Guidelines for graduate student 4th rotation: Guidelines for Students.

CSD and other graduate students typically do three lab rotations and consult with rotation advisors to decide on which laboratory to pursue their thesis work. Sometimes, none of the three labs will be suitable for the student. In this case, the student can do a 4th rotation over the summer, after the preliminary exam. However, the 4th rotation is unique in several ways:

1. A 4th rotation lab is usually the only choice a student will have for a thesis lab, though it might also be appropriate if:
   a. the student has a preferred lab but that lab is waiting on June-August funding decision,
   b. the student has a potential lab, but has strong interest in a 4th lab,
   c. other unforeseen circumstances.

2. Graduate school rules stipulate that students who cannot find a lab by the beginning of their second year will be dismissed from the program. Therefore a 4th rotation is usually a ‘do-or-die’ endeavor.

3. Because a 4th rotation is usually a ‘do-or-die’ endeavor, the student must interview with the prospective fourth rotation advisor as if they were applying for a job (e.g. a postdoc). The object is for both the student and the prospective mentor to determine whether this is a good match for pursuing PhD thesis work, and to agree on expectations BEFORE starting the rotation. Acceptance of the student for a 4th rotation is a commitment by the advisor to accept the student into the lab, provided that clearly stated expectations are met (see below).

4. 4th rotations require approval of the GAC and program director and must have a strong, clearly stated rationale (see below).

The process to be followed by the student:
It is strongly advised that the student consider several labs to find the best possible match. Considerations include interest in the science, compatibility of mentoring style with student’s needs, as well as space, funding, etc. This is very similar to what graduating PhD students do when applying and choosing postdoc labs. Use these specific guidelines:

1. Prior approval of the GAC and CSD program director is required before pursuing a 4th rotation.

2. Before beginning serious discussions with any potential 4th rotation advisor, the student should:
   a. identify several possible labs,
   b. find out if they have money, space, and interest in accepting a PhD student,
   c. carefully and fully investigate the science.

3. The student should inform the GAC of possible labs, so that the GAC can send 4th rotation guidelines to potential mentors.

4. The student should formally interview with the potential mentor(s) to determine if there is sufficient mutual interest in working together and to determine specific expectations.
5. The student should also meet with current and prior lab personnel, to determine if the lab environment and mentoring style is suitable.

6. **BEFORE committing to a 4th rotation the student must be sure that the following requirements are met.**
   a. The 4th rotation faculty advisor must have the space, funding for and interest in training a graduate student for their PhD thesis.
   b. The student must not be competing for a position with any other personnel (e.g. other student, postdoc candidates, or other lab personnel). For example, if the PI wishes to take on two 4th rotation students (from any program), they must be able, interested, and willing to take both.
   c. The student must discuss expectations of the faculty advisor, and must receive a written document stating specific expectations of the student for the 4th rotation.
   d. The faculty advisor should agree to accept the student into the lab provided that these clearly stated expectations are met during the rotation. Note that if expectations are not met, the faculty advisor may elect to not take on the student.
   e. The student receives final approval of the GAC for the negotiated 4th rotation.