

Frequently Asked Questions

General FAQs

Q: How do I declare CELL as my major?

A: Complete a Major Declaration Form (available in the departmental office or at your Dean's office). The major code is "CELL". Then see Marnie Mercado (mmercado@tulane.edu) to be assigned a faculty advisor. Turn the completed form in to your Dean's office after meeting with your assigned advisor and obtaining his or her signature.

Q: Can I double major in CELL and Neuroscience?

A: No. Due to the extensive overlap between the two majors, students may not pursue a double major in Neuroscience and Cell and Molecular Biology.

Q: What if the class or lab section I need is closed?

A: First, wait-list for the course on TOUR (web) or TUTOR (phone). Then send an e-mail or leave a written message for Marnie Mercado (mmercado@tulane.edu). List the course you are trying to get into, any sections which would fit your schedule, and your e-mail address and phone number. Please be sure to list all possible sections that will fit your schedule. Generally, upperclassmen (juniors and seniors) are given preference in upper-level laboratories.

Q: When will my laboratory class begin?

A: Most laboratory classes begin the 2nd week of the semester. An announcement may be made in the lecture portion of the course as to when labs will start. Also, information is sometimes posted at the beginning of the semester in the departmental office, on the syllabus on our website, and on the laboratory classroom doors. If you are unsure when your laboratory starts, check with the instructor.

Q: What if I have a question about a CELL course or the requirements for the CELL major?

A: See your CELL advisor (see Marnie Mercado if you need to be assigned an advisor). Major and minor requirements, course descriptions, and courses allowed from other departments are posted on our website (<http://cell.tulane.edu>) and outside the departmental office (2000 Stern). Questions about college degree requirements (humanities, foreign language, etc.) should be addressed to your college advisor.

Q: How do I transfer cell biology credits from another University to Tulane?

A: Submit a copy of the course description from the other university, a copy of the syllabus, a transfer credit approval form from your Dean, and a [CMB transfer credit request form](#). Omitting any of these will delay your request. Leave these four items with the office staff, and allow 3 or 4 working days for your request to be processed. After review, your materials will be available for pickup at the front desk during regular business hours. Submit the completed paperwork to the Registrar's office.

Q: I would like to be employed as a work-study student or as a student employee. What do I do?

A: Job opportunities in CMB labs are very limited. It is best to check for available positions at the beginning of the fall semester. See Marnie for job opportunities.

Q: Are there any internship opportunities for CMB students?

A: The Office of Service Learning sometimes has such opportunities; visit their website at <http://www.tulane.edu/~ServLrng/>.

Independent Study Information

Q: How do I register for an Independent Study, Special Projects, or Honors Thesis?

A: Complete an Independent Study Registration Form (available in the departmental office or at your Dean's office). You and your faculty sponsor will decide on a title for your project (except for first semester Honors Thesis, which has the title, "Honors Thesis" by default); be sure to include the title on your form. Have your faculty sponsor sign the form (Chair and Dean signatures are not required). Leave the section number blank. Write your phone number and e-mail address on the form, then give the completed form to the office staff.

Q: What is an independent study project?

A: An independent study project provides undergraduate students with the opportunity to participate in scientific research in a faculty laboratory. Such projects give students an opportunity to gain valuable "graduate level" experience; thus, undergraduates who plan to pursue graduate school are encouraged to participate in independent study.

Students registering for a 3-hour independent study project can expect to spend about 8-12 hours per week in the laboratory. At the end of the semester, you will submit a 7-12 page paper (including original data, background, materials and methods, results, discussion and references).

Q: What is not an independent study project?

A: Employment in a laboratory for which you receive compensation.

- Routine repetitive analysis, to benefit or support other laboratory members.
- Lab maintenance, such as washing glassware, preparing media, or running errands.

Q: How do I find a faculty member to sponsor me?

A: It is the student's responsibility to find a faculty member who will sponsor you. You might begin by approaching one of your instructors, or your CELL major advisor. You can also review the list of [faculty research](#) (available in the departmental office and on our website), to see if you are interested in a particular area of research currently being performed.

Students should be aware that space in faculty laboratories is limited. It is therefore strongly suggested that the student approach the faculty member well before the start of the semester, or in the prior semester.

Q: Can I complete an independent study project at the Tulane Health Sciences Center, or at another institution?

A: Students who wish to perform an independent study project at another institution must have two faculty sponsors: One at the host institution, and one in the Cell and Molecular Biology department (preferably the student's CELL advisor). The student must obtain prior approval from the CMB sponsor for the project. The CMB sponsor will communicate with the host institution sponsor to make sure that the work being performed meets our departmental requirements for independent study projects. Also, the grade for the project will be submitted by the CMB faculty sponsor, in consultation with the host institution sponsor.

At the beginning of the project, your host institution sponsor must submit, by letter or e-mail, a description of the project to your CMB sponsor. It is essential that your CMB sponsor and your host institution sponsor communicate with one another to evaluate your final work; otherwise, an incomplete grade may result.

Q: How do I register for an independent study project?

A: Once you have found a faculty sponsor, complete an Independent Study Form (available in the departmental office and at your Dean's office). You and your sponsor will decide on a title for your project, and on the number of credit hours to be earned (between 1 and 3 credits). Obtain your sponsor's signature on the form, and bring the form to the CMB departmental office.

To register for Independent Study with a non-CMB laboratory or supervisor, the student follows the same process as they would with a CMB faculty member. However, the student must obtain approval from both faculty sponsors, and both must sign the form.

Submit completed forms to the CMB office staff. Write your e-mail address and phone number on the form in case we have any questions about your project.

Q: What is an honors thesis?

