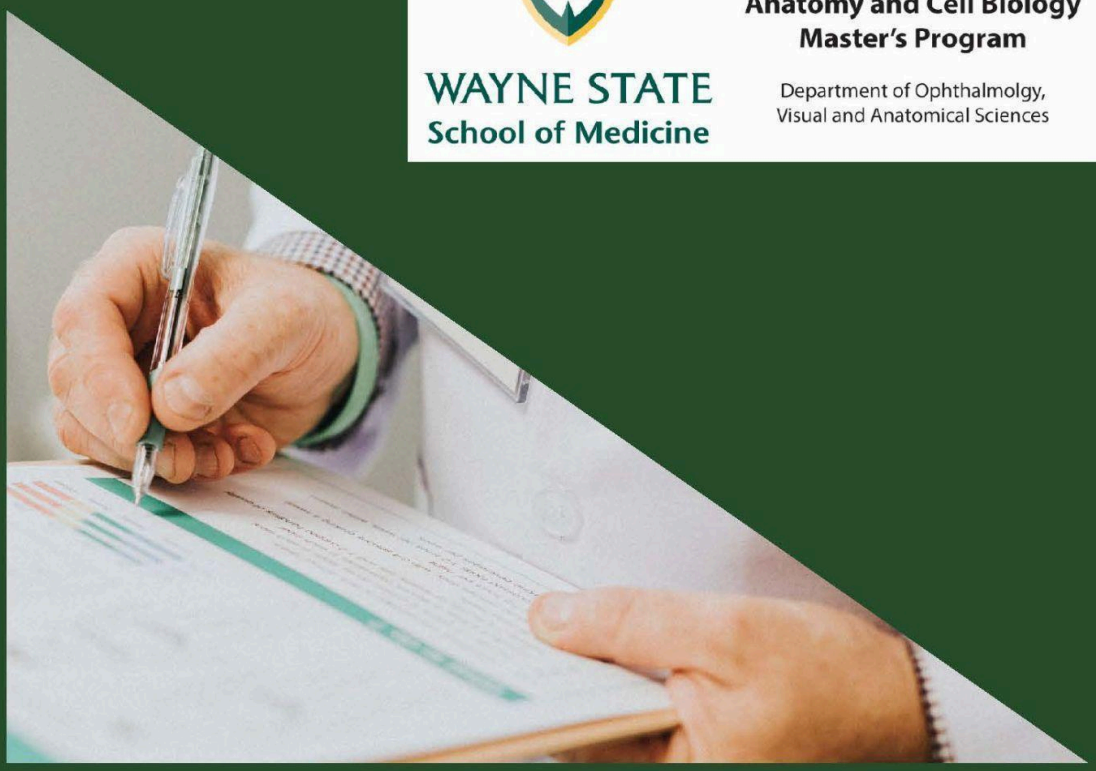
2025-2026

WAYNE STATE
School of Medicine

Anatomy and Cell Biology
Master's Program

Department of Ophthalmolgy,
Visual and Anatomical Sciences



MASTER OF SCIENCE

in Anatomy and Cell Biology

Department of Ophthalmology, Visual and Anatomical Sciences (OVAS)

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Useful Weblinks: http://wayne.edu/gradschool/ provides important information on all graduate degree requirements.

