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Mentoring Philosophy

When I encounter opportunities to act as a mentor to junior researchers (i.e., those at the advanced undergraduate or early graduate level), I aim to create a laboratory culture that emphasizes the following:

- Inspiring and encouraging curiosity
- Aligning Expectations
- Fostering independence while encouraging interdependence
- Modeling and teaching effective and ethical research practices
- Developing an equitable and inclusive environment
- Promoting professional development

Inspiring and encouraging curiosity

Research is fun. It involves exploring questions that you can't find the answer to in a book, or challenging widely-held assumptions about how the world works. Aspects of this work can be tedious, but I hope to encourage mentees to see the forest for the trees. With this in mind, check-ins will situate incremental effort updates in the context of broader project goals or lines of inquiry. Moreover, I intend to encourage my mentees to share their ideas at every stage of the research process. These ideas are useful; they can inform current and future research efforts or guide the team to interesting and potentially relevant literature.

Aligning Expectations

I believe it is important to establish expectations about project goals, check-ins, and aspects of what to expect of the research and mentorship exercise ahead of time. As such, I find it useful to create a contract or mentorship plan with my mentees (an example of which can be found here). Check-ins will involve periodically referring to this living document with mentees, allowing for goal-oriented collaboration and reorientation when necessary. In these check-ins, I will also solicit feedback from mentees about my actions as a mentor to ensure that my efforts are consistent with their developing needs.

Fostering independence while encouraging interdependence

We all begin collaborative efforts with less knowledge and skill than we do by the end of a project. Part of my mentoring philosophy involves encouraging students to develop independent proficiencies with respect to the design and implementation of social research, while *also* teaching students how to continually learn from and cooperate with colleagues on a research team. This set of skills is highly marketable in both academic and industry settings.

More fundamentally, I firmly believe that a "team science" approach benefits everyone on a research team and the quality of the research product itself. I aim to cultivate in my mentees both an ability to operate in a self-sustaining way *and* an awareness that people around them can be resources or agents of support. Others often know things that can improve one's own work, and one's skills are inherently valuable to others.

Modeling and teaching effective and ethical research practices

While aspects of research design and execution vary tremendously across disciplines and subfields, some aspects of good research are (or should be) universal. Mentoring check-ins

over a year-long cycle will include one session solely devoted to research ethics: study design features; the role and purpose of the IRB; the importance of, when possible, going above and beyond IRB expectations for ethical treatment of subjects; the importance of and strategies for protecting participant data.

As a given project progresses, I will aim to integrate these core lessons into phases of the project cycle (IRB protocol development; data collection and storage; analysis and reporting). I will also ask mentees to provide their thoughts on the ethical nature of our research project whenever we encounter nominal decisions that could impact the subjects of study.

Developing an equitable and inclusive environment

I hope my lab is a place where students from all backgrounds feel like they deeply belong, their voices are heard, they can obtain high-quality training, and they are able to share their concerns if they do not feel as though they are not benefiting in all the ways described in this philosophy statement or their contract. While I cannot predict the needs of a diverse array of mentees, I hope to provide a structured open-door policy with mentees to allow and encourage them to share how their backgrounds or experiences may shape their sense of inclusion or fit with my lab, or to let me know how the lab or department could be as conducive to any mentee's sense of self-worth as possible.

It is difficult to talk about certain equity and inclusion items until trust is developed between a mentor and mentee. As such, I plan to demonstrate my interest in mentees by periodically asking them about their own interests and goals, and asking them what is helping or inhibiting them from these explorations. My hope is to treat conversations as opportunities to create a broadly supportive and validating lab environment, which in turn will lead students to either develop comfort and a sense of belonging, or the comfort to share their discomfort.

Promoting Professional Development

Not all students aspire to become academic researchers. This does not make them less worthy of my attention as mentees, or less deserving of high-quality academic training. One of the benefits of social research investigations is the transposable nature of the skillset to both generic critical thinking strategies and technical analytic and computing skills. I intend not only to develop and emphasize the applicability of skills that are useful in and out of the academy; I also plan to check in with students to understand what their emerging career goals look like, to provide them with scaffolded project roles that allow them to build skills in relevant domains, and to connect them with colleagues that are employed in their desired industries. I also plan to share opportunities for internships, jobs, and career development with mentees.