

# MENTORING EXPECTATIONS FOR UNDERGRADS

## NIELSEN LAB

Welcome to the Nielsen Lab! In order to provide clarity and facilitate a conversation about goals and expectations, we have outlined a standard set of expectations for mentors and undergraduate mentees in the lab. You should feel free to discuss these with your mentor; they are not set in stone, and you can think of this document as a starting point for further conversations.

As an undergraduate researcher in this lab, you will learn how research is done and get a sense for what life would be like if you choose a career in research through graduate school. Please take advantage of this time!

### EXPECTATIONS OF PRIMARY MENTOR (GRADUATE STUDENT OR POSTDOC)

In this lab, the primary mentorship of undergraduate students generally comes from graduate students and postdocs. Graduate students in the lab are generally pursuing PhDs in Integrative Biology, Computational Biology, Biostatistics, or another related field. Postdocs are scientists who have finished their PhD, but they have not (yet) started their own lab as a PI (principal investigator, who is a professor).

You can expect that your primary mentor will:

- **Provide a scientific project for you to work on.** This project may be modified throughout the time you are working with your mentor, either based on your input or how the project is naturally changing.
- **Be available to meet with you once a week.** These meetings may include discussion of scientific literature, help with questions related to the research project, planning for the goals of the research project, or discussions about professional development.
- **Provide advice about professional development.** Your mentor is not trained as a career advisor, but they can provide some advice based on their experience in academia.
- **Be open to feedback about mentorship.** Each student has unique needs that may not be obvious to the mentor right away. We are committed to being open to feedback and discussions about what you may be looking for in a mentor or lab experience.
- **Provide an evaluation of your progress halfway through the semester.** With the goal of clarity, we will have one of our meetings at the midpoint of the semester to check in about how things are going.

### EXPECTATIONS OF PI (PROFESSOR RASMUS NIELSEN)

Since Professor Nielsen is not your primary mentor, he will have somewhat limited involvement in your project. Rasmus meets with PhD students and postdocs once a week, so he may be providing feedback to your primary mentor about your project.

Rasmus will:

- **Meet with you twice a semester.** This meeting is an opportunity to discuss your ongoing research, to share professional goals, and to discuss how the research experience and experience with your mentor and the lab is going.
- **Make sure there are desks and resources available in the lab.** We will have some seats available in the lab for undergraduates to work. We hope you will use them!

Note: These expectations may vary by student and by mentor.

Written by Fiona Callahan

## EXPECTATIONS OF MENTEE

We want you to get the most out of this experience. This means that we will expect you to dedicate a significant amount of time to research. Because research is a largely independent endeavor, a lot of that work will not be monitored. We will not assign due dates, so you will need to manage your own time effectively to make progress. We know this is easier said than done, so we can have conversations about these challenges along the way! Out of respect for the time we dedicate to mentorship, we expect you to be honest with us and realistic with yourself about the amount of time you will have to dedicate to research.

We expect you will:

- **Prioritize spending time on research.** We expect you to sign up for at least 2 research credits if you are doing research for credit. If you are signed up for credits, you should expect to spend 4 hours per credit per week doing research (this is 8 hours/week minimum). If you are working on research full time in the summer, we expect you to dedicate 40 hours per week to research.
- **Be on time for individual meetings.** We understand that occasionally you will have to cancel or be late, but make sure to communicate with your mentor as far in advance as possible.
- **Communicate with your mentor.** Let your mentor know if you are confused about something (scientific or about rules and expectations). We do not always know what you know, so it's important that you ask!
- **Independently seek out scientific literature to read.** A big part of being a researcher is doing your own literature searches so that you understand the background of your project. You should ask your mentor if you want help figuring out how to do this, but you should expect to read more papers than they directly assign.
- **Come to lab group meetings once a week.** We can make exceptions for time conflicts with courses, but in general we think that coming to lab meetings will help you get the most out of this research experience. We also eat lunch together after lab meetings, and you are encouraged to join us!
- **Spend some time working in the lab.** Part of the purpose of doing research as an undergraduate is to experience life in a research lab. You do not have to come to the lab to work on research all the time, but we expect that you will spend at least an hour a week working in the lab. You are also invited and encouraged to spend more time with your lab mates (working in the lab, eat lunch with graduate students, come to lab social events, etc.)!
- **Present your research to the lab group at the end of the semester/summer.** This expectation is not set in stone, but you should expect to occasionally present your research progress.

## SAFE ENVIRONMENT

In the Nielsen Lab we are committed individually and collectively to fighting all forms of discrimination and injustice. This includes opposing systems and actions that perpetuate discrimination based on attributes such as race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and socioeconomic class. We strive to build an inclusive environment where excellence in research is built on a foundation of diversity and equity and is fueled by honest scientific curiosity and integrity. We believe that Black Lives Matter and we fight to Stop Asian Hate.

Having a safe working environment is very important to us. If you are experiencing conflict with a lab member or your mentor and don't feel comfortable addressing it with them directly, you can set up a meeting with the PI to figure out how to resolve the situation.

Note: These expectations may vary by student and by mentor.

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If you are experiencing any form of abusive conduct, harassment, or discrimination in the lab, you can report this to the PI in the lab or to the UC Berkeley Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination. You can always talk to your mentor or the PI about these concerns, but please note that we are “responsible employees,” which means that we are legally obligated to make an official report if you report harassment or abusive conduct to us. If you are looking for a confidential resource, the PATH to Care Center has advocates you can talk to about your options.

### GRADING

If you are doing research for credit, we will give you a grade at the end of the semester. If you have consistently dedicated time and effort to your research as outlined in this contract, you will get an A. This does not depend on the outcome of the research or on finishing the project. If you are not meeting expectations, your mentor will let you know at or before the halfway point of the semester and you will address this together. You can always ask your mentor for feedback about your progress at any time.

PLEASE LIST ADDITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS:

Mentee: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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