Since 1961, the Graduate Program in Cellular and Molecular Biology (CMB) has been pioneering graduate education in the fields of cell biology and molecular biology at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. CMB is a research-oriented, interdisciplinary program leading to the Ph.D. degree. UW–Madison has one of the largest and most prestigious biology facilities in the world, well-noted for its cooperation and collaboration across department boundaries. CMB is an important part of that interdepartmental strength, providing students with the opportunity to work with more than 180 faculty members in 40 departments.

Research and coursework experience allow CMB students to obtain a solid foundation in cell biology and molecular biology that is tailored to their professional objectives. Research focus groups are composed of students and faculty studying a common research area. The focus groups are: cancer biology, cell adhesion and cytoskeleton, cellular and molecular metabolism, developmental biology and regenerative medicine, immunology, membrane biology and protein trafficking, molecular and genome biology of microbes, physiology, plant biology, RNA biology, systems biology, transcriptional mechanisms, and virology.

Admission to the program is highly competitive. Admission is based on demonstrated ability and interest in biology, chemistry, and the physical sciences; three letters of recommendation; and the personal statement. Previous research experience is required. The application deadline for fall admission is December 1. All application materials must be received by this date in order to be reviewed by the CMB Admissions Committee. We do not offer spring or summer admission. More information about CMB Admissions can be found on the CMB website (https://cmb.wisc.edu/admissions/).

FUNDING

GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid. Further funding information (https://grad.wisc.edu/funding/) is available from the Graduate School. Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and restrictions related to funding.

PROGRAM RESOURCES

All students accepted into the Ph.D. degree program receive financial support from Graduate School fellowships, interdepartmental training grants, and/or research assistantships. The program strives to maintain a nationally competitive stipend. Students are guaranteed a stipend each year in addition to tuition remission. The current stipend rate can be found on the Financial (https://cmb.wisc.edu/financial-health-insurance/) page of the CMB handbook. Graduate students are also eligible for comprehensive health insurance; individual or family coverage is available at a minimal cost. Students are strongly encouraged to apply for a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship at the time of application to graduate school and/or during the first or second year on campus.

REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Review the Graduate School minimum academic progress and degree requirements (http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirementstext), in addition to the program requirements listed below.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

MODE OF INSTRUCTION

Accelerated: Accelerated programs are offered at a fast pace that condenses the time to completion. Students are able to complete a program with minimal disruptions to careers and other commitments.

Evening/Weekend: Courses meet on the UW–Madison campus only in evenings and/or on weekends to accommodate typical business schedules. Students have the advantages of face-to-face courses with the flexibility to keep work and other life commitments.

Face-to-Face: Courses typically meet during weekdays on the UW-Madison Campus.

Hybrid: These programs combine face-to-face and online learning formats. Contact the program for more specific information.
Online: These programs are offered 100% online. Some programs may require an on-campus orientation or residency experience, but the courses will be facilitated in an online format.

**CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Credit Requirement</td>
<td>51 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Residence Credit Requirement</td>
<td>32 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Graduate Coursework Requirement</td>
<td>Half of degree coursework (26 credits out of 51 total credits) must be completed graduate-level coursework; courses with the Graduate Level Coursework attribute are identified and searchable in the university’s Course Guide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Graduate GPA Requirement</td>
<td>3.00 GPA required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Grade Requirements</td>
<td>The Graduate School requires an average grade of B or better in all coursework (300 or above, not including research credits) taken as a graduate student unless conditions for probationary status require higher grades. Grades of Incomplete are considered to be unsatisfactory if they are not removed during the next enrolled semester.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assessments and Examinations**

Doctoral students are required to take a comprehensive preliminary/oral examination at the end of their second year. In order to complete their preliminary exam, students must have cleared their record of all Incomplete and Progress grades (other than research and thesis). Deposit of the doctoral dissertation in the Graduate School is required.

**Language Requirements**

Contact the program for information on any language requirements.

**Doctoral Minor/Breadth Requirements**

Doctoral students in the CMB program are not required to complete a minor, but may choose to.

**REQUIRED COURSES**

Eleven credits of coursework, not including 990 research credits, are required to complete the CMB course requirements. One course must be taken from the "core" list of molecular biology courses and one course must be taken from the "core" list of cell biology courses. The remaining credits can come from either the "core" or "elective" list of classes to bring the total number of credits to eleven.