Current Training Faculty

Name	Email	Phone	Lab/Office	Track
Elizabeth (Beth) Berger, PhD	eberger@med.wayne.edu	7-0286	8263 Scott Hall	R/E
Bruce Berkowitz, PhD	baberko@med.wayne.edu	7-9035	7339 Scott Hall	R
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Ryan Insolera, PhD	rinsolera@wayne.edu	7-4093	9327 Scott Hall	R
Renu Kowluru, PhD	rkowluru@med.wayne.edu	3-6714	K-404 (KEI)	R
Ashok Kumar, PhD	akuma@med.wayne.edu	7-7922	K-417 (KEI)	R
Michael Landowski, PhD	hx3376@wayne.edu	TEAMS	9304 Scott Hall	R
Alju Simon, MS	hi7343@wayne.edu	7-5511	8275A Scott Hall	E
Nikhlesh Singh, PhD	nsingh2@wayne.edu	7-5442	3414 IBio	R
Susmit Suvas, PhD	ssuvas@med.wayne.edu	7-9820	7223 Scott Hall	R
Ryan Thummel, PhD	rthummel@med.wayne.edu	7-7762	8327 Scott Hall	R/E
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Shunbin Xu, PhD	sxu@med.wayne.edu	7-1061	8137 Scott Hall	R
Fu-Shin Yu, PhD	fyu@med.wayne.edu	7-1657	K-417 (KEI)	R

TEAMS: this PI can only be reached by calling through Microsoft Teams

Track Key:
R = Research Track Mentor
E = Education Track Mentor

Mission Statement

The Master of Science (MS) Program in Anatomy & Cell Biology is dedicated to preparing graduate students for careers in research and teaching across diverse fields, including anatomy, visual science, and neuroscience. The program aims to:

- Equip students with strong foundational knowledge in biomedical science.
- Develop expertise in multiple sub-disciplines within anatomy and cell biology.
- Foster proficiency in advanced instruction of anatomy-related courses.
- Cultivate competence in a wide range of experimental techniques.
- Enhance the ability to critically analyze and interpret current scientific literature.
- Provide hands-on experience in the design and implementation of experiments to test specific hypotheses.

This program serves post-baccalaureate students with the potential to excel as independent researchers, educators at the highest academic levels, or candidates for advanced professional degrees, such as MD, DDS, or other healthcare-related programs.

Learning Outcomes

1. **Subject Mastery:** Demonstrate comprehensive understanding of all subject material covered in the program curriculum and thesis project.
2. **Ethical Scholarship:** Conduct scholarly activities in an ethical manner, following the principles of the scientific process.
3. **Effective Communication:** Communicate scientific concepts and findings effectively in written and oral formats to diverse audiences.
4. **Original Contribution:** Produce and successfully defend an original and significant contribution to scientific knowledge.

Program Description

The Anatomy & Cell Biology MS program offers two distinct tracks: The **Research Track** which is designed for students seeking specialized training and skills in vision science or neuroscience. The **Teaching Track** focused on preparing students to formally instruct anatomy-related courses in higher education, including human gross anatomy, histology/embryology, and neuroanatomy.

Both tracks require a minimum of 32 credits and are generally completed within two years. Each student will conduct thesis research under the mentorship of a faculty advisor within their chosen track, culminating in the oral defense of a written thesis.

Curriculum Requirements

Each track features a well-defined curriculum to provide students with an immersive, hands-on experience. Each program requires a minimum of 32 credit hours, completed over two years, culminating in a capstone Master’s Thesis Research experience.

Research Track Requirements: Whether the student chooses to focus on a Vision Science or Neuroscience subspecialty, completion of core courses, seminar, research rotations, and research are required, as detailed below. Optional electives are available, as well.

* required for Vision Science Track
† required for Neuroscience Track
‡ waiver required for enrollment

Fall Semester – Year 1 (minimum 8 credits)

MGG 7010	Molecular Biology and Genetics (4 credits)
ANA 7996	Research Rotations (1-3 credits)
ANA 7890	Seminar (0-1 credit)
Optional:	
ANA 7055	Biology of the Eye (3 credits)
ANA 7030	Human Microscopic Anatomy (4 credits)

Winter Semester – Year 1 (minimum 8 credits)

