

Mentoring Guidelines – Molecular and Integrative Physiology

The MIP department views Mentoring as a very important part of its mission in providing effective graduate education and training, to help students be successful and productive, and to enjoy their time in our graduate program. A successful experience for a Ph.D. student in MIP largely results from the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship between the mentor and the student. As with any relationship between two people, mentoring is a two-way street, requiring effort, attention, and care on the part of both parties. In addition, mentoring needs and preferences can vary widely between different students and faculty members based on individual styles, personalities, and the nature of the research being performed. However, some general best practices can foster a positive relationship and good outcome for both the student and mentor. Therefore, the MIP department expects all faculty members and students to follow the Illinois Graduate College Suggested Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring:

<https://grad.illinois.edu/files/pdfs/mentoring-guidelines.pdf>

Furthermore, the nature of laboratory research performed in MIP and the requirements of the MIP program necessitate some additional considerations for successful mentoring.

To this end, **faculty mentors** are expected to:

- Familiarize themselves with mentoring best practices, as described in the Grad College Mentoring Toolkit: <https://grad.illinois.edu/faculty-staff/toolkits/mentoring>
- Have ongoing conversations with students regarding their short- and long-term research and career goals
- Provide a positive, supportive, and safe laboratory and research environment for all students
- Treat all students and laboratory members equitably and fairly
- Provide clear expectations for students including (but not limited to) work hours, preferred modes of communication, project assignments, vacation policies, and deadlines
- Hold regular individual meetings with students for feedback and discussions, at a frequency acceptable to both the student and the mentor (typical intervals could be weekly, every other week, or monthly)
- Provide timely feedback to students on research progress, manuscripts, applications for fellowships, and written documents for Qualifying/Preliminary/Thesis Defense Exams
- Assist students in preparing for the oral component of Qualifying/Preliminary/Thesis Defense Exams and for research seminar presentations
- Construct a Data Management Plan to ensure that students' data are stored and maintained in a manner that can be used after the student leaves the lab
- Encourage student attendance at national research conferences as laboratory travel funds permit, and support student applications for travel grants and awards
- Respect students' needs for work-life balance

Reciprocally, **students** are expected to:

- Communicate with the mentor immediately if they are not comfortable with a laboratory procedure or practice, or witness actions of others in the lab that are detrimental to a positive and ethical research environment
- Communicate with the mentor immediately if they are unclear regarding what is expected of them (e.g., work hours, schedules, vacation policies, and project specifics)
- Come to meetings with the mentor prepared and ready to discuss the current state of their projects, their career goals, concerns, and other topics
- Be honest with the mentor regarding evolution of career goals and/or research interests and preferences
- Provide materials (e.g., data, figures, manuscript drafts, conference poster/presentation drafts) with enough time allowed for the mentor to provide useful feedback
- Adhere to lab policies and plans with respect to data management and record keeping, and ensure that data are usable by the mentor and future lab members after the student has left the lab
- Stay up to date on program requirements and deadlines for their own progress to degree
- Respect the faculty's needs for work-life balance

Should concerns about the mentoring relationship arise on the part of the student and/or mentor, the Director of Graduate Studies and/or Department Head may be contacted for confidential consultation. Student Thesis Committee members are also equally vested in mentoring students in MIP and can be another source of help in challenging times.