A: All Cell and Molecular Biology majors who wish to graduate with Departmental Honors must complete an Honors Thesis. An Honors Thesis is a year-long research project conducted during the student's senior year. Students should select a thesis director and register for Honors Thesis at the beginning of the first semester of their senior year. By mid-semester, the student must submit a prospectus that has been approved and signed by the thesis director and a second reader. A first progress report, approved and signed by the thesis director and the second reader at the end of the first semester, indicates whether the thesis is to be continued or terminated. A second progress report is due in the middle of the second semester and a complete draft of the thesis is due a month before the projected date of graduation. Two weeks before graduation the thesis must be completed; the oral examination is held after all other requirements have been met.

Q: What is the capstone experience?

A: The Capstone Experience (3+ hours) is a requirement for every Tulane senior related to the student's major. The capstone experience allows a student to demonstrate the capacity to bring information, skills and ideas acquired from the major to bear on one significant project. Capstone experiences will be designed the departments within the schools.

A: What will satisfy the Cell and Molecular Biology capstone requirement?

Q: The capstone requirement can be fulfilled by CELL 491/492, Independent Studies or CELL 499/500, Honors Thesis. Forthcoming, CELL 424, Seminar on Morbidity and Mortality. 3.0 credit hours will satisfy this requirement.

Q: Must I be enrolled in the Tulane Honors Program in order to graduate with honors?

A: You do not have to be enrolled in the Honors program in order to receive Departmental Honors. For specific information about the requirements for graduating with Honors, please contact the Honors Program, 119 Norman Meyer Hall, 865-5517.

Q: Can I complete an honors thesis at the Tulane Medical Center, or at another institution?

A: Yes, however, students must adhere to the same guidelines as those given above for Independent Study projects.

Q: How do I register for an honors thesis?

A: Use the same registration procedures as above, for Independent Study. CELL 499 is the first semester of Honors Thesis, and CELL 500 is the second semester. The first semester title will be "Honors Thesis". The second semester title will be determined by you and your faculty sponsor.

Especially For Freshmen

Q: I'm an incoming freshman who is interested in majoring in Cell and Molecular Biology. Where can I find out more about the major? And what courses should I register for this fall?

A: Detailed information about our curriculum, courses offered, syllabi, faculty, and more can be found on our website, <http://cell.tulane.edu>. Most freshmen majoring in CELL take two semesters of General Chemistry with laboratory in their first year (CHEM 107/117, 108/118). Freshmen should also take CELL 101 during their freshman year, either in the fall or in the spring semester.

Q: I'm interested in entering medical school, dental school, or veterinary school. Where can I find information about pre-health course requirements? Also, what courses should I take during my first semester at Tulane?

A: The Office of the Pre-Health Advisor is an excellent resource for pre-health students. Their website, at <http://www.tulane.edu/~advisor/prehealth.html>, contains information about required courses, suggested courses to take each year, detailed information about what medical schools look for, and more. In particular, the sections on Scheduling Premedical Courses and Registration Questions and Answers are very helpful. Remember that the timelines shown are suggestions; there is some flexibility in scheduling courses.

Q: I see that it is suggested that I take CELL 101 and CELL 211 to satisfy part of my pre-health requirements. May I take them at the same time?

A: No. CELL 211, General Biology Laboratory, is designed for science majors and/or premedical students who already have completed the lecture course in General Biology (CELL 101).

Q: Do I have to take CELL 211 to satisfy my pre-health requirements?

A: Not necessarily. Please see #3, “what biology courses should I take”, in the “Registration Questions and Answers” portion of the Pre-health Advisor’s website, <http://www.tulane.edu/~advisor/prehealth.html>. Students majoring in Cell and Molecular Biology may satisfy their pre-health requirements by taking upper-level biology courses with labs.

Q: I have a score of 5 on my AP Biology exam. What courses will I be given credit for?

A: Students who receive a 5 on the AP Biology exam (or an IB score of 7) may receive credit for one of the following:

CELL 103 and CELL 106 (for non-majors; this set will satisfy the college laboratory science requirement)

OR

CELL 101 (introductory biology for majors/pre-health)

Students may wish to check with the Office of the Pre-Health Advisor when choosing which course(s) to receive credit for. Some medical schools prefer to see CELL 101 taken at the undergraduate institution, rather than as AP credit. Your Dean’s office will apply the credit you choose to your record. Students who receive an AP score of 5 (or an IB score of 7) may register for CELL 211 (contact Marnie Mercado (mmercado@tulane.edu), if assistance is needed).

Q: I have an AP score of 4 on the Biology exam. What courses will I be given credit for?

A: Students who receive a 4 on the AP Biology exam (or an IB score of 5 or 6) will be given credit for CELL 103 and CELL 106.

Q: I am eligible to register for CELL 211, but all of the sections are full. What should I do?

A: First, use TOUR or TUTOR to wait-list for the section you want. Then, send an e-mail to Marnie Mercado (mmercado@tulane.edu). Include your name, your student ID number, your phone number, and all sections of 211 which will fit your schedule.

Q: If I choose to major in CELL, do I need to take EBIO 101 and 111 in order to satisfy premedical requirements?

A: No. According to the Office of the Pre-health Advisor, “introductory courses are not required to meet major requirements in Biological Chemistry or Cell and Molecular Biology. Students in these areas will take two upper-level biology courses with labs to meet their major requirements.” Please see the Pre-Health Advisor for additional information. However, CELL majors can use the EBIO 101/111 set to satisfy one lecture elective towards the CELL major.

Q: If I choose to major in CELL, is CELL 211 required?

A: No, CELL 211 is not specifically required for the completion of the CELL major, but it may be used as one of the three laboratory electives required for the major.