ANA 7890	Seminar (0-1 credit)
ANA 7065*	Mechanisms of Ocular Disease (2 credits)
ANA 7130†	Neuroanatomy (4 credits)
ANA 7996	Research (1-6 credits)
Optional:	
IBS 7050‡	Biomedical Neurobiology (2 credits)
IBS 7090‡	Biomedical Immunology (2 credits)
IBS 7030‡	Functional Genomics and Systems Biology (2 credits)
IBS 7130‡	Systems Neuroscience: Structure and Function of the Nervous System (2 credits)
ANA 7130	Neuroanatomy (4 credits)
PYC 7010	Neurobiology I (3 credits)

Spring/Summer Semester – Year 1 (0 - 2 credits)

ANA 7996	Research (0-2 credits)

Fall Semester – Year 2 (minimum 8 credits)

GS 0900	Essential Research Practices: Responsible Conduct of Research (0 credits)
ANA 8999	Master's Thesis Research and Direction (1-8 credits)
ANA 7890	Seminar (0-1 credit)
Optional:	
FPH 7015	Biostatistics I (3 credits)
ANA 7075*	Mechanisms of Ocular Disease II (2 credits)

Winter Semester – Year 2 (minimum 8 credits)

ANA 8999	Master's Thesis Research and Direction (1-8 credits)
ANA 7890	Seminar (0-1 credit)
Optional:	
FPH 7020	Biostatistics II (3 credits)
IBS 7110‡	Introduction to the Business of Biotechnology (3 credits)

Total minimum credits = 32

Education Track Requirements: For the Education Track, core courses are paired with credits for Special Dissection (ANA 7260), Special Projects (ANA 7270), research, and seminar.

Fall Semester – Year 1 (12 credits)

ANA 7010	Human Gross Anatomy (8 credits)
ANA 7030	Human Microscopic Anatomy (4 credits)
ANA 7890	Seminar (0 credit)

Winter Semester – Year 1 (8 credits)
ANA 7130 Neuroanatomy (4 credits)
ANA 7260 Special Dissection (4 credits)
ANA 7890 Seminar (0 credit)

Spring/Summer Semester – Year 1 (0 - 2 credits)
ANA 7260 Special Dissection (2 credits)

Fall Semester – Year 2 (8 credits)
ANA 7270 Special Projects in Anatomy (4 credits)
ANA 8999 Master's Thesis Research and Direction (2 4 credits)
ANA 7890 Seminar (0 -2 credit)
GS 0900 Essential Research Practices: Responsible Conduct of Research (0 credits)

Winter Semester – Year 2 (4 - 6 credits)
ANA 7270 Special Projects in Anatomy (2 credits)
ANA 8999 Master's Thesis Research and Direction (2 - 4 credits)
ANA 7890 Seminar (0 credit)

Total minimum credits = 32

Progression through the ACB MS Program

The MS program in Anatomy & Cell Biology provides checklists for both the Research and Education Tracks to guide the students successfully through the program. Respective outlines for each track follow:

Research Track: During Year 1, students officially select three lab rotations, which must be finalized by **September 15** by submitting the *Selected Rotations Form*. Given the quick timeline, students are strongly encouraged to research potential labs of interest before matriculation. Each rotation lasts ~4 weeks, allowing students to explore the diverse research areas and techniques while identifying a lab that aligns with their interests. Students can officially select a lab after two rotations by submitting an *Advisor Agreement Form* by **January 15**.

Once the lab is chosen, students will develop a *Research Proposal and Timeline* outlining the scientific premise, proposed specific aims/goals, and expected timeline. This proposal, due by **February 1**, sets the stage for their research journey. Shortly afterward, students work with their advisor to establish a thesis advisory committee, which will consist of the faculty advisor and two additional faculty members. Although not a requirement, a single committee member may be from an outside (external) department. It is the student's responsibility to formally request each faculty member to join their committee. Once the committee is established, the *Thesis Advisory Committee Formation Form* must be submitted by **March 1**.