**Code** | **Title** | **Credits** |
--- | --- | --- |
**Molecular Biology Core** | | 3 |
BIOCHEM/GENETICS/MD GENET 620 | Eukaryotic Molecular Biology | 3 |

Choose one of the following:  

- BIOCHEM/GENETICS/MICROBIO 612: Prokaryotic Molecular Biology  
- ONCOLOGY/PL PATH 640: General Virology-Multiplication of Viruses  

**Cell Biology Core**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOTANY 860</td>
<td>Plant Cell Biology</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZOOLOGY/NEURODPT/ NTP 765</td>
<td>Developmental Neuroscience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PATH 750</td>
<td>Cellular and Molecular Biology/Pathology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONCOLOGY 703</td>
<td>Carcinogenesis and Tumor Cell Biology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ethics Core**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIOCHEM 729</td>
<td>Advanced Topics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONCOLOGY 715</td>
<td>Ethics in Science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SURG SCI 812</td>
<td>Research Ethics and Career Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remaining credits can come from either the core or elective list of classes to bring the total number of credits to eleven.

**Elective Courses**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEURODPT 700</td>
<td>Cytoskeletal Dynamics</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B M E 510</td>
<td>Introduction to Tissue Engineering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B M E 520</td>
<td>Stem Cell Bioengineering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B M E/CBE 783</td>
<td>Design of Biological Molecules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B M E 545</td>
<td>Engineering Extracellular Matrices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B M E 556</td>
<td>Systems Biology: Mammalian Signaling Networks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B M I/STAT 541</td>
<td>Introduction to Biostatistics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B M I/STAT 877</td>
<td>Statistical Methods for Molecular Biology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B M I 826</td>
<td>Special Topics in Biostatistics and Biomedical Informatics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOTANY/ BIOCHEM/ GENETICS 840</td>
<td>Regulatory Mechanisms in Plant Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOCHEM/ BOTANY 621</td>
<td>Plant Biochemistry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOCHEM/ CHEM 665</td>
<td>Biophysical Chemistry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOCHEM/ NUTR SCI 619</td>
<td>Advanced Nutrition: Intermediary Metabolism of Macronutrients</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOCHEM/ PHMCOLO-M/ZOOLOGY 630</td>
<td>Cellular Signal Transduction Mechanisms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOCHEM 601</td>
<td>Protein and Enzyme Structure and Function</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMOLCHEM 675</td>
<td>Advanced or Special Topics in Biomolecular Chemistry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOTANY/ENTOM/ PL PATH 505</td>
<td>Plant-Microbe Interactions: Molecular and Ecological Aspects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRB/MEDICINE 701</td>
<td>Cell Signaling and Human Disease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CRB 640  Fundamentals of Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology
CRB 650  Molecular and Cellular Organogenesis
F&W ECOL/HORT/STAT 571  Statistical Methods for Bioscience I
GENETICS/HORT 550  Molecular Approaches for Potential Crop Improvement
GENETICS/MD GENET 677  Advanced Topics in Genetics
GENETICS 631  Plant Genetics
GENETICS 633  Population Genetics
GENETICS 885  Advanced Genomic and Proteomic Analysis
M M & I 555  Vaccines: Practical Issues for a Global Society
M M & I 740  Mechanisms of Microbial Pathogenesis
M M & I/PATH-BIO 750  Host-Parasite Relationships in Vertebrate Viral Disease
MED PHYS 671  Selected Topics in Medical Physics
MICROBIO 625  Advanced Microbial Physiology
MICROBIO/BMOLCHEM 668  Microbiology at Atomic Resolution
MICROBIO 607  Advanced Microbial Genetics
NTP/NEURODPT 610  Cellular and Molecular Neuroscience
ONCOLOGY 675  Advanced or Special Topics in Cancer Research
PATH 751  Cell and Molecular Biology of Aging
PATH 803  Pathogenesis of Major Human Diseases
PATH 807  Immunopathology: The Immune System in Health and Disease
PATH-BIO 675  Special Topics
PL PATH/BOTANY/GENETICS/M M & I 655  Biology and Genetics of Fungi
ZOOLOGY 604  Computer-based Gene and Disease/Disorder Research Lab

Research Credits
A minimum of 51 credits taken in graduate level courses are required: the 11 above, and the remaining credits can be 990 research credits.

Total Credits  51-53

1 EXCEPTION: M.D./Ph.D. students are only required to take 3 credits from the Core Curriculum or the Elective Courses list.

2 EXCEPTION: M.D./Ph.D. students are not required to take an ethics course because they received this training in their M.D. courses.

POLICIES

GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES
The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures (https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/) provide essential information regarding general university policies. Program authority to set degree policies beyond the minimum required by the Graduate School lies with the degree program faculty. Policies set by the academic degree program can be found below.

MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES

PRIOR COURSEWORK

Graduate Work from Other Institutions
Does not appear on UW–Madison transcript or count toward graduate GPA. The minimum residence requirement can be satisfied only with courses taken as a graduate student at UW–Madison, with the exception being graduate-level work taken as a CIC traveling scholar. These requests evaluated on case-by-case basis.

