PITTSBURGH BIOMEDICAL INFORMATICS TRAINING PROGRAM

DEPARTMENT OF BIOMEDICAL INFORMATICS
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

PITTSBURGH BIOMEDICAL INFORMATICS TRAINING PROGRAM
HANDBOOK FOR TRAINEES

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Introduction

Students participate in the BMITP to earn certificates, MS, or PhD degrees. Postdoctoral researchers complete advanced research in biomedical informatics. Completion of the degree requirements - initially coursework and subsequently research - should be the first focus of student trainees. Awareness of program requirements is a key component of this responsibility. It is each student's responsibility to be aware of program requirements and expectations, and to play an active role in managing their studies. PhD students are particularly encouraged to set goals for their timely progress through the program, identifying milestones and communicating those goals to advisors, who should be willing to support the student in attempting to meet those goals. Any difficulties should be discussed with mentors and with the training program director as early as possible, to maximize flexibility in developing solutions.

This document outlines some of the policies, procedures, and expectations regarding trainees and their path through the training program.

Training Program Core Faculty

A significant strength of the program is its large faculty of active teachers and productive researchers. The core faculty has grown steadily since the program's inception and now includes 40 members, with primary appointments in 13departments of the University of Pittsburgh. Nine core faculty members are alumni of NLM-funded training programs. Two are

fellows of the American College of Medical Informatics. Others are recognized national leaders in informatics applied to specific domains including pathology, nursing, radiology, librarianship, anesthesiology, pharmacology, information science, biostatistics and health services research. As a group, the core faculty set all matters of program policy. As individuals, they offer core courses, oversee student research, chair thesis and dissertation committees, and serve as primary advisors and mentors to trainees.

A listing of the current Training Program Core Faculty can be found at http://www.dbmi.pitt.edu/training-programs/core-faculty.

Coursework

Students must complete all coursework as required in the published curriculum, being aware that many courses are only offered once/year, and some are offered even less frequently. Students and their advisors should work together to identify electives and supplementary courses as needed to fulfill requirements while also gaining the breadth and depth of knowledge necessary for successful completion of their research.

The curricula and requirements of the Biomedical Informatics degree program (Masters and Doctoral), as well as the Biomedical Informatics Certificate Program, are outlined in the Curricula document on the Pittsburgh Biomedical Informatics Training Program website. See http://www.dbmi.pitt.edu/. For those on the Biomedical Informatics Track of the Intelligent Systems Program, see the ISP's website at http://www.isp.pitt.edu/ under "Requirements."

Instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research
The Pittsburgh Biomedical Informatics Training program bases its plan for instruction in the responsible conduct of research (RCR) on NIH policy. Guidelines to completing the RCR modules can be found in Training Program Policy 8. All new trainees in our program are required to successfully complete these modules as soon as possible but no later than 6 months from enrolling in the training program. Some modules might need to be renewed periodically – reminders will be sent via email when appropriate.

Biomedical Informatics Courses
All Biomedical Informatics courses (BIOINF), including courses offered each semester along with relevant dates and times are listed on the Pittsburgh Biomedical Informatics Training Program website at http://www.dbmi.pitt.edu/.

Biomedical Informatics Colloquia (BMI "Lecture Series")
All trainees are <u>required</u> to attend 75% of the Biomedical Informatics Colloquia (BMI "Lecture Series") in all semesters throughout their traineeship. Anyone requesting an exception must discuss it with the Director of the Training Program. These presentations are offered through the fall and spring semesters on Fridays from 11:00 a.m. until 12:00 a.m. Grading is pass/fail, based entirely on attendance. A passing grade is earned by attending at least 75% of sessions in each semester. Failure to achieve a passing grade will be considered during end-of-semester evaluations, and may contribute to disciplinary actions. An attendance will be taken at each colloquium. The Coordinator of the Training Program maintains a record of attendance.

Biomedical Informatics (BIOINF 2032) Journal Club
All trainees are required to register for at least one credit of Journal Club in the fall and spring terms of their first year. These are formal courses. More information on these courses can be found on the BMI website.

