Ives Lab Guide

This is a summary of guidelines, expectations, and organization for all members of our lab: faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students. This document also includes some information about logistics and resources that are available. It is a living document, and all lab members should contribute to its continuing development.

I. Lab Goals

The primary goal of the lab is to learn by engaging in research, teaching, and service. A successful learning and research environment necessarily requires that all members respect the diversity of people and ideas in the lab and surrounding communities. The main currency of success is postdocs, graduate students, and undergraduates being able to continue on the path that they choose for their career. To be clear, the goal is not research, but research is the means to an end: doing what you want to do in your life. Research is also fun.

II. Lab Philosophy

Research is often most fun when it is collaborative, and collaboration among members of the lab, and between lab members and other researchers, is encouraged. These collaborations might or might not include Tony. You should consider the lab a research community in which members have both their own and collaborative projects. Some projects are inherently collaborative, such as the field projects at Myvatn and at Arlington. Even though participants in these projects do their own research, they depend on collaborators, and these collaborations carry both rewards and responsibilities. To make collaborations work effectively, it is important to know and appreciate everybody's responsibilities, and also to discuss the responsibilities openly particularly if the collaboration is not going smoothly.

Everybody in the lab will be different, and it would be futile to expect everybody to follow the same course doing research while in the lab or in their future career. The PhD program in iBio allows students and their committees to design their PhD program individually. That lack of a fixed path or set of expectations can be unsettling for some lab members, especially when entering the lab. It might seem like they are being forced to play a game in which the main objective is to discover the rules. If this ever feels like the case for you, talk to lab members, especially Tony. The cost of tracking your own course while in the lab is uncertainty in the absence of narrow rules. Recognize that this uncertainty is a good thing, because it is just the natural consequence of having freedom. This freedom includes freedom to fail: not fail in a catastrophic sense, but to have experiments, collaborative projects, etc., fail.

Tony's job is to foster your career. There is an unavoidable balancing act between being hands off and helping, and he might not always get the balancing act right. Therefore, you have to let him know if you need something you aren't getting, or if there is something you are getting that you don't want. Please trust that his goal is to help you be successful on whatever path you choose.

III. Code of Conduct

We expect all lab members to conduct themselves in a spirit of cooperation, respect, and thoughtfulness for others in the lab, the department, and the public. Each person's identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinions will be respected. As established by professional societies such as the Ecological Society of America, harassment, discrimination, and bullying in scientific endeavors (including field research) are considered scientific misconduct. There is a zero-tolerance policy with regard to sexual harassment, and all students, faculty, and staff are protected by Title IX in all aspects of our activities. Examples of unacceptable behavior include (but are not limited to):

- Physical or verbal abuse of any participant;
- Unwelcome or offensive verbal comments or exclusionary behavior related to age, appearance of body size, employment or military status, ethnicity, gender identify and expression, individual lifestyle, marital status, national origin, physical or cognitive ability, political affiliation, sexual orientation, race or religion;
- Inappropriate physical contact;
- Unwanted sexual attention;
- Bullying behavior;
- Retaliation for reporting unacceptable behavior.

Reporting unacceptable behavior. There are several options for reporting unacceptable behavior, and you should select the course of action that you feel is best. Retaliatory behavior is not accepted in the lab or on campus, so you should feel safe against retaliation. Nonetheless, the victim of any type of harassment should have the freedom to weigh the different types of reporting available to them. If you witness harassment of somebody else, recognize that your first responsibility is to support the victim and accordingly defer to their wishes about possible courses of action.

Here is a partial list of contacts for different types of reporting. Remember, being comfortable in your working environment is important, and so please take steps and enlist help to ensure this is the case.

i. Tony has a legal and ethical obligation to stop unacceptable behavior in the lab. He realizes, though, that he sometimes might not be the most comfortable person to contact for personal issues.

ii. Lauren Riters, as Chair of iBio, is both legally bound to address unacceptable behavior and can be a good source of information about reporting mechanisms.

iii. Sexual misconduct can be reported through the UW Sexual Misconduct Resource and Response Program.

iv. The overarching place on campus for climate issues is the Office of Compliance. There are a lot of resources on the website.

v. For staff (including postdocs) a good place to start is the Ombuds Office.

vi. For students, there is the Dean of Students Office in the Division of Student Life. The address is 75 Bascom Hall, and you can email dean@studentlife.wisc.edu or call 608-263-5700.

