



# University of Rochester Dean's Interview Weekend

A GUIDE FOR PROSPECTIVE INTERVIEWEES

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*Prepared by the Toxicology Ph.D. Program Director and  
Current Toxicology Graduate Students*



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## ***Director's Welcome Message***

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*Welcome and thank you for taking the time to explore opportunities in graduate training in Toxicology at the University of Rochester. Our mission is to educate and train the next generation of talented, independent toxicologists and environmental health scientists who are able to conduct innovative research and transform their findings into information that will be used to improve overall human health and well-being. Joining the Toxicology Program at University of Rochester opens doors to numerous exciting and rewarding career options. Indeed, our alumni hold leadership positions in academia, research institutes, government agencies, consultancies, and chemical and pharmaceutical companies.*



Alison Elder, Ph.D.  
Director, Toxicology Ph.D. Program



## ***Toxicology Ph.D. Program Introduction***

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Housed within the Department of Environmental Medicine, the Rochester [Toxicology Training Program](#)\* provides state-of-the-art, interdisciplinary graduate and postdoctoral training in the environmental health sciences and toxicology. It is one of the oldest (>45 years) and strongest research-oriented toxicology programs in the nation. We are ranked among the top 5 toxicology graduate programs in the country, according to the most recent National Academy of Science's NRC Assessment of Graduate Education (2011). While a doctorate in Toxicology is the program's only terminal degree, program trainees obtain a Master of Science in Toxicology upon the passing of their qualifying exam.

Program trainees work with a team of dedicated faculty who are internationally recognized, well-funded, and deeply committed to education and mentoring. Faculty research programs span the entire spectrum of toxicology from the molecular level to human populations. There are seven major [focus areas](#): Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Toxicology, Developmental & Reproductive Toxicology, Immunotoxicology, Molecular Modifiers of Disease, Neurotoxicology, Osteotoxicology, and Stem Cell Toxicology & Epigenetics. Many of the mentors in the training program are also members of the [Environmental Health Sciences Center \(EHSC\)](#) – an NIH-funded Center of Excellence – that is primarily focused on the impact of environmental toxicants on human health and disease across the lifespan.

The [combined resources](#) of the EHSC provide trainees with access to unique, state-of-the-art research infrastructure including the Inhalation Exposure, Behavioral Analysis, Epigenetics, and Elemental Analysis Facilities, all of which promote interdisciplinary, multi-directional translation of research findings. The Community Engagement Core facilitates communication between University research faculty and the larger community, thus enriching the experience for trainees. In addition to Center-specific research resources, program trainees also have access to [University-level research cores](#), e.g., flow cytometry, confocal microscopy, electron microscopy, genomics, and proteomics.

Outside of the laboratory, trainees have the opportunity to further their development and support. Within the Toxicology Ph.D. Program, there is an established peer-to-peer mentorship program, allowing for first year trainees to have a designated graduate student peer mentor. Furthermore, monthly social and service events are organized by current toxicology graduate students to foster a sense of camaraderie and support within the program. Beyond the program, the [Center for Professional Development](#) host frequent seminars and provide skill development, career planning, and writing resources for graduate students. Whereas, [UR BEST](#) is a NIH-funded program meant to support graduate and post-doctoral career preparedness by providing access to [career-specific training pathways](#).

\*On all pages, [text](#) indicates a hyperlink.



## ***URMC Diversity, Inclusion, and Support Resources***

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### *Department of Environmental Medicine Diversity and Inclusion Mission Statement*

*We are committed to creating and celebrating an inclusive work and learning environment that is diverse and culturally rich. We believe that individuals of differing backgrounds, colors, sexes, races, religions, sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, abilities, and other unique identifiers contribute knowledge and perspectives that are essential to our individual and collective successes. We strive to create an environment that supports and values different points of view, as diversity is pivotal to groundbreaking research and life-long learning. Because our work provides insight into how the environment affects health, we aim to inform environmental public health improvements, particularly for vulnerable communities. We will keep striving to be ever better, together.*

University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC) Department of Environmental Medicine Diversity and Inclusion: [www.urmc.rochester.edu/environmental-medicine/diversity-and-inclusion.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/environmental-medicine/diversity-and-inclusion.aspx)

The URMC provides a variety of diversity and inclusion resources for graduate students:

- UMRC Affinity Groups
  - Graduate Student Society (GSS):  
[www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/current-students/graduate-student-society.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/current-students/graduate-student-society.aspx)
  - Alliance for Diversity in Science and Engineering (ADSE):  
[www.rochester.edu/gradstudies/adse/](http://www.rochester.edu/gradstudies/adse/)
  - Graduate Women in Science:  
[www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/graduate-women-in-science.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/graduate-women-in-science.aspx)
  - Graduate Students of Color:  
[www.rochester.edu/college/kearnscenter/graduate/gsoc.html](http://www.rochester.edu/college/kearnscenter/graduate/gsoc.html)
  - Many others: [www.urmc.rochester.edu/inclusion-culture-development/urmc-groups.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/inclusion-culture-development/urmc-groups.aspx)
- LGBTQIA+ Resources
  - SPECTRUM: Affinity group for LGBTQIA+ medical and graduate students
  - Pride Alliance: [www.rochester.edu/diversity/staff/resourcegroups/pride/](http://www.rochester.edu/diversity/staff/resourcegroups/pride/)
  - Trans @ UR: [www.rochester.edu/sba/resources/trans-uofr/](http://www.rochester.edu/sba/resources/trans-uofr/)
  - URMC Faculty Out and Ally List: [www.urmc.rochester.edu/inclusion-culture-development/urmc-resources/urmc-faculty-out-and-ally-list.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/inclusion-culture-development/urmc-resources/urmc-faculty-out-and-ally-list.aspx)
- Graduate Student Support Systems
  - Ombudspersons Program: [www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/post-doctoral/ombudspersons.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/post-doctoral/ombudspersons.aspx)
  - CARE Program Overview: [www.rochester.edu/care/about.html](http://www.rochester.edu/care/about.html)
- Access Services and Support
  - Dedicated staff available to assist with requesting access services and support:  
[www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/post-doctoral/disability-supports-services.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/post-doctoral/disability-supports-services.aspx)



## ***Interview Weekend Schedule of Events\****

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### **Thursday**

#### **Evening:**

Welcome Dinner Reception

*The program coordinator and several of the current toxicology graduate students will be in attendance. Dress: Business casual*

### **Friday**

#### **Morning:**

Breakfast and Dean's Welcome

*Dress: Business casual/Smart casual*

Program Overview with Director, Alison Elder, Ph.D.

Morning Faculty Interviews

*Two 30-minute interviews.*

**Afternoon:** Lunch with current toxicology graduate students

Afternoon Faculty Interviews

*Three 30-minute interviews.*

Philosophy Meeting

*An optional, informal gathering of URMC graduate students and faculty. Drinks and finger food are provided.*

#### **Evening:**

Bowling

*Bar food and drinks will be available. Please bring your ID if drinking alcohol and please wear socks for bowling. Dress: Casual*

### **Saturday**

#### **Morning:**

Equity & Inclusion Breakfast

*Dress: Business casual*

**Afternoon:** Research Poster Session and Grazing Brunch

Driving Tour of Rochester

*If you have specific locations you are interested in seeing around Rochester, please let your toxicology graduate student driver know! This is a great opportunity to scope out potential housing options.*

#### **Evening:**

Recruitment Dinner

*Dinner is held at a faculty's house. Dress: Casual*

Night Out in Rochester

*An optional outing organized by the current toxicology graduate students.*

\*A more detailed schedule will be provided closer to the Interview Weekend.



## ***Interviewing Advice***

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### **Before the Interview**

- Review the documents you sent with your application as these will be the primary resource interviewers use to learn about you.
- Review basic information about the program as this will show that you have some invested interest in the program.
- Practice for the interview: Many universities offer mock interviews to both current students and alumni through student services or a career center.
- Dress for success: Make sure to dress in appropriate attire (business casual/smart casual) that is comfortable.
- If participating in a virtual interview, several additional steps should be considered:
  - Test and ensure you have a strong Wi-Fi connection.
  - Make sure the video platform works with your electronic device and that you know how to use the platform.
  - Choose a quiet, well-lit space for the interview. Keep the lighting and background environment as professional as possible. If unavoidable, consider using a professional background filter.

### **During the Interview**

- Introduce yourself to your interviewer: First impressions can influence the mood of the entire interview.
- Make eye contact and engage with your interviewer: This shows the interviewer that you are interested and paying attention in what they have to say.
- Do not fiddle with clothing or objects. A trick to avoid this would be to bring a small notebook and pen that you can hold. This not only gives your hands something to do but also allows for some notetaking.
- Stay calm: From the pool of applicants, YOU were chosen by the faculty to enter the interview phase. Although cliché, the faculty you will be meeting were once in your shoes, so they understand feeling nervous.

### **After the Interview**

- After the interview, send an email thanking each interviewer for taking the time to talk with you. Within this email, you could ask any follow-up questions as well.