Cross-Registration with other Institutions

Carnegie Mellon University, Duquesne University, Robert Morris College, and the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary offer graduate students the opportunity for cross-registration in graduate programs in the Fall and Spring Terms. Credits earned by cross-registration in graduate programs in these institutions, when approved in advance by the student's graduate advisor, are accepted as University of Pittsburgh credits for the purpose of the calculation of the quality point average and the completion of degree requirements. Each program/department at each institution retains the authority to establish the prerequisites for admission and the maximum enrollment in its own courses and to grant priority in registration to its own graduate students. For details regarding cross-registration procedures, please see the Training Program Coordinator. Plans to register for courses in these other Institutions should be discussed with your Biomedical Informatics academic advisor, if those courses are not personal development (e.g., languages, etc.) Trainees can obtain a cross-registration form from the Biomedical Informatics Training Program Coordinator.

Grading

All BMI core courses are listed as having the grading option "LG/SN" (letter grade/satisfactory/audit). However, no S/N grade will be accepted towards fulfillment of the Biomedical Informatics Training Program core requirements (with the exception of journal clubs and some Directed or Independent Study courses). **All core courses require a minimum "B" grade**. The "SN" option is maintained only for the purpose of being able to switch a B- to a S/N for any student to use towards his/her degree program in another department (e.g., Information Science degree students; see University of Pittsburgh individual departmental rules and regulations in this regard).

Degree/Certificate

All trainees who finish the requirements of the Biomedical Informatics degree programs (Masters and Doctoral) will, of course, obtain a degree in Biomedical Informatics from the University of Pittsburgh. Those trainees who on are on the Biomedical Informatics Track of the Intelligent Systems Program (ISP) will received their respective degree through the ISP, and the transcript will note a "Concentration in Biomedical Informatics." Trainees in the Biomedical Informatics Certificate Program who complete all of the requirements of the training program will receive a Certificate from the Department of Biomedical Informatics that verifies completion of the program.

Dual Responsibilities for Trainees Registered in Other Degree Programs

It is understood by the Training Program Faculty that trainees in degree programs other than Biomedical Informatics must work in two arenas: that of the biomedical informatics community and that of their individual degree program communities (e.g., the Intelligent Systems Program). The whole design of the Training Program is one of integrated cross-training, and those accepted into the Pittsburgh Biomedical Informatics Training Program must understand this dual responsibility. Particularly those here on National Library of Medicine funding must understand that the NLM has agreed to pay for training based on the trainee's understanding of that integrated cross-training concept. Every effort has been made on the part of the Training Program Faculty and Staff to clarify the requirements of the Program. No activities outside of the Training Program and degree programs will be accepted as an excuse for failure to fulfill all of the requirements of the program. Comments to improve or revise the program in this regard are welcome.

Exams

PhD students must complete preliminary evaluation exam and doctoral comprehensive exams in a timely fashion and in accordance with published policies. Delays in either the prelims or the comps often have cascading effects, as late completion of comps in particular may delay doctoral proposals, which may delay degree completion. Additional details on the preliminary and comprehensive exams can be found on the DBMI web site.

Preliminary Exam:

The preliminary evaluation, to be held at the spring TP Core Faculty Meeting focused on trainee evaluations, will assess appropriate progress in the first year in both coursework and research.

1. All first-year coursework will be reviewed to ensure minimal grade requirements (3.0 GPA and successfully passing all courses) and to address any performance concerns identified by instructors.
2. The trainee will make a short presentation (15-20 minutes) to faculty in an open forum, providing an introduction to the trainee's research. The goal of this presentation will be to inform the faculty about the trainee's proposed project, including relevant background, and to establish that the trainee has the potential to succeed in graduate studies.
3. The research mentor will provide a letter assessing the trainee's progress and prospects for success.

The preliminary presentation should be completed before the end of May of the second semester of the first year.

For the preliminary evaluation, the presentation will be evaluated to ensure that the trainee has begun the process of exploring research topics that may lead to a dissertation, and has an initial plan for making further progress. Evaluation of the presentation will be based on several criteria:

- BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE: Does the trainee have at least a preliminary understanding of the domain knowledge necessary to proceed with the proposed line of investigation?
- RESEARCH LITERATURE COMPETENCY: Has the trainee demonstrated an ability to review published work and to relate that work to their topic of interest?
- APPROPRIATENESS: Does the proposed line of inquiry have a strong possibility of leading to a novel contribution to the field of biomedical informatics?
- POTENTIAL: Does the trainee have the potential to succeed with the proposed work?