As part of the program, students will meet quarterly with their advisory committee to ensure progress and receive feedback. Meetings that will be formally recorded using the *Quarterly Advisory Committee Meeting Form* with the following deadlines:

Meeting #1 - April 1 (Year 1)
Meeting #2 - July 1 (Year 1)
Meeting #3 - October 1 (Year 2)
Meeting #4 - January 1 (Year 2)

During the first year, a *Plan of Work* must also be submitted to the Office of Research and Graduate Programs of the School of Medicine by **February 15**. This formal document outlines the planned coursework that satisfies the program's 32 credit minimum. The Plan of Work requires the approval of the advisor and MS Program Director, who will help each student develop the plan.

The summer term is an opportunity for focused research efforts. Students and their advisors will complete the *Summer Research Expectations Form*, submitted by **June 1**, and assess the summer's outcome using the *Summer Research and Timeline Assessment Form*, due by **August 15**.

During Year 2, the remaining two quarterly meetings will take place, culminating in a decision to approve or delay writing the MS Thesis. By January 1, students and their committees will decide whether the thesis is ready to proceed by submitting the *Formal Approval/Delay to Write MS Thesis* form by **January 1**. This will be followed by submitting the *Formal Approval/Delay to Defend MS Thesis* due **April 1**, with the expectation that the MS Thesis Defense is held before the end of April. The final step is to submit the *MS Thesis Defense Assessment Form* by **May 1**.

Education Track: This track begins with hands-on shadowing experiences. During the Fall of Year 1, students shadow a minimum of four (4) instructors across ANA 7010 Human Gross Anatomy (2 labs) and ANA 7030 Human Microscopic Anatomy (3 labs). By **September 15**, students submit the *Shadowing Selection Form - Fall*. During the Winter of Year 1, students will shadow a minimum of three (3) instructors within ANA 7130 Neuroanatomy (2 labs) and ANA 7010 Human Gross Anatomy (2 labs), with the *Shadowing Selection Form - Winter* due by **December 15**.

Students also develop a *Plan of Work*, outlining the coursework required to meet the 32-credit minimum. This plan is submitted to the Office of Research and Graduate Programs of the School of Medicine by **December 15**, with guidance and approval from the MS Program Director.

Students officially select an education advisor, submitting the *Advisor Agreement Form* by **April 1**. A *Research Proposal and Timeline* is then developed, due by **April 15**. This form will provide the overall layout of the research project, including the scientific premise, proposed specific aims/goals, and expected timeline. Students form a thesis advisory committee with their advisor, consisting of the faculty advisor and two additional faculty members. Although not a requirement, a single committee member may be from an outside (external) department. It is the student's responsibility to formally request each faculty member to join their committee. Once the committee is established, the *Thesis Advisory Committee Formation Form* must be submitted by **May 1**.

There will be quarterly advisory committee meetings that will be formally recorded using the *Quarterly Advisory Committee Meeting Form* with the following deadlines:

Meeting #1 - June 1 (Year 1)
Meeting #2 - October 1 (Year 2)
Meeting #3 - January 1 (Year 2)

As students prepare for their teaching roles, they choose (pending course director approval) between Gross Anatomy Labs or Histology Labs for their Special Projects in Anatomy course. The *Graduate Teaching Assistant Form* is submitted by **April 1**.

The *Summer Research Expectations Form* will be completed by students with their advisor by **June 1** to clearly define expectations for continued progress toward the capstone research project. Upon completion of the summer term, a *Summer Research and Timeline Assessment Form* will be submitted by **August 15**.

Year 2 focuses on completing research, teaching assignments, and thesis preparation. The remaining two quarterly meetings will be held, with the final meeting determining whether the student is ready to write their thesis. The *Formal Approval/Delay to Write MS Thesis* form must be submitted by **January 1**, followed by the *Formal Approval/Delay to Defend MS Thesis* by **April 1**. The program concludes with the MS Thesis Defense, expected by the end of April, and submission of the *MS Thesis Defense Assessment Form* by **May 1**.