UW–Madison Undergraduate
The program may decide to accept up to seven credits numbered 300 or above of required or elective courses from undergraduate work completed at UW–Madison toward fulfillment of minimum degree requirements. This is not allowed to count toward the 50% graduate coursework minimum unless taken at the 700 level or above. Work will not appear on the graduate career portion of UW–Madison transcript or count toward GPA. Minimum residence credit requirement can be satisfied only with courses taken as a graduate student at UW–Madison. All requests evaluated on case-by-case basis.

UW–Madison University Special
The program may accept up to 15 University Special student credits as fulfillment of the minimum graduate residence, or graduate degree requirements on occasion. This work would not be allowed to count toward the 50% graduate coursework minimum unless taken at the 700 level or above. All requests evaluated on case-by-case basis.

PROBATION
The Graduate School regularly reviews the record of any student who earned grades of BC, C, D, F, or Incomplete in a graduate course (300 or above), or grade of U in research credits. This review could result in academic probation with a hold on future enrollment or in being suspended from the Graduate School.

ADVISOR / COMMITTEE
The thesis advisor will assist the graduate student throughout the duration of their Ph.D. studies. Upon choosing a thesis advisor, the student should formulate goals and expectations when starting in a permanent lab home. The student and thesis advisor should work together to ensure that mutual goals and expectations are met. The thesis advisor will monitor and guide the student's progress toward the Ph.D. degree, provide the student with advice about how and when to meet the degree requirements of the program, and help the student decide on appropriate coursework during Ph.D. studies.

After joining a thesis lab, students are required to form a thesis committee. The purpose of the thesis committee is to: guide the student through the process of earning the Ph.D. degree and meeting all CMB program requirements; assist the student in developing as an
independent scientist in the student’s area of research; provide the student with an array of ideas and opportunities regarding the direction of the research and thesis project; and evaluate the student’s research proposal, attend curriculum certification, preliminary exam, annual progress report, and thesis defense. 

The thesis committee consists of five faculty members, including the thesis advisor. All committee members must be readers when the student defends their dissertation. Three committee members, including the thesis advisor, must be faculty trainers in the CMB program. Two committee members must be outside the student’s direct area of expertise.

**CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED**

15 credits

**TIME CONSTRAINTS**

Doctoral degree students who have been absent for ten or more consecutive years lose all credits that they have earned before their absence. Individual programs may count the coursework students completed prior to their absence for meeting program requirements; that coursework may not count toward Graduate School credit requirements.

A candidate for a doctoral degree who fails to take the final oral examination and deposit the dissertation within 5 years after passing the preliminary examination may require to take another preliminary examination and to be admitted to candidacy a second time.

**GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS**

These resources may be helpful in addressing your concerns:

- Bias or Hate Reporting (https://doso.students.wisc.edu/bias-or-hate-reporting/)
- Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures (https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/#grievance-procedure)
- Hostile and Intimidating Behavior Policies and Procedures (https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/)
  - Office of the Provost for Faculty and Staff Affairs (https://facstaff.provost.wisc.edu/)
- Dean of Students Office (https://doso.students.wisc.edu/) (for all students to seek grievance assistance and support)
- Employee Assistance (http://www.eao.wisc.edu/) (for personal counseling and workplace consultation around communication and conflict involving graduate assistants and other employees, post-doctoral students, faculty and staff)
- Employee Disability Resource Office (https://employee.disabilities.wisc.edu/) (for qualified employees or applicants with disabilities to have equal employment opportunities)
- Graduate School (https://grad.wisc.edu/) (for informal advice at any level of review and for official appeals of program/departmental or school/college grievance decisions)
- Office of Compliance (https://compliance.wisc.edu/) (for class harassment and discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence)
- Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/) (for conflicts involving students)
- Ombuds Office for Faculty and Staff (http://www.ombuds.wisc.edu/) (for employed graduate students and post-docs, as well as faculty and staff)
- Title IX (https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/) (for concerns about discrimination)

**Overview**

If a student feels unfairly treated or aggrieved by faculty, staff, or another student, the University offers several avenues to resolve the grievance.

Students’ concerns about unfair treatment are best handled directly with the person responsible for the objectionable action. If the student is uncomfortable making direct contact with the individual(s) involved, they should contact the advisor or the person in charge of the unit where the action occurred (CMB Program Administration or Chair, Lab Department Administration or Chair, Lab Manager, etc.). Many departments and schools/colleges have established specific procedures for handling such situations; check their web pages for more information. If such procedures exist at the local level, these should be investigated first.

