Expectations for Graduate Mentees

Pursuing a PhD is an incredible opportunity to enhance your research and critical thinking skills while contributing to groundbreaking scientific discoveries. By joining the Mathew Lab, you become part of a supportive team of scientists at various stages of their careers, united by a shared commitment to advancing science.

My lab's mission is not only to conduct and share meaningful research that benefits the world but also to train the next generation of scientists, including you. As a PhD student, you are expected to meet certain training and development expectations, and I make commitments to support you as your PI and mentor.

What Graduate Students Can Expect:

As a Graduate researcher in the Mathew Lab, you can expect the following:

1. **Mentorship and Guidance:** My primary role as your mentor is to guide you in conducting meaningful research that you can be proud of, which will naturally lead to earning your degree. I focus on helping you grow as an experimentalist and critical thinker. I am available for regular meetings to discuss everything from failed experiments to your best results and anything in between. I will support you through the ups and downs of research and provide detailed feedback on drafts of manuscripts, fellowship applications, and other necessary documents.

2. **Mentoring Approach:** Rather than a rigid mentoring style, I prefer to adapt my mentoring style to your needs. If you are someone who needs frequent mentoring, I can provide that. Alternatively, if you are someone who prefers a more hands-off approach, I can accommodate that, too. While I won't micromanage your work, I'll always be available to provide guidance and support. I realize that research involves inevitable failures, which are valuable learning opportunities. If you are lucky, you will fail a lot, but I promise you that I will help you use those failures as learning opportunities to do great science and also help you grow as an individual.

3. **Support for Presenting and Publishing Your Work:** I am committed to promoting your work and ensuring it is shared with the scientific community. Assuming funding allows, I will support your attendance at conferences to present your first-author work. I will also present your work at conferences I attend, giving you full credit. For publication, I will assist with crafting a compelling storyline, providing feedback on drafts, and selecting the right journals for submission.

4. **Support for Your Next Steps:** Your time in the Mathew Lab is a stepping stone to future opportunities. Whether you pursue an academic postdoc, a teaching role, industry, public sector work, or even a non-scientific career, I will support your transition. This includes providing strong reference letters, making phone calls, and offering advice based on my knowledge of the various fields.

5. **A Welcoming Workplace:** I am committed to creating an inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment for researchers of all backgrounds, races, ethnicities, ages, beliefs, sexes, genders, and orientations. Everyone in the Mathew Lab deserves a welcoming workplace.

What is expected of Graduate Students:

1. **Independence in Research:** The goal of your PhD is to become an independent researcher. This means taking full ownership of your project—reading relevant literature, designing and conducting experiments, and planning the next steps. Always think beyond your current experiment and come prepared to discuss your ideas during our meetings.
2. **Presenting Your Work:** Sharing your research is essential. Funding permitting, you can attend and present at conferences. While not mandatory every year, aim to present at least a few times during your training. You are also expected to publish your findings as first-author papers in peer-reviewed journals, with at least two papers in revision (ideally accepted) before graduation. I will provide feedback, but you are responsible for writing and preparing figures.
3. **Applying for Funding:** Graduate students are expected to apply for external funding. Beyond supporting the lab, this strengthens your grant-writing skills and your CV. First- and second-year U.S. citizens or permanent residents should apply for the NSF GRFP and DoD NDSEG fellowships, while third- and fourth-years should aim for an NIH F31 NRSA fellowship. I will assist with proposals, but tracking deadlines and writing are your responsibilities.
4. **Mentoring Others:** You should mentor less experienced students, typically undergraduates. This involves training them in safe, effective experimental techniques and supervising their work. Early on, expect to be physically present for most of their tasks. Ensure safety, protect resources, and adapt supervision to their abilities. Mentorship experience will benefit you in any career path. I'm available to help with guidance or funding applications for mentees.
5. **Lab Hours:** Your schedule will vary depending on teaching, classes, or writing demands. I do not track hours but expect you to be present during standard daytime hours when possible to collaborate and learn from colleagues. Working primarily late-night hours isn't conducive to lab dynamics. Flexibility is fine, but being around during the day is important.
6. **Vacation:** Time off is essential, and I do not track vacation days. Just inform me when you'll be away, note whether you'll be available for emergencies, and ensure your responsibilities (e.g., your fly lines, your lab duties) are covered before you leave.
7. **Safety Rules:** Safety is our top priority. You must follow the lab's standard operating procedures (SOPs) and complete all required training as prescribed by UNR-EH&S. Serious safety violations may result in dismissal.
8. **A Welcoming Workplace:** We value inclusivity. All lab members are expected to contribute to a welcoming, respectful environment for everyone, regardless of background, race, ethnicity, age, beliefs, gender, or orientation.

Communication:

Routine Communication: The lab uses **Slack** for regular communication during working hours.

Response Time: Expect responses from me within one working day. If I don't reply, send a polite reminder. Lab members are generally expected to respond within the same timeframe.

Non-Working Days: Emails sent on weekends or holidays are for convenience and do not require immediate responses. For example, if I email you on a Saturday, I don't expect a reply until Monday.

Emergencies: Use text messaging for urgent matters, such as equipment failures or unexpected absences requiring assistance.