Opportunities to Develop Presentation Skills

Departmental Seminar: Students are required to attend departmental seminars with the expectation of meaningful interaction as outlined in the syllabus. The departmental seminar series usually runs from September through May and is held in the OVAS Library (8366 Scott Hall) or virtually on Thursdays at 12p EST.

Vision Research Workshop: This is an annual conference, typically held in October, aimed to highlight trainees in the OVAS department who are working on vision research. It also provides opportunities for professional development and networking.

Translational Focus Groups: There are three translational focus groups in the department - Retina: Development, Function and Restoration (contact: Dr. Zhuo-Hua Pan); Ocular Infection/Inflammation (contact: Dr. Fu-Shin Yu); and Translational Approaches to Vascular and Neurological Diseases (contact: Dr. Renu Kowluru). These groups meet monthly and include both basic science and clinical faculty.

Graduate Student Research Presentation Day: All graduate students are encouraged to present their research in poster or oral format at the annual WSU Graduate Student Research Day, held in September at the School of Medicine. Participation in this event is important in the overall training experience offered by all MS and PhD programs at the School of Medicine. For more information: GSRPD

Graduate Research Symposium: All graduate students are encouraged to present their research in a poster or oral format at the annual WSU Graduate Research Symposium, held in February on the University's Main Campus. Participation in this event is important to “showcase” the overall scholarly activity and creativity of graduate students across the University campus. For more information: Graduate Research Symposium

Medical Education Research And Innovation Conference: This annual conference showcases completed and in-progress medical education research and innovation projects conducted by students, residents, staff, and faculty. Topics are related to the learning process within a medical education setting, including learner characteristics, optimizing the learning process, assessment and evaluation, professional development, instruction design, technology in the learning environment, well-being, and innovative curricula addressing current issues within medical education. For more information: MERI

Preparing for the Written MS Thesis

Following the formal approval to write an MS Thesis, the student should:

1. Meet with your advisor to plan the outline of the written thesis as well as the structure of the thesis committee.

    a) The Thesis Proposal contains the following information:

- Scientific Background of the Project
- Central Hypothesis/Description of Problem and Specific Aims
- Experimental Design & Methods
- Primary Outcomes/Data & Significance
- Future Directions

The document must reflect the student's comprehensive understanding of the overall project and is developed in close collaboration with their advisor. Depending on the track, the central focus may be either hypothesis-driven or centered on addressing a critical need. Adjustments to the outlined structure may be warranted depending on the specific nature of the study. The document is typically 20-30 pages long and should not exceed 50 pages, excluding references.

2. Once the initial draft of the written document is complete, submit it to your advisor for review. Students should allow approximately one month for the review process, as it may take several revisions to refine the document and gain your advisor's approval.

3. When your advisor approves the final written document, submit it to the committee.

4. One week after submission, the committee will either formally approve or delay the defense of the MS Thesis.
    a) If approved, the student will schedule the oral presentation before May 1.

    b) If delayed, the student should anticipate extending their timeline by one semester, with the defense scheduled by the end of the Spring/Summer Term. The first step is to schedule a meeting with each committee member to discuss their comments and suggestions then make the necessary revisions. Once the revisions are made, the student should schedule an oral defense by July 1.

Preparing for the Oral Defense of the MS Thesis

The public oral defense of the MS Thesis should be completed before the end of Year 2 of the program. Following approval to defend, it is expected that the MS Thesis Defense will take place before the end of April.

The oral examination consists of a 40-45 min presentation followed by 60-90 minutes of committee questions based on the written document and oral presentation. The defense will be conducted in the presence of the public, the student's MS committee, and the MS Program Director, who will serve as the Moderator. Another member of the MS Committee can substitute if the MS Program Director is unavailable.

1. **Meet with your advisor** to plan the outline of your oral seminar. The seminar should cover the scientific background and rationale of the project, including the specific aims, experimental design, preliminary studies, and predicted outcomes.

