

Lab expectations

This document will change and be adapted over time, based on feedback and experience. A prime goal is for all lab members to become competitive to pursue their dream job. I have no expectation that everyone will want to stay in academia. People with diverse interests and career goals are therefore welcome, and shifts in career goals and trajectories should be openly discussed so that we can make plans accordingly.

Below you can find information on expectations of lab members. Text borrows heavily (in many places verbatim) from similar examples developed by the Ross-Ibarra, Puckett and the Dolezal lab.

Safety and Health:

Your health and safety are of primary importance. Lab members are expected to adhere to lab safety rules at all times. Lab members must complete all required University of Illinois Division of Research Safety [training modules](#) before beginning lab work. Anyone participating in field work should complete the online field safety trainings.

Beyond your own safety, failure to follow proper laboratory and field practices could affect the safety of other lab members. In addition to the normal laboratory safety protocols that are common to most labs, we must be even more diligent in our work with vectors. With this in mind:

- Familiarize yourself with the lab's chemical safety, biological safety, and field safety training
- Follow and adhere to all aspects of the safety trainings
- If you need personal protective equipment (PPE) for any procedure, let Dr. Kim or me know. We have stocks of PPE, but can also obtain more as necessary.
- If your health status changes (including pregnancy), tell me in private so that we can investigate how to best accommodate your needs. Some of our work could pose health hazards that are greater for some individuals, and it's imperative that we find ways for everyone to work safely.
- If you see someone acting in an unsafe manner (in the field or lab), simply remind them what they should be doing. We all make mistakes and forget. If you are reminded, be grateful instead of defensive.

If you're sick, stay home and rest and, if necessary, arrange for any responsibilities to be handled by co-workers. Let me know if you're out sick and make sure to record it in the HR system and any shared calendars.

Active lab and work hours:

Lab members are expected to be in the office during normal business hours 9am-5pm M-F. There is some flexibility here but on the whole being around lab members and departmental colleagues will enable the interactions and relationship building critical to science. There may be times when project work requires more hours per day or per week. You are not expected to work more than 40 hours per week. However, reading the news or social media is not work; you are expected to work 40 hours per week not simply be at your desk. It can occasionally be necessary to work into an evening, but if so, for safety and security reasons, you should make me aware of that. Work with living organisms often requires coming in for some amount of time on the weekend, for instance if you are running an experiment or maintaining a colony. If this is necessary, again make sure you come in during daytime hours.

Expectations regarding hours spent at work are as follows:

Graduate Students: the expectation is that you work and study a 40-hour week. Generally, you get as much out of graduate school as you put in. The 40 hours includes coursework, teaching commitments, RA commitments and making progress on your personal research. When not teaching or attending a course, you should make every effort to be in the lab. You pick up a tremendous amount from being around and interacting with your lab mates, and are also expected to contribute to the overall intellectual environment through your presence.

Hourly workers: up to 40 hours (or less, depending on what we agreed) per week. Some weeks this may be more, others it will be less. If you're in the lab, and on a given day, there is no more work the lead you are assigned to has, don't sit around. If you find that you are unable to make as many hours in the lab as you would like each week, come talk to me or Dr. Kim and we will likely be able to find additional work for you.

Full-time employees: the expectation for full-time work is a 40-hr workweek. This may sometimes be more, depending on what's going on. You should be present during normal business hours.

Field work will typically require an earlier start for the day (e.g., 6:00am) and will often be a long day. Hourly employees should track these hours and can have shorter days in the lab later in the week to try to not go over 40 hrs.

It is important that you take time off for personal life, vacations, etc to help maintain work-life balance and reset. I will depend on you to keep track of your needs and available vacation days. I do ask, however, that you notify me if you will be absent, and let me know of any extended leave well in advance (ideally a month before or earlier). It is critical that you accurately track and use your vacation days and report them in our HR system.

Communication:

Communication within the lab should occur through Slack in an appropriate public channel or e-mail. Do not use unofficial channels (e.g., text messages) to communicate about work unless it's an emergency (e.g., changes to field work schedules, failing freezers, etc.). When communicating about work with (potential) collaborators or colleagues outside of our lab use e-mail and CC me to make sure no misunderstandings arise. We have a biweekly lab meeting for which attendance is required.

Collegiality:

I expect lab members to contribute to a collegial and productive environment that supports learning and research. This includes treating your colleagues with respect and ensuring the lab is a place where everybody feels welcome and appreciated. The success of each team member contributes to everyone else's success. Science is a global pursuit, please approach cultural differences with inquisitiveness. Be kind to others. Listen respectfully to each other, learn from each other, and contribute as you can. We will all bring different life experiences to the research lab. You are expected to be respectful of those different experiences, learn from them when appropriate, and contribute when you can.

Conferences

Everyone is encouraged to attend at least one conference a year. Lab members should attempt to obtain partial to full costs of meeting and travel expenses. This includes applying for departmental, university, and society travel grants; or volunteering at the conference. Whenever possible, I will help fund attendance at one conference per year on the condition that you present a poster or talk. Abstracts must be reviewed by myself and all coauthors at least three weeks prior to the submission deadline. You should plan to give a practice talk to the lab one month prior to the conference.

Development

It is important to me that we maintain a supportive environment so that everyone can do their best science. My goal is to create a collegial and inclusive educational environment where we can grow as people and scientists to achieve our long term scientific and career goals. Our goals are going to be different for each person and will evolve over time.

You should have a list of things you would like to learn and apply to your research or keep in your back pocket. These can be as simple as improving time management to learning to use R. You will never develop these skills unless you engage in deliberate practice to develop them. Plan ahead at the scale of daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly for when and how you will develop these skills.

Authorship

My preference is to be inclusive when considering authorship for anyone who has made a substantial contribution to a manuscript. In general, the lab follows the IJME rules for authorship:

- 1- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
- 2- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
- 3- Final approval of the version to be published; AND
- 4- Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Since there is still potential for confusion, it is best to have clear expectations regarding potential authorship at the start of any project. Projects also evolve over time; thus, authorship inclusion and author order will be re-evaluated accordingly.

Grant Writing

Lab members should actively seek out and apply for grants and fellowships. No amount is too small. If you have a big idea that needs big funding, let's discuss then form a grant writing strategy.

Own Your Mistakes

Everyone (undergraduates, graduate students, postdocs, and myself) will make mistakes in lab. Be honest and forthright when you have made a mistake. Apologize if warranted.