Each committee member will evaluate the presentation, providing a grade of acceptable or not acceptable on each, along with an overall final grade. These results will then be discussed (behind closed doors) by the committee, who will arrive at an overall consensus for each question, and an overall consensus grade.

The committee should provide the trainee with constructive feedback regarding their presentation. Particularly in cases where one or more of the above criteria is deficient, the trainee should be given clear descriptions of any gaps and suggestions as to how those gaps might be addressed.

Results of the presentation evaluation, along with course grades; comments from academic advisors, and other faculty members; and the letter from the research mentor, will be discussed at the annual trainee assessment meeting. Training program faculty members at that meeting will vote on the status of each trainee.

The outcome of the preliminary examination will be pass, remediation required, or fail, with remediation required resulting in being placed on probation. In that case, the trainee will have one semester (in the case of the assessment) or until the course is next offered (for the coursework) to remedy the situation. In the case of a result of remediation required, the training program director will develop a specific plan detailing what must be completed and when. Trainees who receive a grade of fail, or who receive a grade of remediation required and fail to complete the remediation plan, will not be allowed to pursue a PhD, but the trainee may choose to complete an MS degree.

https://www.dbmi.pitt.edu/content/doctoral-degree-0

Comprehensive Exam
he comprehensive evaluation will challenge the trainee to demonstrate their depth of knowledge in biomedical informatics, while making concrete steps relevant to their dissertation research. This examination will have two components: 1) a written document and 2) an oral examination. The written document will consist of:

1. A brief description of the proposed dissertation work, in a maximum of two pages that consists of specific aims, significance and innovation. This description will outline, at a high level, the questions and goals of the proposed work, as informed by the content of the literature review (see next section). The aims should be prepared without direct involvement from the research mentor, and should contain a statement of the research hypotheses. Specifically, although discussion of the questions and content with the mentor is allowed, the mentor should not review any written text that might be included in this section.
2. A narrative literature review providing background sufficient for motivating subsequent dissertation research. This review should focus on the topic of the proposed dissertation research and should involve both discussion of prior work and synthesis of that work as needed to identify and frame research questions to be addressed in the dissertation work. Ideally, the literature review would provide a conceptual model of the proposed work, including contextualization in previous work. The methods that will be used should be covered in the literature review. This review should show that the trainee has sufficient breadth and depth to complete the proposed work. The literature review should be detailed, but not overly verbose and should be between 2500-5000 words. The literature review should be entirely the trainee's own work.

Although focusing the aims and literature review on the trainee's planned dissertation work will usually be the best way to expedite progress, this linkage is not required, and it is expected that aims will evolve, or in some cases be completely reworked after the comprehensive examination.

As the goal of this examination is to demonstrate the trainee's fitness for completing doctoral work, input from others should be relatively minimal. As discussed above, the research mentor should not provide any comments on written text that might be submitted in the brief proposal (item #1 above). Trainees are welcome to discuss the aims and the literature review with their peers, but such discussions should be limited to oral conversations, with no peer review of drafts of either of the proposed work or the literature review.

The comprehensive examination should be completed before the end of the second year. Under unusual circumstances, the Training Program Director may relax this requirement, but trainees should alert the TP Director as soon as possible if they will require a delay.

When the trainee is ready to complete the comprehensive examination, they will work with the chair of the Comprehensive Examination committee to schedule a date. The examination should be timed so as to guarantee that the review and description of the proposed dissertation work can be provided to the comprehensive examination committee members at least two weeks in advance of the examination. *Trainees should be aware that Comprehensive Examination members can delay the examination if materials are not provided at least two weeks in advance.*

The comprehensive exam will be 1.5 hours long, consisting of a (maximally) 30-minute presentation of their literature review and proposed work, followed by up to 45 minutes of questions and discussion from the committee, and up to 15 minutes for closed committee discussion.

The student will submit a literature review providing background and a specific aims page summarizing their research direction to the committee **two weeks** prior to the exam date. The exam will evaluate the trainee's knowledge about biomedical informatics based on the curriculum in the first two years of the training program. Trainees are expected to have a strong grasp of biomedical informatics as a whole and a clear understanding of how their proposed research fits within, and adds to, existing scientific literature.

