Potential Questions
to ask when interviewing a lab group/ advisor

1. Are there positions available in the lab? How many?

2. (Advisor Tenure and Academic Position) Does the advisor have tenure? If not, do they for see having to leave? What is their ‘pedigree’ and/or connections/collaborations? Number of papers published and where?

3. (Average GS Tenure) What is the longest, shortest, average time (years) for graduate students in the group to acquire a PhD degree?

4. (Advisor’s Personality) How approachable is the advisor when there are problems (both research and school related, as well as personal). What is the managing style of the advisor? Best/worst quality

5. (Advisor Involvement) How involved is the advisor in directing the graduate students’ studies and/or supervising the lab? What type of involvement is provided? Amount of help and/or independence is given to the students? Frequencies and type of groups meetings and/or subgroup meetings. Time abilities for questions and/or problems. Best/worst quality.

6. (Advisor Expectations) What are the advisors expectations? In terms of research progress, work policies (hours spent in lab, group meetings, vacations, holidays, illnesses), requirements for graduation (key element that should be required), paper publications requirements, teaching requirements, flexibility in terms of work hours (specified hours or personalized schedules) and/or progress,

7. (Lab Space and Equipment). How occupied and stocked is the lab. Does each student have their own hood/bench, what things are shared, what status of the types of instruments or amount of equipment the lab has (collaborations with others groups).

8. (Funding). Is the lab well funded? What are the grants (how many) and how long will they last? Will you be expected to teach or be funded for the majority of your graduate time? What are the policies for summer funding? What is the average number of semesters group members teach?

9. (Publications) What is the publishing frequency of the group and it’s importance and connection to the progress and success of the student/group/research? What is the average number of papers students have by the time they graduate? What types of journals? Length of papers?

10. (Group Environment) How does the group interact – both socially and professionally. How are problems resolved? Working Atmosphere: sharing of space, ideas, equipment; amount of help received? Camaraderie, Philosophies.
11. (Project) Who or how is a project chosen or decided upon? What are the current projects, future projects? What are the projects from which to chose? Starting a new project or new independent ideas? What is the easiest/hardest transition upon joining the group?

12. What are the requirements to join the lab group? What are the initial expectations after joining?

13. How many students from a particular lab has left the labs and/or program? For what reasons?

14. (Rotations) Can you do rotations in a few groups if you are trying to decide between groups?

15. What is the typical day for first, second, third, fourth (etc) year group member?

16. After joining the group, when do you start research?

17. How many members are in your lab? Number of undergrads, post-docs? Level of interaction with undergrads and/or post-docs?

18. (Leaving a Group, Changing Projects) If you join a lab and later find out you either dislike the project, the group, or the advisor are there options to switch projects and/or groups?