Research ethics. Scientific ethics are fundamental to the scientific endeavor and your careers. The Ecological Society of America has a detailed code of ethics that provides a framework for all scientists. A key issue in data generation and analysis, and modeling, is that all activities and decisions are transparent. In practice, this is often hard to do, because there are many many decisions that are made at each step in the scientific process, all of which can affect the outcome and conclusions of a study. While it is impractical in a scientific paper to state the reasoning behind every decision you make, you should make clear any decisions that affect the conclusions that you draw. And you should include enough information in a paper or data repository so that a knowledgeable researcher can repeat your work.

IV. Safety

Safety is critical. Never put yourself at risk. Even if you are comfortable with risk, this might not be true for those around you. To quote Grace Wilkinson's lab rule #2, "No sample is worth your life". Take safety seriously.

V. Lab Organization

Funding. Postdocs and grad students get funding from different sources, and this makes it impossible to make funding 100% equal for everybody. For example, a grad student who receives an NSF fellowship might have to TA less than a grad student who doesn't. Although there is no guarantee, Tony will try to make sure everybody has summer support from one source or other. Lab finances are one area that is not transparent to all members of the lab; still, please trust that Tony is trying to make things as equitable as possible.

Scheduling your day. The lab is product oriented: there is no time clock for punching in and out. Your success will be determined by what you accomplish, not by how many hours you work. You are ultimately responsible for your time management. However, you need to be aware of how your time budgeting affects your collaborators and others who depend on you. For example, if a collaborator needs something, make sure you give them a possible timeline. If you are mentoring, make sure that you are available as the mentee needs. This is particularly the case for Tony: if you need something, do not hesitate to ask (this is his job), but also give a reasonable amount of lead time.

Although there is no requirement that you come into the lab every day, COVID-19 showed that personal contact is really important. Therefore, when it is feasible, time in the lab will likely help you and those around you stay engaged.

Scheduling your year. Faculty, postdocs, and graduate students at the UW-Madison do not have formal vacation time beyond public holidays. Nonetheless, the lab is product oriented. Therefore, you should take the time off that you need as long as it doesn't interfere with your overall research progress or your other obligations. These obligations typically involve collaborators and mentees. When you take time off, it is appropriate to let everybody in the lab know in case they need to get hold of you.

At a yearly time scale, consider how you organize and pace your research. For grad students, it is beneficial to publish papers continuously throughout your PhD. This will mean that you have published papers when you are applying for postdocs. Starting postdocs who haven't published work from their PhDs should spend time getting these published provided this doesn't detract too much from their postdoc work. Typically grad students and postdocs finish some projects that they started in the lab after they leave, so things generally balance out in the long run.

Lab meetings. Lab meetings are probably the single most important thing we do as a lab. They are fundamental to learning what everybody in the lab is doing and getting feedback on your work. We generally start lab meetings with announcements and discussion about issues in the lab; you should never hesitate to bring up issues as you want. And you should try not to miss lab meetings, and if you have to, please let everybody know so we don't wait for you.

Deadlines and administrative requirements. You are individually responsible for deadlines and administrative tasks such as grad students submitting Progress Reports and postdocs submitting travel reimbursements. That said, if administrative tasks aren't completed, they often fall on Tony's desk. Everything runs more smoothly if deadlines are met. Don't be shy in reminding Tony about upcoming deadlines; he will generally let you know when he has completed your request, so if you haven't heard, let him know.

Mentoring. An important professional development opportunity for postdocs and grad students involves mentoring undergraduates. A great source for possible undergraduate mentees is URS (University Research Scholars). Another is Introductory Biology 152; as part of a course requirement, many 152 students complete lab-based independent projects. For grad students and postdocs, it can be a great way to develop your mentoring skills along with getting help on some aspect of your own work. Many lab members have mentored students in the past – feel free to talk to any of us if you have questions about it.