The research mentor can be in the room during the examination, and can participate in the discussion, but the results of the examination will be determined solely by the members of the Comprehensive Examination Committee.

Potential outcomes of the examination are pass or fail, as determined by a vote of the members of the Comprehensive Examination Committee. As the comprehensive examination is the last general evaluation of the trainee, the comprehensive examination committee will also consider any remedial efforts that may have been required in response to the preliminary or interim evaluations. If any deficiencies remain unaddressed, they may be considered, at least in part, as reason for failure in the comprehensive examination.

If the trainee fails, they are allowed to take the Comprehensive Examination one more time. Consistent with School of Medicine guidelines the second exam must occur within 90 days of the first Comprehensive Examination. If the trainee does not complete the second examination within the 90-day limit due to inaction on the part of the trainee, then the trainee will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program at the end of the academic term in which the 90-day limit is reached. In unusual circumstances, exceptions to this policy can only be approved by the Training Program Director.

If the second Comprehensive Examination is failed, then the trainee is dismissed from the Ph.D. program, effective at the end of the academic term in which the second failed attempt occurred. They will be eligible for a MS degree if they have completed all relevant requirements.

https://www.dbmi.pitt.edu/content/doctoral-degree-0

Research
Completion of novel biomedical informatics research is the core goal of DBMI trainees. All trainees are expected to publish at least first-authored one peer-reviewed conference or journal paper per year, after their first year in the program.

MS/PhD Committee, Proposal, and Thesis/Dissertation
The MS thesis and the PhD dissertation are the main milestones in a graduate student's academic career. Both efforts share a common framework:

- Identification and formulation of an appropriate research question
- Identification of a research committee
- Presentation and defense of the research proposal
- Completion of the work and writing of the thesis/dissertation
- Defense/oral examination of the work.

As with other aspects of the graduate career, it is ultimately the student's responsibility to plan for and execute each of these steps. The research advisor and the committee (when selected) will provide guidance regarding the suitability of the proposed project and applicability of appropriate methods, but the student has final responsibility.

MS/PhD committees also play a vital role in the MS/PhD process. Committee members review research, providing a knowledgeable perspective independent of that of the research mentor. This perspective can be useful in resolving any differences of opinion regarding the content of the work, methodologies used, goals and requirements for graduation, etc. Ideally, the members of the research committee will work together with the student to form a consensus plan for each phase of the work. Committee members also represent the institution, evaluating all work for proper adherence to university policies and appropriate norms of scholarship.

Detailed notes regarding the specifics of timelines and committee composition can be found in policies specific to each of the degrees. Here, a few notes clarify key issues:

PhD committees should meet at least annually, to ensure appropriate progress toward completion of the work.

For PhD dissertations, the chair of the committee is not necessarily the primary advisor: These roles may be assigned to different individuals if desired.

Committees should meet at the students' discretion: Regular interactions between students and committee members is encouraged, as such discussions provide opportunities for exchange of ideas, guidance from committee members, and progress updates that might prove useful for identifying difficulties or obstacles. Students should feel free to schedule committee meetings, or to meet with committee members, individually, as they feel most useful for ensuring their progress. Similarly, committee members and advisors should strive to be responsive to student requests for feedback and/or meetings.

Students must adhere to guidelines and timing constraints: Published guidelines for both the MS and PhD degrees include timing requirements for providing proposals and thesis/dissertation documents to committee members before proposals and defenses. These deadlines are designed to provide faculty with enough time to critically read and review submitted documents before the actual presentation date. It is the student's responsibility to meet these deadlines. Failure to do so may result in inability to complete the proposal or thesis defense on the scheduled date.

A proposal or a defense date is not a commitment to completion: Students often schedule defenses (and less frequently proposal) to meet certain deadlines, as might happen when a defense is planned weeks before the student intends to start a new position elsewhere. When work has been going well and progress is appropriate, this is not a problem. However, scheduling constraints do not make a successful defense a foregone conclusion - appropriate rigor and standards must be applied, and committees are under no obligation to approve a body of work that is not up to par.

NLM Fellows
Policies dictating NLM fellows are largely dictated by the National Library of Medicine. Some details are available at https://www.nlm.nih.gov/ep/trainingdirectors.html. Briefly, fellows are expected to attend the AMIA conference and the NLM training program every year, and should submit posters or abstracts for both events after their first year.

