whom rotations were done during their first year. If none of these are possible options, an additional rotation might be considered. While it is not required that the student do another rotation before joining a new thesis lab, this can be arranged by the PD if needed.

Alternatively, a pre-comps student may choose to move with the mentor. In this case, ORE policy is that the student withdraw from the ORE PhD program and enroll in a program at the new institution. However, the major goal is the best interest of the students which may require flexibility, e.g., if student has been with mentor well over a year, has a comps committee set up and about to do comps - as one example. This decision should be reached by discussion with the student and the comps committee/graduate advisory committee of the program and with final approval by the Program Director.

ii) Post-comp students. Until the program faculty member leaves the institution and until the student's training path has been determined, the faculty member will remain responsible for the student's tuition, stipend and fees. Depending on the stage of the student's research and training, the best course for the student might differ. If the student remains with the PI, the PI and student will develop a detailed training plan that specifies (1) whether the student will continue her/his/their

research at the faculty member's new institution or remain at CU-AMC; (2) the frequency (at least weekly) of regular meetings between the faculty member and student; (3) financial and technical support for the student's research (e.g., ordering supplies, continuation of any PRA or other lab member assistance); (3) steps taken to ensure minimal impact on the student's training and time to degree; and (4) a detailed plan to resolve any problems that might develop is needed.

For students who remain at CU-AMC after the mentor departs to a new institution: The student, student's mentor, the student's thesis committee chair, and the PD will write and sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that specifies the laboratory & desk space and technical and financial support that will be available to the student as well as a CU-AMC on-site co-mentor. The co-mentor will serve as a scientific advisor and advocate for the student to ensure that the mentoring plan is followed and program requirements are met. The required MOU is discussed further below in #3.

iii) Students who opt to or are forced to change mentors (e.g., mentor insists student move but student is unable to do so). The PD will make a good faith effort to facilitate the student's ability to find another mentor. The choice of a new mentor may also lead to changes in thesis committee membership. Accordingly, decisions about new mentors or additional rotations will be left to the discretion of the PD.

In some cases, it may not be possible to establish a new mentor/mentee relationship. Failing to identify a new thesis laboratory if unable to continue with the leaving PI may result in dismissal from the ORE PhD program. In addition, lack of academic progress may be cause for dismissal from a program. ORE strongly recommends that PDs place specific time-lines on the decision-making by students. This includes both the decision about whether the student will leave with the PI or select a new lab.

3. Financial responsibilities. Faculty who leave UC-AMC and continue as the mentor for a student in an ORE PhD program will remain responsible for the student's tuition, stipend and all fees until completion of the PhD. On the other hand, if a program faculty member leaves the institution but will not continue as a student's primary mentor, he/she/they will remain responsible for the student's tuition, stipend and fees until a new training plan has been approved by the student, PI, student's PhD committee (if one has already been formed) and the Director(s) of the PhD program. A formal MOU will be put in place that is agreed to and signed by the departing mentor, the PD(s), and the thesis advisory committee chair. The MOU will detail the financial arrangements for the trainee's stipend, necessary supplies and equipment, and defined space*.

* *Agreements regarding space may require the signature of the Dean of the relevant school.*

** *If deemed necessary for the best interest of the trainee, ORE expects the mentee's departing PI to underwrite the short rotation.*

4. Mediating problems that might arise: If the PI leaves the institution and the student continues on the same project, then an individual (typically the thesis committee chair) will be designated to mediate problems that arise. If the student elects to pick a different individual from their thesis committee, they will do so in consultation with the PD and her/his/their thesis committee chair. Thus, the student will have an assigned co-mentor whom he/she/they and the PhD program trust and expect to raise any concerns as soon as they arise and advocate for the student's best interests. As always, any situations that emerge and raise issues for the student about equity, retaliation, discrimination, and/or harassment need to be addressed and reported as required (e.g., Office of Equity).

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