

SEED Lab: Mentoring Philosophy and Review of Expectations for Doctoral Students

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This is a summary of my mentoring philosophy and general expectations for doctoral students working with me. An important intent of this document is to foster a conversation that can lead to a clear understanding of my and your expectations. Another intent is to emphasize how important it is that we work together as a team. The most important thing to me is that you achieve your individual goals.

I hope that you maintain an enthusiastic and committed interest in research while you are working in the SEED Lab. I believe that research is best carried out when you are excited by the research questions themselves, so I want you to strive to do research that excites you. That said, if you are my student, I expect that you will be excited by at least part of the research I am leading, and that you will work hard, with my help, to find a niche for an independent project or series of projects that inspire you. In the SEED Lab, our research focuses on the effects of early experience, particularly early life stress, on the socioemotional development of children and their families. We are especially interested in how early adversity shapes children's developing capacity for self-regulation and how parent-child relationship factors can promote resilience. Another goal of our lab is to better understand factors that contribute to the development of parenting and the intergenerational transmission of trauma and psychopathology. Finally, we examine interventions to promote positive development in high-risk families. I will work with you to develop your independent research interests that complement my own.

I know that plans, preferences, and pursuits of short- and long-term goals change as people develop and acquire new experiences, so it is important to me that you *continue* to be enthusiastic and happy. I want you to be motivated for the career path you ultimately choose, whether or not that includes a major focus on research. I will be supportive of your decisions and plans for after you finish graduate school, but I do want you to be devoted to conducting productive research while you are here. I also ask that you communicate your goals to me as they develop.

I value diversity in my lab and strive for equity and inclusion of all members, especially underrepresented groups. Overarching goals for the lab are to advance social equality, contribute meaningfully to improving people's lives through research and advocacy, and prepare lab members to practice and/or research psychology in a diverse society. I seek to create a safe and welcoming community in the SEED Lab enhanced by the rich experiences and diverse perspectives of the lab members. I encourage students to utilize critical thinking skills and stand up for their ideals. I am open to feedback and guidance on these issues as I acknowledge my position of privilege and know that this is a lifelong learning process.

My responsibilities as a graduate advisor/research mentor

1. I do not work with more students than I am capable of providing high quality mentorship to. I am fiercely loyal to students who show a commitment to my lab and will do everything in my power to help them be successful.
2. I am highly responsive to email and other communications. I respond to most email the same day and almost never more than 48 hours after a message is sent, except in rare occasions. I'm also available by phone/text for urgent or emergency matters. I likewise strive to turn around drafts sent for feedback within a few days to one week so as not to delay productivity.
3. I meet with my students once a week *one-on-one*, typically for an hour, and expect them to come to those meetings prepared to discuss lab work and personal research projects. Meetings with more advanced students may shift to biweekly or monthly if indicated and mutually agreed upon.
4. I provide opportunities to analyze existing data whenever possible, given availability and alignment of research questions with existing data. See data use policies below.
5. I strive for open communication where I give continual feedback to students on their performance and discuss issues as they arise. Students are also formally evaluated at the end of every academic year, but never should these end of year reviews come as a surprise.
6. I welcome feedback from students and will try to adjust my mentoring accordingly.
7. I care about mentees as people and not just students.

My expectations for graduate students:

1. I expect my graduate students to be highly engaged in their graduate studies. They should rarely if ever cancel their weekly meetings with me and otherwise make the most of this weekly one-on-one time. They should rarely if ever miss our weekly lab meetings. They should progress in a timely manner through the program milestones and should consistently attend and present lab data at national and international conferences.
2. I expect graduate students to take an active leadership role in the SEED Lab, including when they are on and off fellowship. This will likely include involvement with active data collection and leading a team of undergraduate students in coding/data entry/small group projects. While on fellowship, this involves a minimum of 15 hours per week devoted to research (primarily lab tasks, with opportunity to spend some of this time on independent research projects). Once off fellowship, a continued involvement of at least 5 hours per week on lab tasks is expected. These experiences provide valuable skills in data collection and lab management while at the same time contribute to making the SEED Lab projects successful.
3. I expect all students to communicate often and effectively, including responding promptly to all email that I or other faculty send. I appreciate a response within 48 hours, even if brief (such as “I’m working on it, will get back to you by the end of the week”). I also expect students to communicate their preferences for lab tasks so that we can match tasks to student interests for everyone’s benefits. Please note that when you take time off, you are expected to notify me in advance so that I not only know you will not be present in lab, but also so that we have ample coverage for our ongoing research activities.
4. If you have an idea for a conference submission or any other project that has a deadline (including grant submissions, award applications, etc.) or you require a letter of recommendation, please inform me of the deadline, discuss your plans with me, and send me all relevant information as soon as possible, preferably at least one month in advance. Never submit or present data from the SEED Lab without fully vetting the submissions with me and (as necessary) all other potential co-authors in advance.
5. I do not require my doctoral students to keep exact logs of their hours, however I ask that you keep general track of how many hours you have worked each week. This is primarily for your own benefit so that you don’t end up working MORE than the appropriate amount of time for the lab and so I can adjust my assignments/expectations accordingly. I do not want to assign tasks to you that are unrealistic or unduly stressful.
6. Please keep me informed about life events or circumstances that might take time or energy away from your focus on research and responsibilities in the lab. I do not expect you to share personal things with me if you do not feel comfortable, and I do not need all the details, but if I am made generally aware that something is stressful or difficult in your life, then I can help support you and revise our mutual expectations if needed. Graduate school should be hard but should not make you miserable. I am also happy to help find mental health resources for you should the need arise.