Graduate Student Researchers
Some students will be funded as graduate student researchers. The expectation of a GSR is that they work up to 20 hours/week on research as directed by the principal investigator of the research grant research grant that provides the funding for the GSR position. Time spent on the GSR work should contribute to the funded project without detracting from timely completion of the student's degree. Ideally, GSRs will be paid to work on their MS or PhD research, but this is not always possible.

Funding

Although we would like to provide all students with guarantees of funding for the entire duration of their PhD work, we are not able to do so. Students should be aware of their funding status, and should discuss possibilities with their advisors. Students within one year of the end of their funding should work with their advisor(s) and the training program director to secure additional funding, either through writing of proposals, finding GSRs, etc.

Information on funding from our NLM T15 Pittsburgh Biomedical Informatics Training Grant can be found at https://www.dbmi.pitt.edu/funding/.

Information regarding GSR or GSA funding can be found at https://www.gradstudies.pitt.edu/about/guidelines-policies-resources.

Advising and Evaluation

Biomedical Informatics Trainee Academic and Research Advisors
An Academic Advisor will be appointed to all new trainees. Responsibilities of the Academic Advisor and Trainee are outlined in the Academic Mentoring Contract (provided in your retreat packet). The Academic Advisor and Trainee should sign the contract and provide the Training Program Coordinator with a copy.

The academic advisor's primary responsibility is to work with the student to select classes and to plan the path toward completing coursework requirements and relevant milestones, including the preliminary and comprehensive exams. Although the role of the academic advisor may diminish as students proceed to candidacy and rely more heavily on their research advisors for ongoing guidance, the academic advisor can provide an alternative perspective on the trainee's progress through the program.

A Research Advisor should be selected by the Trainee before the end of their first semester. Responsibilities of the Research Advisor and Trainee are outlined in the Research Mentoring Contract. The Research Advisor and Trainee should complete this contract every semester and provide the Training Program Coordinator with a copy.

The mentor's role is to advise and guide the student through the MS and/or PhD process, providing guidance on problem selection and definition; conducting research; writing; completing

degree requirements; presenting work; and planning career options. Although each student's closest relationships are likely to be with their research mentor, there is no exclusivity implied. Students are encouraged to cultivate relationships with multiple faculty members who can provide complementary advice. Although some of these mentors may serve on MS and PhD committees, there is no implied limitation - students should feel free to draw on others outside of their committees - or even outside of the BMI training program - as they see fit.

Trainees are also encouraged to speak to the Director of the Training Program if they have any concerns or issues that they would prefer to address with someone other than their academic or research mentors.

The Evaluation Process
At the end of the fall term and end of spring term, all trainees are required to complete self-evaluation forms. Research and academic advisors will complete similar forms for each of their advisees. Completed evaluation forms become part of the Evaluation process of our program. The Evaluations Committee will meet to discuss each trainee, based on information provided on coursework and fulfillment of training program requirements. The evaluation process is designed to ascertain each trainees' progress, and to identify any problems that may exist. Reviews resulting in the determination that a trainee has not made sufficient progress may lead to academic probation or potentially dismissal from the program.

The Biomedical Informatics Professional Development Seminar Series aka Brown Bag

Regular attendance at the Biomedical Informatics Professional Development Seminar Series is strongly encouraged (but not mandatory). The Seminar Series is a **(near) monthly** informal, "bring-your-own-lunch," interactive seminar designed to provide students with practical advice and information towards professional development. Although students are not truly *required* to attend (no attendance will be taken), faculty strongly encourage this seminar due to the nature of the discussions. It is a one-hour seminar, six topics per year, and each topic will be discussed only once every two years; faculty will not cover these topics with their advisees on an individual basis. The schedule for these presentations will be provided via e-mail from the Training Program Coordinator early in the fall. Some examples of topics:
- Practical Advice on How to Plan, Execute, and Report on your Research
- Professional Presentations
- Grant Writing and 3-Letter Agencies
- Who's Who in Medical Informatics
- Getting the Most out of the AMIA Symposium
- Basics of Getting a Job

Meetings

Trainees are expected to actively participate in relevant academic meetings, including through presentation of papers and posters wherever possible. There are several possible sources of funds to support conference travel, listed here in order of priority:

- *Fellowships or GSR funding:* Trainees on the NLM training grant have an annual travel allowance, which generally (although not exclusively) covers the costs of the AMIA symposium and the NLM Annual meeting, discussed below. Trainees on GSR or other grant funding may be able to use some of that funding for travel costs.