2. **Contact each committee member and MS Program Director** to coordinate schedules and find open dates for the exam. Also contact Selina Hall in the departmental office to reserve the conference room and create a public announcement of the defense.

3. **Construct and rehearse a 40-45 min PowerPoint presentation** that will serve as the oral seminar for your MS Thesis defense. Rehearse the presentation with your advisor and other colleagues, and ask for sample questions from the audience to test your knowledge.

4. **Send reminder emails to the committee members** one (1) week prior to the defense, confirming the date and time.

Note: The oral presentation will be immediately followed by a ~15-minute public question & answer session. After the public questions, the public will be dismissed, and a private Q&A session will begin with the committee and the student. Afterward, the committee will briefly deliberate while the student is excused to determine if sufficient mastery of the scientific background, experimental design, and methods of their research project has been demonstrated based on the oral presentation and response to committee questions.

If the student passes the exam, the committee will sign the oral defense form, which will be submitted to the Office of Research and Graduate Programs in the School of Medicine.

If the student fails the exam, a second attempt will be scheduled at a later time, but not within the same semester as the first attempt. Failure to pass on the second attempt will result in dismissal from the program.

Guidelines for Thesis Advisory Committee Meetings

The purpose of the thesis advisory committee is to offer a wide range of faculty expertise, providing ideas and suggestions that will support the progression and successful completion of the MS thesis project. Students are required to meet with their thesis committee as outlined for each respective track above.

Format for the Thesis Committee Meeting

It is the student's responsibility to schedule each thesis committee meeting before the stated deadlines. Each meeting will include a student oral presentation (PowerPoint) that provides an update on the specific aims of the research project (Research Track) or research topic (Education Track), followed by results obtained from each specific aim.

After the student's presentation, each thesis committee member will have an opportunity to offer comments and suggestions aimed at strengthening the project. The MS Program Director will take detailed notes on these suggestions during the meeting, which will be referred to in future meetings.

During the meeting, the advisor should not speak on behalf of the student. The advisor's role is to ensure that committee suggestions remain focused on the project's scope and to inform the committee whether the suggestions are feasible within a reasonable time frame, ensuring the successful completion of the project.

All subsequent meetings should focus on the progress of the project, with the student presenting their results in PowerPoint format at each meeting. If significant changes are made to the project beyond the original project description, the student should provide an update on these changes, as well.

How to Act Upon Committee Suggestions

The student is expected to act upon the committee's suggestions in consultation with the advisor. The student and advisor may decide jointly that certain suggestions should be incorporated into the project, while others may be rejected. Under circumstances of rejection, the student must convey the rationale for

rejection in writing (email is acceptable) to the committee. Sample reasons include feasibility problems or detraction from the original specific aims of the project. If the rationale for rejecting a suggestion is not considered acceptable by committee members, the MS Program Director will review this decision and resolve the issue.

Thesis Committee Meeting Report

During the meeting, the MS Program Director records committee suggestions on a departmental *MS Thesis Committee Meeting Report* form. This form serves as written documentation of the suggestions that must or may be addressed at future committee meetings. The *Formal Approval/Delay to Write MS Thesis* should be used as the final report before the writing phase of the MS Thesis.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes (LO)

Assessment of LO1: Demonstrate mastery of all subject material related to the program curriculum and thesis project.

- Mastery of the program curriculum will be assessed by grades obtained in each course.
- Mastery of the research area and thesis project will be evaluated by the thesis advisor, during thesis committee meetings, and at the final thesis defense.
- The ability to critically read and evaluate pertinent literature will be assessed through participation in the departmental seminar course, journal clubs, and quarterly meetings.

Assessment of LO2: Produce original significant contributions and effectively communicate scientific material formally in both written and oral formats.