For more information, see the Graduate School Academic Policies and Procedures. (http://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/#grievancesandappeals)

**Procedure**

Procedures for proper accounting of student grievances within the CMB Program:

- The student is encouraged to speak first with the person toward whom the grievance is directed to see if a situation can be resolved interpersonally at this level.
- Should satisfactory resolution not be achieved, the student should contact the CMB Office and the CMB Program Chair to discuss the grievance. The program will facilitate problem resolution through informal channels and facilitate any complaints or issues of students. The first attempt is to help the student informally address the grievance prior to any formal complaint. Students are also encouraged to talk with their faculty advisor or thesis committee members if appropriate.
- If the issue is not resolved to the student’s satisfaction, the student can submit a formal grievance in writing to the CMB Office and CMB Program Chair. The written formal grievance must be submitted within 60 days of the alleged unfair treatment.
- On receipt of a written complaint, a faculty committee will be convened within 10 working days by the CMB Program to manage the grievance. The program faculty committee will obtain a written response from the person toward whom the complaint is directed. This response will be shared with the person filing the grievance.
- Within 10 working days of being convened, the faculty committee will make a decision regarding the grievance. The CMB Program will report on the committee’s decision and any action taken by the committee in writing to both the student and the party toward whom the complaint was directed.
- At this point, if either party (the student or the person toward whom the grievance is directed) is unsatisfied with the decision of the faculty committee, the party may file a written appeal within 10 working days of the committee’s decision. The appeal will go to the tenure home School/College of the grieving student’s primary advisor.

The Graduate School has procedures for students wishing to further appeal a grievance decision made at the school/college level. These policies are described in the Graduate School’s Academic Policies and Procedures. (https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/grievances-and-appeals/)

**OTHER**

CMB students all earn a stipend that is set by the program each year, and tuition is covered. First year rotating students are funded through the CMB Program during the first semester. After the first semester,
students are typically funded by their thesis advisor. In some cases, students earn individual fellowships or training grant slots and are funded through these mechanisms. Please contact the CMB Program for specific questions about stipend level, etc.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES**

Take advantage of the Graduate School's professional development resources (https://grad.wisc.edu/pd/) to build skills, thrive academically, and launch your career.

**PROGRAM RESOURCES**

The CMB program offers and encourages participation in many professional development opportunities. The student-led Professional Development Committee plans events such as visiting speakers, panelists, and an annual mock interview event. The program shares information about alumni and their current employment with CMB students and encourages collaboration between the two groups. At the annual student retreat, students hear a panel featuring CMB alumni working in academic and non-academic positions. Program requirements such as an annual oral presentation and an annual thesis committee meeting foster professional development skills. Students also have opportunities to participate in program governance and leadership roles in other program activities such as advising and orientation, recruiting, admissions, the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee, and the Coordinating Committee. A weekly email newsletter publicizes other relevant upcoming professional development opportunities. More information can be found on the CMB Professional Development page (https://cmb.wisc.edu/professional-development/).

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

1. Gain a broad understanding of the cellular and molecular principles that underlie biological processes.
2. Develop proficiency in a chosen area of cellular and molecular biology.
3. Learn to think critically and problem solve to address research challenges using a broad range of theories, research methods, and approaches to scientific inquiry.
4. Create research and scholarship that makes a substantive contribution to the field of cellular and molecular biology.
5. Experience collaboration with scientists within the lab, the department, the program, the university, and beyond.
6. Clearly and effectively communicate scientific ideas and research to both scientists and non-scientists in written and oral forms.
7. Exhibit and foster ethical and professional conduct.
8. Gain exposure to potential career paths and develop leadership and professional skills that will prepare them for a successful and rewarding career.

**PEOPLE**

**Faculty Chairs:** David Wassarman (program chair), Andy Mehle (admissions chair), Caroline Alexander (awards chair), Donna Peters (curriculum chair), Colleen McDowell (diversity chair)

**Focus Group Chairs:** Caroline Alexander (Cancer Biology), Wilmara Salgado-Pabon (Cell Adhesion and Cytoskeleton), Dudley Lamming (Cellular and Molecular Metabolism), Anne Griep (Developmental Biology and Regenerative Medicine), Lisa Arendt (Immunology), Guy Groblewski (Membrane Biology and Protein Trafficking), Robert Landick (Molecular and Genome Biology of Microbes), Raunak Sinha (Physiology), Jean-Michel Ane (Plant Biology), David Brow (RNA Biology), Megan McClean (Systems Biology), Melissa Harrison (Transcriptional Mechanisms), Paul Ahlquist (Virology).

For a list of all participating faculty, see the program website (http://www.cmb.wisc.edu).