Authorship. There are many guidelines for authorship online from professional societies and publishers, for example in the Ecological Society of America code of ethics. The general principle we use in the lab is Utilitarianism: the greatest good for the greatest number (at least, within reason). For a manuscript that already has a few authors, there is no cost to the lead author of including more, so we should not be stingy with authorship. This is particularly the case for larger collaborative projects in which all participants have been important for the infrastructure that made the work possible. Authorship for the lab head (Tony) needs to be handled differently. For example, it is good for graduate students to have publications without Tony as a co-author, and therefore his contribution to a study should be substantial before he is a co-author.

Data. More and more throughout the sciences, data are regarded as public resources, rather than owned by individuals. Some data that you collect in the lab will be part of a bigger data collection program, such as the long-term monitoring at Myvatn and the long-term field data from Arlington. For common data, we try to manage data in a systematic way. All of you will also have more-independent projects that generate more-specialized data. It is really important to make sure these data are secure and backed up. There are resources on campus for this, such as ResearchDrive. At the very least, use Box.

When leaving the lab, it is a good idea for both you and others in the lab to archive and leave a copy of all of your data. Nobody in the lab will use your individual data without your consent. But if you archive them, we will all know where they are.

Communicating. Email is the default mode of communication on campus, and you should check your email regularly. Please note that individuals in science and academia often send emails at times convenient for them, as we all have flexible schedules and may work in the evenings or over the weekend; an immediate reply is not expected.

Generally, if Tony is in his office, you should not hesitate to knock. He might be busy at the moment, but if so, he'll make an appointment to see you soon.

VI. Lab Logistics

Integrative Biology main office, Noland Hall. It's good to get to know the people in the Noland office, and always appreciate how much they do to keep things running smoothly for us. There is a iBio website (under the Internal Resources tab) that gives overall guidelines and who to contact for specific needs. A quick list is

Brandon Dowd is the buildings manager and should be contacted both for emergencies and other issues.

Kelin Boldiis is the graduate student advisor who is a great contact for things relating to the administration of PhDs, like getting warrants.

Lauren Riters is the iBio Chair, and she is responsible for the overall functioning of the department.

Julie Lindsey is our departmental administrator (and the department chair's right-hand person), and she's a great source of information on department policy and activities.

James Vanderberg handles other purchases and travel. Be nice to him: he is a tremendous help.

Michelle Kirch handles some financials, including purchases over $5K.

Laurel Buss handles payroll questions, benefits, timecards, and all things HR. Laurel is also a first line of inquiry for student visa questions.

Cole Christophel is our IT person who should be contacted about computers, internet issues, etc.

Joel Lord is the iBio instrument maker, and he is a great resource for creating special equipment needs for sampling, measurement, etc. We can make requests for designing, building, or modifying equipment.

Julie Larson handles grant financials, and she would be assisting you with any fellowship or graduate student grant applications that run through RSP (Research and Sponsored Programs) at UW-Madison (vs. fellowships awarded directly to students).

Mailboxes. Mailboxes are located on the first floor of Birge. If you enter from the Bascom Hill side, turn right and go down a hallway, the mailboxes are on the outside of the copy room.

Lab space. The lab space is common space. If you need space for research, check with everybody in the lab; we should be able to make room. You are welcome to use the lab, microwave, coffee pot, etc. All kitchen things have been donated by lab members.

Since the lab space is common, it typically suffers from the tragedy of a commons. Please try to keep the lab clean. This is hard especially during summer fieldwork. A general lab cleaning should be done twice a year.

Finding funding. There are numerous sources of funding for postdocs, grad students, and undergraduates. Sometimes they are hard to find, though. The best source of information is other members of the lab and department.

There are several sources of funding specifically for grad students. For example, the John Jefferson Davis Fund conference travel awards are typically about $800 for domestic travel and $1000 for international, and these often cover about 50% of a conference trip. There are two deadlines each year. You are eligible at least once each year, and sometimes twice. There are also departmental endowed funds for summer research. Check the iBio website for information.

There are also numerous funding opportunities for undergraduates, such Hilldale and Sophomore Research Scholarships, and scholarships through the Honors Program. The deadlines for these are early in the spring semester. They require research proposals, so planning should start in the fall.

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