

## Graduate Student Advising Statement

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I am providing you with this statement of advising philosophy to enhance communication and transparency in our working relationship. It is intended to be an outline that will inform, and be informed by, our ongoing interactions. It is not intended to be a set of rigid requirements, and may be updated as necessary. Finally, it is not meant as a substitute for existing program, departmental, or university policy. It is your responsibility to be aware of such policies as applicable, and I will gladly direct you to the relevant resources.

### Mentoring Philosophy

**My mentoring philosophy is founded on the idea that the graduate-advisor academic relationship should be a mutually beneficial experience.** I rely on my students' productivity and intellectual development to move research in the lab forward, and to provide the research "product" (in the form of papers and meeting presentations) necessary to maintain funding. In turn, it is my responsibility to provide the training they need to become great scientists in their own right, including experience in research, teaching, service/advocacy, and clinical work, as appropriate. I believe open communication about each of our goals and expectations is the best way to form a successful and fruitful professional relationship.

My job as an advisor is to provide you with the tools you need to be successful in your chosen career. I recognize that there is individual variability among my students in their backgrounds, aspirations, talents, progress, and accomplishments. My goal is to work with you to maximize your individual strengths and to help you develop the skills to succeed in your career. This may include things that you may not be enthusiastic about at the time, but hopefully will come to see as necessary in the future. I will support you in whatever career path you select, whether it is academic or not. I realize that career paths change through graduate school, and advisees should feel welcome to bring up the issue whenever needed.

I expect my trainees to be ambitious and work hard, but it should come from a perspective of pushing your limits and exploring what you are capable of. Managing your motivation and work habits while integrating interests and commitments outside of work is a key self-leadership skill that will serve you well throughout your career, and now is a great time to build that skill. However, productivity should never come at the cost of your well-being. Your mental and physical health are by far the most important consideration in all that you do while in the lab. Moreover, success should not come at the cost of maintaining healthy relationships in your life. In fact, you are more likely to be successful if you take care of yourself and give time to the things outside of work that matter to you.

### Lab Policies

#### Working hours

I do not set strict working hours for my trainees and staff; however, you are expected to work 'full-time' and to use your time productively. For example, based on a course-load of 15 PhD research credits, 'full-time' is at least 45 hours per week devoted to research endeavors, including bench work, writing, reading papers, etc. Rotation students are expected to spend 10-15 active hours in the lab. It is expected that PhD and MS students still taking required or elective courses will accordingly spend less time in lab.

I highly recommend keeping regular hours. For example, I work on weekdays 8:30am-5:30pm in the office, and spend about an hour at home each night reading papers, but do not generally work on the

weekends. This allows me sufficient time to spend with my family and on my hobbies and accomplish my goals for the lab. When I need to take time to run errands or take care of personal issues (doctor's appointments, etc.) during the week, I adjust my schedule accordingly. Time management is a learned skill, and I am happy to discuss strategies for time management and task prioritization. Keeping regular hours also helps me and your lab mates, as we know when to expect you in the lab.

### **Time off**

*Vacation.* Students are permitted two weeks of vacation time (10 business days) each calendar year, plus 7 official holidays in accordance with University policy. Semester breaks are not automatic holidays. I expect students to inform me of their vacation schedule well in advance, and to consider whether it is an appropriate time to be away from the lab. Availability of reagents, animal models, and equipment, as well as upcoming deadlines, are important factors that should inform your decision as to when to take vacation. Occasionally, vacation time in excess of the allowed amount may be approved on a case by case basis.

*Personal time.* If you are not feeling well, either physically or mentally, take the time off you need to seek out help and take care of yourself. If you are struggling with depression or anxiety and wondering: "Is it okay to go see a counselor instead of setting up that PCR?" the answer is "Yes. Get the help that you need." If you have an acute situation that requires help, take the day (or a few days) off with no questions asked. My only request is to let me know that you won't be in, and if you are going to be out for more than 3 days, check in from time-to-time to let me know you are okay. No need to give details if you don't want to, it is sufficient to email and say that you have a "personal health emergency." If you need to take more substantial amounts of time off (>1 week), I will work with you to facilitate this. The same applies for family emergencies. In these situations, the top priority is taking care of yourself and dealing with the situation. If possible, let me know that you are dealing with something and approximately how much time you will need off.

Resources: University Health Services has several locations, including in the Medical Center (Room 1-5077, UR Medical Center) the UR Employee Pharmacy, which provides common over-the-counter medication and prescription medicines, is nearby. Mental Health Counseling is provided by the University Counseling Center Medical Center, Room 1-5091A.