## Living in Rochester

### Places to Live

- Common Housing for Toxicology Students – [1600 Elmwood Apartments\\*](#), [Clintwood Apartments](#), [Elmwood Manor Apartments & Townhouses\\*](#), [Elmwood Terrace Apartments & Townhomes\\*](#), Goler House\*, [Imperial South Apartments\\*](#), [Mount Hope Lofts at College Town\\*](#), [Rustic Village Apartments](#), and University Park\*
- University Housing Options – [Goler House](#), [University Park](#), and [Whipple Park Apartments](#)
- For Housing Assistance – contact [University of Rochester Office for Residential Life & Housing Services Off-Campus Housing](#) or the Toxicology Training Program Coordinator

\*Within walking distance to URMC

### Activities in Rochester

#### Food

- Try a Rochester famous garbage plate!
- Rochester’s local craft breweries: Swiftwater Brewing Company, Roc Brewing Co., and Genesee Brewing Company.
- If you prefer wine, head down to the Finger Lakes Region for a wine tour, such as the [Seneca Lake Wine Trail](#).
- The Pittsford Dairy offers great homemade ice cream year-round.
- The Neighborhood of the Arts (NOTA) and Park Ave Neighborhood are great places to shop and dine.
- For groceries, try the Rochester famous grocery chain Wegmans or head to the [Rochester’s Public Market](#) for some fresh, seasonal, and local produce.



<http://www.visitrochester.com/listings/rochester-public-market/252/>

#### Events

- From summer festivals to music and sports, check out the continually updated list of upcoming events in Rochester at [www.rochesterevents.com/](http://www.rochesterevents.com/).



<https://southhickory.com/news/area-activity-guide-park-ave-fest/>

#### Recreation

- [www.daytrippingroc.com/](http://www.daytrippingroc.com/) is a great resource for Rochester day trip ideas!
- Local museums: the Kodak/Eastman Museum, the Memorial Art Gallery (free with a UR Student ID), the Strasenburgh Planetarium, the Strong National Museum of Play, and the Rochester Museum and Science Center.
- To explore or expand your artistic side, try classes at Flower City Arts Center or the Rochester Brainery.
- Rochester contains many [parks](#) and [trails](#) that are perfect for running, [biking](#), hiking, and cross country skiing. Some local favorites are Highland Park, Mount Hope Cemetery, Cobb’s Hill Park, Erie Canal, Genesee Valley Park. Plus, just a short drive away are several great [New York State Parks](#), including Niagara Falls State Park, Letchworth State Park, Watkins Glen State Park, and Taughannock Falls State Park.



<https://www.newyorkbyrail.com/local-guide/highland-park-conservatory/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watkins\\_Glen\\_State\\_Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Watkins_Glen_State_Park)





## **Contact Information**

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### **Points of Contact**

- Alison Elder, Ph.D., Toxicology Ph.D. Program Director
  - Email: [Alison\\_Elder@URMC.Rochester.edu](mailto:Alison_Elder@URMC.Rochester.edu)
- Elizabeth (Lizzie) Williams-Velasquez, M.S., Toxicology Ph.D. Program Coordinator
  - Email: [Elizabeth\\_Williams-Velasquez@URMC.Rochester.edu](mailto:Elizabeth_Williams-Velasquez@URMC.Rochester.edu)
- All current toxicology graduate students' emails are available [online](#). Graduate students welcome any emails from prospective students.

### **Important Links**

- The University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry Graduate Education: [www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate.aspx)
- The University of Rochester Department of Environmental Medicine: [www.urmc.rochester.edu/environmental-medicine.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/environmental-medicine.aspx)
- The University of Rochester Toxicology Ph.D. Program: [www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/phd/toxicology.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/phd/toxicology.aspx)
- URM C Office for Inclusion and Culture:
  - Homepage: [www.urmc.rochester.edu/inclusion-culture-development.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/inclusion-culture-development.aspx)
  - URM C Groups: [www.urmc.rochester.edu/inclusion-culture-development/urmc-groups.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/inclusion-culture-development/urmc-groups.aspx)
  - URM C Resources: [www.urmc.rochester.edu/inclusion-culture-development/urmc-resources.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/inclusion-culture-development/urmc-resources.aspx)
- URM C Graduate Student Trainee Handbook: [www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/trainee-handbook/graduate-students.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/trainee-handbook/graduate-students.aspx)
- Toxicology Graduate Student Trainee Handbook: [www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/phd/toxicology/curriculum.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/phd/toxicology/curriculum.aspx)

### **Toxicology Ph.D. Program Social Media Accounts**

- [Facebook](#)
  - Handle: @URMCToxicology
- [Instagram](#)
  - Handle: @urmctoxicology
- [Twitter](#)
  - Handle: @urmctoxicology
- Toxicology Ph.D. Student Perspectives
  - [www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/phd/toxicology/faculty-students/student-perspectives.aspx](http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/phd/toxicology/faculty-students/student-perspectives.aspx)