- *Research Mentors:* Research mentors may have funds available to cover student travel.
- *Department funds:* DBMI funds may be available to support some travel for trainees who hope to present work and have no other means of funding travel. Contact the Training Program Director for information.

The Annual Fall Symposium of the American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA)

All trainees are expected to submit a paper or poster to the Annual Fall Symposium of the American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA), particularly those in their second year of training. Trainees should speak to their individual Biomedical Informatics advisors regarding AMIA submissions. See http://www.amia.org for information on this organization. All NLM-funded trainees in our program are required to attend this meeting; others are strongly encouraged to do so if able. This meeting is usually held in November, with location changing from year-to-year. Information on this meeting will come from the Training Program Coordinator as the time of the meeting approaches.

The National Library of Medicine Informatics Training Conference

All trainees supported by the NLM are required to attend the Annual NLM Informatics Training Conference, which is usually held in June. If any trainee funded by the NLM cannot make this meeting, he/she should discuss the issue with the Director of the Training Program.

If an NLM fellow has travel money remaining after these meetings noted above and he/she wishes to attend other academic meetings, he/she should discuss it with the Director of the Training Program.

Work Policies

Please see the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) Academic Regulations (https://www.gradstudies.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/assets/GSRAcademicRegs6-1-22.pdf) for official policy statements.

Expectations

Although GSRs and NLM fellows are expected to work up to 20 hours/week on their research, graduate study should be considered a full-time position. During the first two-years, coursework may take up a good amount of working time. After advancement to candidacy, students with research funding (GSR or fellowship) should be spending the equivalent of a full work-week on research. In rare cases of students working on GSRs unrelated to their dissertation work, this may mean splitting time between funded effort and dissertation research.

The exigencies of research work may present circumstances requiring bursts of work beyond the usual maximum of 20 hours/week, particular before major academic, publishing, or conference deadlines. It's not uncommon for students (or faculty) to take some time off after such milestones.

There are no set policies regarding working hours. Although some students work unpredictable hours, others work set schedules. Trainees should discuss expectations with their research mentors. Attendance at lab meetings, departmental colloquia, and other events is expected.

Vacation

All trainees must inform their advisors before leaving on lengthy vacations and must do so several weeks (or months if possible) in advance of such plans. Vacation interrupts research, and trainees are therefore required to obtain advisor agreement to vacation time.

Those trainees who are funded by the National Library of Medicine are permitted four weeks vacation time (any additional vacation time must be negotiated with advisors). Graduate Student Researchers (GSRs) are expected to limit vacation time to four weeks per year. All other trainees, including Certificate students, should inform their advisor of any time they plan to be away for more than a few days due to possible interference with research plans.

Note: GSRs can find the official University of Pittsburgh policies for graduate students at https://www.gradstudies.pitt.edu/about/guidelines-policies-resources

Parental Accomodations

Trainees who become parents during their graduate studies are eligible for a Parental Accomodotion Period of up to eight weeks of modified deadlines and academic expectations. Please see the Graduate Student Parental Accomodation Guidelines (https://www.gradstudies.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/assets/GradParentalAccommGuidelines6-1-22.pdf) for details.

Outside Work

Trainees occasionally consider outside employment to broaden their experience and/or to supplement their stipends. DBMI follows University of Pittsburgh policy, as stated in the Academic Regulations for graduate student researchers, teaching assistants, teaching fellows, and graduate assistants: "Given the intensive and time-consuming nature of graduate studies and training, graduate students holding TA, TF, and GSA appointments are discouraged from employment outside of the University".

August Retreat and Dinner

All trainees in the Biomedical Informatics Training Program are required to attend the Program's Annual Retreat. This Retreat is usually held within the last two weeks of August and usually lasts an entire day. **No trainee, current or new, will be excused from attendance at the Training Program's Annual Retreat without very good reason. This is an opportunity to welcome new trainees, and for current trainees to learn new information about the Training Program. As one of the Retreat's most important events is the introduction of new and current trainees, as well as the sharing of information about the program through the experience of current trainees, this requirement is considered by the faculty to be most important. Past feedback from incoming trainees has confirmed the importance of this requirement. If any trainee, for a good reason, cannot attend the Retreat, he/she must ask for the express permission of the Director of the Training Program. <u>Only Extremely Important events will be considered reason for absence.</u> Send such requests for waiver to either the Director or the Training Program Coordinator.**   The retreat includes a get-to-meet-all dinner, in the evening, for all trainees and training program faculty followed by a full day of activities.