Data Use Policies

1. Research projects should be hypothesis-driven as much as possible. This means that all researchers should develop theoretically-guided rationale/justification for their research questions, clear hypotheses, and preliminary data analytic plans that would test such hypotheses. My practice is to review hypotheses and data plans in advance of giving access to any data. You will be asked to complete a brief research proposal with these core pieces of information (research questions/justification, hypotheses, proposed variables, preliminary analytic plan), which I will review and approve, before you begin to work with any data. The proposals for existing or completed projects, as well as the template for you to use to propose a new project, are located on the SEED Lab Sharing Google Drive.
2. Because we have a large lab, we need to coordinate our research interests so as to not overlap on research projects. Some topics or questions that you might be interested in investigating may already be ones that others are developing. Prior to submitting a research proposal form, it is in your best interest to review the approved proposals for ongoing projects, which describe the topics that others are already investigating. I highly encourage students to collaborate on projects together when interests overlap.
3. You should familiarize yourself with the study protocol, the measures, and the theoretical approach behind our research before beginning any independent project. When you present data from the SEED Lab and are asked about how something was collected or what types of questions a measure asked, you should be able to answer such questions off the top of your head.

4. Access to particular data is not guaranteed. Especially in the case of external collaborative projects, data requests may not be approved. I will work with you to identify research questions that can be answered with available data.

Thesis and Dissertation Projects

1. As soon as possible, you and I should establish a timeline for your thesis, dissertation, or any other research/writing projects. This should include a series of dates for completing subtasks such as various writing stages, proposal meetings, data collection/coding, data analyses, and defending the project that is consistent with the departmental expectations. Timelines help for both of us to monitor your progress, goals, and productivity.
2. I'd also encourage you to set some positive rewards for yourself upon meeting your deadlines and goals. I believe that achievements, big or small, should be celebrated, especially in our field where patience, perseverance, and delay of gratification are key skills to develop and refine. I and other members of the lab would be happy to celebrate your milestones with you if you update us on your progress.
3. It is my general expectation that you will have your dissertation completed before leaving on internship or leaving the area, unless there are special circumstances which we have discussed in advance. You will also find yourself to be more competitive for internships if you can say that your dissertation will be done before you start the internship year. In addition, you will be very glad that you don't have to worry about finishing your dissertation when you are immersed in internship opportunities and responsibilities!
4. I also expect you to submit your dissertation for publication shortly after its completion. It is easy to lose motivation and interest if the data have been idle for a long time.

Authorship Policies

1. The final (and some would argue most important) step of the research process is dissemination, and thus it is important to share our research findings at conferences and through publications. I try to involve my students as co-authors on my own projects whenever possible. We will discuss authorship issues early in the process of conducting a project. That discussion will result in a clear agreement regarding what each person will do to contribute, and the timeline for when this will occur. This agreement should be recapped in an email (by the student) after such a conversation so that all parties understand and agree.
2. Consistent with APA guidelines, authorship is a function of scholarly contribution. This includes contribution of ideas and writing, developing methods, and data analyses. It is important to note that data collection and coding do not guarantee authorship.
3. Authorship order or inclusion can be changed from the original agreement if someone does not adhere to the original agreement, if the work that is done changes substantially in nature or magnitude, or if the paper is not completed in a timely manner.
4. Ideally, graduate students should publish at least two first-authored empirical studies during your training. It is in your best interest to demonstrate strong research productivity, evident in published papers, when you go on internship interviews regardless of the ultimate career path you choose.

I have read and discussed this document with my mentor and agree to the terms listed here.

Graduate Student Signature

Graduate Student Printed Name

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