MCB 290 INDEPENDENT STUDY

MCB 290 Independent Study is the means by which students in the MCB major receive academic credit for research carried out as part of their undergraduate training in the Biological Sciences. In addition to earning credit hours which apply towards their 120 hours needed to graduate, a letter grade assigned by their faculty mentor for each semester that a student enrolls in MCB 290 is reflected in their major GPA.

MCB 290 CRITERIA

- All Students in the Biological Sciences (undeclared), MCB, MCB Honors or Biochemistry are eligible to enroll for MCB 290 credits. Note that students in the Biochemistry Specialized Curriculum should adhere to guidelines for research laid out for that major. If you are not in an MCB major, but will be working with an MCB professor, note the restrictions described under ENROLLING FOR MCB 290 INDEPENDENT STUDY.

- MCB 290 research may be conducted in any research professor’s program on the UIUC campus that entails aspects of molecular, cellular, physiological or biochemical studies. Note that work carried out in a non-MCB lab requires prior approval in the MCB Core Curriculum Office, 252 Davenport Hall (See instructions below).

- MCB 290 research should include an introduction to experimental design, training in appropriate techniques and bench skills, experience in carrying out investigations and analysis of data. In addition, many research labs at UIUC will expect student researchers to read relevant primary literature, participate in scheduled lab meetings and present their work in oral and/or written form.

- Students pursuing MCB 290 independent Study must be in good academic standing, with a recommended GPA of 3.0 or higher. The research endeavor is often time intensive and necessitates strategies to ensure that a student can sustain the balance between their coursework and laboratory studies.

- A total of 10 credit hours of MCB 290 may be applied towards the 120 hours (minimum) required for graduation with an undergraduate degree from the University of Illinois. Students are urged to sustain their research experience for as long as they wish. After the 10 hour limit is reached, MCB 290 credit hours along with their assigned letter grade for each semester will continue to be documented on the academic transcript.

- MCB 290 Independent Study is assigned a grade by the faculty mentor for each semester a student enrolls. Credit hours are allotted using the following ratio: 1 (one) hour of MCB 290 credit per 5 hours per week engaged in research. Since most positions entail at least 10 hours/week in the lab, a typical semester involves 2-3 hours of MCB 290 credit.
ENROLLING IN MCB 290 INDEPENDENT STUDY

Enrolling in MCB 290 requires that you find a faculty mentor who has agreed to allow you to join his or her program for at least one semester. For instructions and tips in your search for a research position, see the Search for MCB Undergrad Research handout. When you have received permission to enroll for MCB 290, you will need to know:

• The name of the research professor in whose lab you will work.
• The semester in which you'll begin your research and for which you wish to enroll in MCB 290
• How many hours/week you will be working in the lab. MCB 290 credit hours are awarded in the ratio of 1 credit hour = 5 hours/week in the lab. The typical 16 week semester entails at least 10 hours/week in the lab – Hence, 2 credit hours of MCB 290. During summer session II (8 weeks), 1 credit hour = 10 hours/week in the lab.

IF YOU ARE A BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES STUDENT, MCB, MCB HONORS OR BIOCHEMISTRY STUDENT AND WILL BE WORKING IN:

AN MCB RESEARCH LAB:
A. If you have an active profile in the MCB 290 Student Profile Database: Provide your faculty mentor with the link to your profile. S/he will be able to complete the MCB 290 enrollment portion and submit your documentation electronically. Once submitted, you will receive an automatic email containing the CRN for your MCB faculty advisor and instructions on line registration of your MCB 290 credit hours for the specified semester.

B. If you do not have an active profile in the MCB 290 Student Profile Database: Complete the MCB 290/MCB 492 Application Form for Work in an MCB Lab in hard copy, asking your faculty mentor to assist with information and to sign it. Submit the application to the MCB Core Curriculum Office in 252 Davenport Hall. This form is also available in the MCB Core Curriculum Office or in the Advising Program Office, 173 Burrill Hall.

A NON-MCB RESEARCH LAB: Complete the MCB 290/MCB 492 Application Form for Work Outside of MCB in hard copy, asking your faculty mentor for assistance and a signature. Submit the application for MCB 290 consideration in the MCB Core Curriculum Office in 252 Davenport Hall. Melissa Michael, Asst. Dir. MCB Undergrad. Instrn, will confirm that your proposed project is consistent with MCB guidelines for MCB 290 credit (See MCB 290 Criteria above). To arrange your meeting with her, call 244-1975:

A. If approved, you will receive a CRN for the specified semester that will allow you to register on line for the number of agreed upon MCB 290 hours. The steps involved in filing the form and securing the proper CRN in the MCB Core Curriculum Office will need to be repeated for each semester that you work with your faculty mentor.

B. If not approved, you may be able to receive credit using another independent study rubric (e.g. PSYC 290).
IF YOU ARE NOT IN AN MCB MAJOR BUT WILL BE WORKING IN:

AN MCB RESEARCH LAB: Request permission from your MCB faculty mentor to enroll for MCB 290. Ask your mentor to complete the MCB 290/MCB 492 Application Form for Work in an MCB Lab in hard copy. S/He will also need to write a letter to the MCB Instructional Program to request that you be able to earn MCB 290 credit for work in their lab. Submit the form and letter for review to the MCB Core Curriculum Office in 252 Davenport Hall. Be aware that enrollment in MCB 492 Senior Thesis is typically restricted to students in the MCB majors (See: MCB 492 Senior Thesis and Graduation with Distinction in MCB handout for more information). Requests to complete an MCB 492 thesis for graduation must be made to the MCB Core Curriculum Office as well as to Dr. Brenda Wilson, Chair of the MCB Distinction Committee. Students outside of the MCB majors are not permitted to graduate with Distinction in MCB, irrespective of the extent of research carried out in MCB research programs.

A NON-MCB RESEARCH LAB: You are not eligible to receive MCB 290 Independent Study credits for studies conducted outside of the School of MCB.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MCB 290 INDEPENDENT STUDY

• Is it possible to enroll for MCB 290 in the summer?

Yes, in fact the summer typically offers more hours in the lab and greater schedule flexibility that can translate into more rapid progress in your work.

• What if I haven’t found a lab position by the time I need to register for the semester when I want to begin research?

Go ahead and register for your classes, but reserve time in your M-F daytime schedule for research – especially a couple of 3-4 hour blocks in your week -- then continue to search for a mentor and lab. If necessary, you will be able to add MCB 290 after the new term starts – even after the course add deadline -- by receiving permission in 252 Davenport Hall (when you file the paperwork described above). You will not be able to add MCB 290 credits for a semester once it has ended.

• What happens if I continue to enroll for MCB 290 credit hours after I reach the 10 hour limit towards graduation?

There is no limit to the number of hours of MCB 290 you can enroll for. Once you reach 10 hours of MCB 290 credits, any additional semesters of MCB 290 will appear on your academic record along with your letter grade, but will not contribute hours to the 120 total hours you need to graduate.

• Is it possible to be paid AND receive credit for my research?

No, not simultaneously for the same work. It may be possible to devise an arrangement wherein your MCB 290 project is distinct from your responsibilities as a paid member of the lab. Speak with your faculty advisor about the potential for such provision.

• Can I receive MCB 290 credit for my research at another institution?

No, but that experience (whether paid or as a volunteer) may enhance your ability to find a research position at Illinois, make you more competitive for summer research fellowships and provide evidence of a richer, more varied research experience as an undergraduate!