Health Sciences Library System Orientation

New trainees not familiar with the University of Pittsburgh Health Sciences Library System (HSLS) may request a HSLS Library Orientation. The Training Program Coordinator will coordinate your library orientation.

Department Events

The Department of Biomedical Informatics sponsors occasional guest lectures and all day events, which every trainee is strongly encouraged to attend. On occasion, trainees may be asked for help with these events as "representatives" of the Department.

Trainee Representation in the Pittsburgh Biomedical Informatics Training Program

Two trainee representatives are elected every year among the trainees. Attempts are made to have one senior trainee and one "apprentice" trainee in this role. Meetings of trainees are held regularly, via scheduling by the senior trainee representative, in order to discuss trainee issues. In addition, quarterly meetings – Fellows' Forums – are held between the Director and all core faculty and trainees who attend to discuss trainee issues. The latter are scheduled by the Training Program Coordinator; all trainees and core faculty will be informed of the dates and times. Most trainee meetings are held in the classroom, 407A or 407B BAUM or conference rooms 536A or 536B BAUM, 5607 Baum Blvd.

Hosting Perspective Trainees

Trainees will be asked by the Training Program Coordinator for occasional help in the form of hosting prospective trainees coming to interview for vacancies in the Training Program in any given year. Hosting simply involves taking the prospective recruit to lunch (cost reimbursed by the Department) and answering whatever questions a prospective candidate might have about the Training Program.

General Information for Trainees

Trainees will find it worthwhile to obtain a copy of the Bulletin of the University of Pittsburgh, Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS). This bulletin provides a great deal of general information to graduate students of the University of Pittsburgh. A copy can be obtained by calling the FAS Office of the Provost at 412-624-0790. Throughout the course of training, trainees may in addition find the following handbooks for students to be helpful:

Guidelines on Academic Integrity (Student and Faculty Code of Conduct)
Policy Statement for Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows and Graduate Student Assistants
Policy Statement for Graduate Student Researchers

All of these handbooks can be found on the website:
http://www.pitt.edu/~graduate/policies.html

This website is most important to all graduate students at the University of Pittsburgh. It is important that all review this website for pertinent information to your training here.

Housing

Housing is the responsibility of each individual trainee. Most trainees visit Pittsburgh to look around and choose an apartment before they actually relocate here. However, the University of Pittsburgh has a website that can provide assistance regarding housing, particularly the areas around the University of Pittsburgh, and these include a separate listing on Graduate Student Housing. See http://www.pc.pitt.edu/housing/index.html.

This website includes various information that you may find helpful, and you can also refer to the City of Pittsburgh website that would provide additional information (see http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/). To those of you coming to live in Pittsburgh for the first time, we can suggest three areas that you would probably find most convenient and liveable: Squirrel Hill, Shadyside, and North Oakland – all three of these areas are within walking distance, have frequent and convenient bus service, and have shopping areas and apartments to rent. Many of our faculty and trainees live in these areas.

Information for International Students
All international students are required to go the Office of International Services on their first day in Pittsburgh. That office is located in room 725 William Pitt Union Building, on Forbes Avenue. All students are personally responsible for fulfilling the requirements of the University of Pittsburgh's regulations for international students.

The website of the University of Pittsburgh Office of International Services is **http://www.ois.pitt.edu/**   Telephone: 412-624-7120.

There are several special interest groups in Pittsburgh designed to alleviate the concerns of international students. All international trainees are encouraged to contact any of these groups for basic help or support regarding your transition to Pittsburgh and the University. These are as follows:

The Pittsburgh Council for International Visitors (PCIV) is Western Pennsylvania's only community based non-profit solely dedicated to supporting the development of professional and interpersonal relationships between people of Western Pennsylvania and the world. We are an organization with a regional network of approximately 2,500 volunteers who meet with international visitors sponsored by the U.S. government, foreign governments, businesses, institutions of higher education, and medical centers.