*Family Leave.* The lab follows University policies for trainee leave following the birth or adoption of a child.

### **Conduct of Research**

*Research practices.* All trainees are expected to explicitly reject questionable research practices, and conduct their research in a way that is transparent, rigorous, and ethical. They should be familiar with, and abide by, the University of Rochester's [Policy on Research Misconduct](#). Academic misconduct can be reported online at <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/about-us/values-culture.aspx>.

All trainees and staff are expected to contribute toward keeping the lab running smoothly and in general be "Good Lab Citizens". This includes making sure reagents are ordered in a timely fashion, sharing reagents when appropriate, as well as participating in general lab up-keep (cleaning/dishwashing, making solutions, etc.) as needed and without being asked. "Good Lab Citizenship" also includes using and maintaining equipment correctly so that it continues to be functional and available for use.

Finally, mistakes happen. I have made and continue to make mistakes all the time. However, part of my job as an advisor is to be sure that I and my trainees learn from our mistakes. Thus, I often advise students that I don't expect them to not make any mistakes, but I do expect them to not make the same mistake twice. This goal is achievable only if lab members are willing to ask questions of each other.

**There are no dumb questions.** If you feel someone is reluctant to answer questions or is dismissive of your concerns, please let me know immediately so that we can resolve the situation.

*Record-keeping.* An important part of conducting research is record-keeping. In this lab, we keep most research products, including lab notebooks, electronically. You will be given detailed instructions

about how to keep your lab notebook in a separate document. It is important that you follow those instructions carefully and consistently every day you work in the lab. While we do not expect our work to be reviewed for academic misconduct, in the case of an audit, poor record-keeping can lead to the retraction of research papers, loss of employment, and loss of career opportunities. It is our job as a lab to prevent that from happening.

Here are some important tips:

1. Always keep an original copy of the raw data as a backup.
2. Maintain your files on the cloud, and work from those files. The University grants all students and employees a free Box account. This can be set up to sync directly to your computer. Do not download or copy files to your desktop or laptop to work on them. If your computer cannot support this function, please let me know.
3. Use antivirus software. The University provides free antivirus software to all students at <https://tech.rochester.edu/services/antivirus-software/>.
4. Backup your computer frequently or use a cloud backup system. DVD-R's or external hard drives will be provided as necessary.
5. Large files, such as image files, can be unwieldy to transfer and work on in the cloud. Large files should be removed from the original acquisition computer promptly and backed up by at least two alternative methods.

## Relationships

*Advisor-trainee relationship.* A good working relationship requires good communication; therefore, I expect my advisees to schedule a standing individual 30-minute weekly meeting with me. Additional scheduled or impromptu meetings are available as my schedule allows. There is no specific agenda for these meetings. We will typically go through your work of the past week, troubleshoot experiments, and set goals for the coming weeks/months. In order to do this, you should bring copies of your protocols, raw results, and data analysis to the meeting, either in analog or digital form. Being insufficiently prepared for a meeting is unprofessional, and if chronic, disrespectful. We should be mutually respectful of each other's time and effort.

If you want to discuss specific materials (i.e. a paper draft), please make sure I have them enough in advance to allow me to review them before our meeting (i.e. 24 hrs.). If you have requested materials from me (like a recommendation letter) please include the due date in your request.

I am also available by email and as necessary by phone/text. My cell phone number is posted on the phone in the lab. If the matter is urgent, please indicate that in your message. I would appreciate having your cell phone number for text messaging, which I will use sparingly.

Though we will be in contact during the week, I expect my advisees to work without daily input and to take the initiative to "figure it out" on their own. Late career students are expected to be generous with their advice to beginning students, but are not required to 'babysit' them. If a training relationship is requiring too much of your time, please let me know and I will address the issue. Conversely, advisees who are not accustomed to working independently should feel free to come to me for more regular guidance. It is my goal that by the time they leave the University, all my trainees are able to function as independent researchers and teachers.

*Trainee relationships.* I expect my advisees to develop a strong professional relationship with other people in my lab and the graduate program generally. This relationship should be supportive, not competitive. It is my job to maintain an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, safe, and free of harassment, but I can only step in if I am made aware of what is going on. Therefore, I encourage everyone to bring these issues to my attention as soon as possible.