- The ability to formally present scientific material will be assessed through internal and/or external conference presentations, journal club presentations, thesis committee meetings, and the final thesis defense. The thesis advisor and committee will assess the quality of the presentations and proficiency of the student.
- Proficiency in scientific writing will be assessed based on the quality and clarity of abstract submissions, original research publications, and the final thesis document.
- The primary advisor will complete a series of evaluations documenting the student's progress on the thesis project and any relevant honors or awards that align with the student's professional career path.

Assessment of LO3: Conduct scholarly activities in an ethical manner, following the principles of the scientific process.

- Mandatory enrollment in BMS6010: Responsible Conduct in Biomedical Research.
- Plagiarism will be monitored through Unicheck for written documents produced by the student.
- Students will demonstrate appropriate use of the scientific method and the proper use of statistics in biological research, as assessed by the thesis advisor and committee members.

Academic Standing

Students must maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher to remain in good academic standing and continue in the ACB MS program. If the overall GPA drops below the 3.0 threshold, the student will have one “probationary” semester to bring their overall GPA above the 3.0 threshold. If the overall GPA does not meet the 3.0 requirement after the probationary semester, the student will be unable to continue in the program.

Any grade below a 3.0 in a required course (listed above) is considered insufficient and will necessitate retaking the course. In this case, the timeline of completion of the MS program will need to be adjusted to accommodate retaking of the course.

Linkage Agreement

The Anatomy & Cell Biology MS program offers pre-professionals rigorous graduate training for careers in healthcare and biomedical sciences. Many students in the program aim to pursue medical school and to support this goal, a linkage agreement has been established with Wayne State University School of Medicine (WSUSOM). Students who meet specific GPA, MCAT, professionalism, and course requirements - after completing the first year’s 16 credits of the program’s coursework - are granted an interview for admission to WSUSOM. Please contact the MS program director for additional details.

Student Academic Success Services

Health and wellness are important aspects of student academic success. Students are encouraged to achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle through student health services offered by WSU. Student Affairs promotes and enhances student personal health and wellness. Numerous services are offered, including Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and Title IX Sexual Misconduct support.

Leave of absence: A student may request a leave of absence (LOA) for personal or medical reasons. A formal written request for a LOA must be made to the MS Program Director. All LOAs are part of the student’s official record. The leave type and start/end dates are entered into the WSU information system and recorded on the official transcript. Once the MS Program Director approves a LOA, there is a reasonable expectation that the student will return to the MS program. Once placed on leave, a student remains on leave until approved to return and resume coursework. Students placed on a LOA will be considered withdrawn from coursework. A LOA does not retroactively nullify course failure.

Personal Leave of Absence (PLOA): Approval of PLOA is discretionary by the MS Program Director and will only be granted where reasonably necessary and in collaboration with the student’s mentor. A student’s written request should specify the beginning and end dates of the leave. To return from an approved PLOA, the student must confirm the expected return date outlined in the leave letter before returning to their studies.

Medical Leave of Absence (MLOA): A student’s written request for a medical LOA requires authorization from a licensed healthcare professional certified to treat the specific illness, indicating that the student is unable to perform the functions and responsibilities of their MS studies for a specified period of time. The certification letter must state the beginning and end dates for which the MLOA is deemed medically necessary. To return from an approved MLOA, the student's healthcare provider must affirm in writing that

the student is fit to return to their MS studies. Such notification must be received as outlined in the leave letter before the anticipated return to school. Health providers who are family members may not provide the certification letter.

Scholarships: A limited number of **partial** competitive scholarships may be available to assist with costs for tuition and fees. Please contact the MS program director for further information on the availability of these funds for each semester.

In addition, applicants intending to apply for Wayne State University's Graduate School scholarships (Scholarships and awards - Graduate School - Wayne State University) must submit their admissions application by **March 1** to allow review of application prior to scholarship deadlines. Wayne State University's Graduate School scholarship applications are due in March and April for financial support the following Fall. Some Graduate School scholarship applications must be submitted while your ACB MS application is under review, and can be fulfilled upon acceptance into the graduate program (see linked website above)