The Pittsburgh Council for International Visitors
413 Bellefield Hall
315 S. Bellefield Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania   15260
Tel: 412-624-7800
e-mail: **info@pciv.org**
See **http://www.pciv.org**

The Pittsburgh Chinese Church, Oakland Branch
Representatives: Pastor Hugo, and Lei Zhai (lzhai@andrew.cmu.edu)

University of Pittsburgh Graduate and Professional Student Association
825 William Pitt Union
3959 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
Tel: 412-648-7844
http://www.gpsg.pitt.edu

In addition, all new trainees are welcome to contact any current trainee for support and information concerning any aspect of living in Pittsburgh. A Personnel directory, which includes campus location, telephone number, and e-mail address for all Department of Biomedical Informatics faculty, staff, and trainees can be found at

http://www.dbmi.pitt.edu/content/personnel.htm and a listing of all trainees in the program can be found at http://www.dbmi.pitt.edu

The Training Program Coordinator will be happy to help direct you in any questions you may have about the City, the University, or the Program.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

(Note: In addition to information below specific to trainees, please refer to the Department's Administrative Handbook on the BMI Intranet for general administrative information and regulations for all staff, faculty, and trainees of the Department of Biomedical Informatics (see http://www.dbmi.pitt.edu).

Administrative Contact & Areas of Responsibility

Training Program Coordinator
Responsibilities: Communications, Seminars and Conferences, Biomedical Informatics Training Program Coordinator, Advisor Assignments, Course Scheduling, Grade Rosters, Ethics Program, Tuition Benefits/Payments, Health Insurance Information, Purchasing Requests and Information, Travel Information, Reimbursement Requests and Information, Travel, Reimbursements, Work/Library Requests, Memberships, Subscriptions, Seminar Room Scheduling, General Information.

Appointment to Training Program for Funded Trainees
As a rule, funded trainees must be appointed by the 10th of the month in order to register for courses by the end of the month; thus, new funded trainees must be appointed by August 10 in order to be able to register for courses by the August 25 (approximate in any given year) deadline for registration without a late fee (note: registration deadline changes yearly, but only by a day or two). Late fees of any kind are the responsibility of the trainee. Self-funded trainees do not have to undergo the process of appointment and thus the starting date of training can begin as late as August 15 (see section in this *Handbook on Pittsburgh Biomedical Informatics Training Program Annual Retreat and Orientation*). However, self-funded trainees are also required to meet with their Biomedical Informatics advisors prior to registration, which should occur as early as mid-July in order to also discuss research directions. Contact advisor or the Training Program Coordinator to discuss such arrangements.

Tuition
All matters concerning tuition and fees for funded trainees (e.g., NLM-sponsored and Graduate Student Researchers) should be directed to the Training Program Coordinator. As soon as a funded trainee receives a tuition bill, it must be given to the Training Program Coordinator to process for payment. All late fees (for late registration and past due tuition bills) are the responsibility of the trainee. In addition, some Schools within the University of Pittsburgh (FAS, GSPH) will not pay the activity fee for degree-seeking, funded trainees, and such trainees will be required to cover this fee as well. Graduate Student Researchers must pay the activity fee in full.

Paychecks
Paychecks for funded trainees will be distributed on the last work day of the month. Live paychecks will be left in trainees' individual mailboxes. Any funded trainee wishing to arrange for direct deposit of his/her pay should see the Training Program Coordinator for direct deposit forms.

Health Insurance
Trainees awarded an NLM-funded stipend will also receive individual health insurance coverage as per your acceptance letter into the Training Program. The particular health insurance coverage for which you opted will be paid directly from your paycheck through the University of Pittsburgh, and then reimbursed within a few weeks following each payday (the last work day of each month).

There are specific rules and regulations regarding travel to which all trainees, as well as staff and faculty, must adhere. Neglect in following these rules may jeopardize reimbursement.

Job Postings
Any job positions that come to the attention of the staff and faculty of DBMI will be sent electronically through the fellows email distribution list. They will also be posted on the Fellows' DBMI intranet.

FEEDBACK
All comments or suggestions for improving this handbook are welcome. Contact the Training Program Coordinator or the Program Director regarding such revisions or additions.