Intimate relationships sometimes develop between coworkers; I expect all lab members to follow the guidelines of the Faculty Policy on Intimate Relationships, in that advisees should not enter into an intimate relationship with any members of the University community over whom they exercise academic

authority unless a written plan is approved to manage the professional relationships for the protection of the parties involved.

*Conflict.* Conflicts within a group are somewhat inevitable, and early communication is key to minimizing these conflicts. If you have concerns about your interaction with me or with anyone else, please don't hesitate to come talk with me. If you wish a conversation to remain confidential, please be sure to indicate that at the start of the conversation. If you are uncomfortable speaking to me, you can find a list of others you can speak with at <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/education/graduate/trainee-handbook/trainee-support-resources.aspx>.

## **Professional Development**

*Literature.* A current knowledge of the literature is critical in science. Therefore, I expect my students to spend significant hours each week reading relevant literature that is both specific/directly related to their research interests and of broad relevance to the field. Students should begin by reading all of the articles on the Required Reading List.

In order to stay abreast of the current literature, students should sign up for article alerts. This can be done through an article aggregator such as Google Scholar or My NCBI (I use PubCrawler-<http://pubcrawler.gen.tcd.ie/>). These allow you to set up searches using custom keywords and receive alerts about matching articles weekly. Not all retrieved articles will be relevant, but this way you can be sure to keep on top of the ones that really matter.

*Goal Setting and Accountability.*

*Publications.* Publishing is essential for most career paths in science. I expect my advisees to have multiple publications in the pipeline by the time they graduate. Ideally, you would have 2-3 first-authored papers plus 1-2 co-authored papers. This is aspirational, but doing so would make you competitive for whatever job you were interested in. For a paper to be published, it must present a "story", which can be simple or complex. Together, we will regularly outline the 'story' your data is telling to assess how complete it is, and whether it is ready for publication. Notably, this "story" can change based on the data generated. My pledge is to never delay publication for non-experimental reasons. In turn, my advisees should be aware that their publication record is ultimately their responsibility; they will get out (in publications) what they put in (hard work and diligence).

Authorship arrangements should be arranged as early as possible, and should be agreed to in writing. Anyone with a significant involvement in a research project (developing the original idea, collecting data, analyzing data, and/or writing a portion of the manuscript) should expect to be listed as an author. Usually, the first author has played the lead role in project execution and will take the lead in writing the manuscript and overseeing the revision process. I expect the first author to retain primary responsibility for the publication process even if they leave the lab.

*Conferences/Meetings.* I expect my advisees will attend at least one conference per year and to report their research at those meetings. Funds will be made available, but trainees are expected to apply for travel grants/awards if they are eligible. The decision to present at a national or international meeting will be mutual. However, I do reserve the right to determine whether it is an appropriate time to present your findings. Concern for competition for research funding may preclude presenting new or incomplete findings.

*Professional organizations.* Participation in professional organizations is encouraged, whether they are inside the University (i.e., Graduate Student Society, Postdoctoral Association), or outside (North American Vascular Biology Organization, etc.). Membership dues incurred as a result of attending/presenting at a meeting are reimbursable, membership dues incurred not due to a conference/meeting may be reimbursed at my discretion.

*Funding.* It is my responsibility to maintain funding to support the stipends and salaries of my advisees and staff. However, grant proposal writing is a critically important skill regardless of career path. Therefore, I expect all my advisees to apply for external funding opportunities. They are also expected to assist in the preparation of federal grants and progress reports from the lab.

*Teaching.* All students are expected to complete the program's teaching requirement prior to graduation. Students who are interested in getting more teaching experience should feel free to discuss this with me, I will be happy to provide what opportunities I can or point them toward additional resources.

*Other professional development/continuing education.* Participation in MyHub and the Center for Professional Development is encouraged, particularly for those interested in industry careers. Taking additional electives (in excess of graduation requirements) is also allowed, but there should be a strong scientific or professional justification for the course.

*When leaving the lab.* Getting ready to leave the lab (and defending your thesis) can be a very busy and stressful time. Most of that time will be spent working on your thesis and/or hunting for a new job. However, before you leave the lab, please set aside time to: update and finalize your lab notebook, clean out your fridge/freezer space and archive reagents as necessary, clean your bench space, and leave your contact information. You are welcome to take a copy of your lab notebook with you. However, remember that the intellectual property (data) contained therein is property of the University, and therefore you may not publish any of that work without authorization.

Lastly, the mentor-mentee relationship does not end when you leave the lab. I will always be available for letters of recommendation, questions about career planning, technical advice, or just a chat.