

Berkeley Agroecology Lab Joint Expectations for Undergraduates

The expectations and roles of undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty advisors can sometimes be opaque. The following is to outline some of my expectations in the lab, with the key caveat being that every person is different and that my primary motivation is to support you as well as balancing the needs of the overall lab community.

Your tasks within our project include:

- Lab:
 o _____
- Field:
 o _____
- Other:
 o _____

These tasks/roles within the project are likely to shift over time; however, I will always have a conversation with you before shifting my expectations around any of the above.

Lab Community

It is very important that our lab engender a culture of generosity, respect, kindness, and robust scientific exchange. It is always important to have boundaries and not get overextended, but as much as possible, please help create a culture of generosity in the group. Please read our lab community guidelines and let me know if you have any difficulty in committing to them.

When in the lab, please stay on top of your own work and treat communal resources as if they were your own. If there are any conflicts (scheduling or otherwise) around using any of the lab space or equipment, first try to resolve them in a generous manner that takes the time sensitivity of everyone's work into account. If you ever feel that you do not have access to the resources you need, let me know. Clean up after yourself, and let me know if any of the supplies/reagents you are using are running low.

Please be present and engaged. Attending lab meetings is rarely required for undergraduates, but this is a great space to get to know your scientific community and be exposed to ideas and projects beyond the one(s) that you are working on. This is also a great time to get to know Tim and see what running a lab looks like from a faculty perspective. So, we encourage you to join and be an active participant if you would like to and your schedule permits.

There may be opportunities to help with other projects going on in the lab from time to time. You are never obligated to join for projects beyond my own, but if you are able to, it is always appreciated. Similar to lab meetings, this can be a great way to gain additional experience and be exposed to ideas and styles beyond my own.

Independence

I do not expect you to join our lab with prior knowledge of the work that we do. You are here to gain exposure and experience, and part of my job is to make those as accessible to you as I can. As I teach you methods/protocols/techniques/ideas, I expect you to approach them with a goal of eventually being able to do them independently, and engage in the learning process accordingly.

Being independent does not mean being isolated! Even as you are able to carry out tasks in the lab/field on your own, there will always be things that come up that require you to consult with me or someone else in the lab. You should expect me to create an environment in which you are comfortable asking for help when you need it, and I will in turn expect you to communicate those needs.

No matter how independent you are, mistakes and errors will always happen! I expect you to correct mistakes/errors when you know they have occurred, and/or let me know so I can help you troubleshoot. You should expect me to treat mistakes and errors as learning opportunities rather than reasons to chastise. It is always better to redo a procedure/work on a mistake made than to have a bunch of unexplainable data. Mistakes are the best opportunity for growth!

Depending on how long you work with me, you may start to pursue self-led projects in which I support you as the project leader, rather than vice versa. I do not necessarily expect you to take on your own projects, but you should expect me to encourage and support you if that is something you are interested in pursuing. Please do not hesitate to discuss this with me, and if I know of opportunities or have ideas, I will share them with you to see if you might be interested.

Timeliness

Unless otherwise stated, I observe Berkeley time. If I set a meeting time, I expect you to arrive within 10 minutes of the scheduled start time, and you should expect the same from me. If either of us will be late, that should be communicated (ideally in advance) with an email or text message.

Communication

You can expect me to be highly committed to your development as a scholar and scientist. I enjoy investing time and energy in developing collaborative relationships with everyone in the lab, and you are a top priority for me in our lab.

Please communicate with me about your research progress and obstacles regularly. If I am not involved, I cannot help. Please ask for help when you need it. I am available to troubleshoot your work [at any time/from the hours of xx to xx/some other option].

If you are working on a self-led project, you can expect that I will ask you to set goals at regular intervals and will check in about progress toward those goals or barriers you encounter. If you tell me, or I observe, that progress is hindered, then I will take a more active role in helping to define short-term goals and ensuring that goals are met.

I am also here to help you navigate your career at Berkeley and after graduation. I generally encourage you to let me know when there is something you want to discuss, no matter what the topic.

You can expect me to respond to your needs in a timely way. If you suspect that something has fallen off my radar, please don't be shy about reminding me. Likewise, please respond to me in a timely fashion as well, even if it is to say, "I'll get back to you about this."

Organization and research

All research related files and data, including in-progress work, should be stored in locations that I have specified to you. Please follow any and all organizational structure and guidance I have given you, and ask for clarifications whenever necessary. Also, be rigorous about lab and field safety, lab and field equipment, lab records, field notes etc.

Labor and Funding

I value your labor, and you should expect me to compensate you accordingly. That may be through paid labor, research credits, mentorship on self-directed projects (e.g. a senior thesis), or some combination thereof. You should expect me to think carefully about whether you are being appropriately and fully compensated for the work that you do. You can also expect that we will check in once a semester to ensure that your needs around compensation are being met. If you ever feel exploited, I hope you feel able to bring it up with me or someone else in our lab. The research that you do for me should never require any personal expenditure.

If you present the work that you do with me (at a conference, poster session, etc.) you should expect me to help you find funding. This may be through identifying opportunities at Berkeley and beyond for you to apply to, but it is unlikely that I will be able to provide funding directly. With that being said, please let me know if you are interested in presenting your/our work! There are often creative ways to make this happen.

Authorship and Editing

You should expect to have the opportunity to be included as an author if any of the projects that you work on with me result in a publication. I will generally be first author on these publications, and you should expect me to be transparent about authorship through all stages of the research process (see our lab authorship guidelines for more information).

If we are involved in writing projects together—anything from a SPUR proposal to a paper to your senior thesis—you should expect me to read several drafts of your work. You should plan on me returning comments to you within ~1 week, so please plan ahead and back calculate the amount of time necessary. It is often impossible for me to give meaningful feedback at the last minute.

School-work-life balance

This is not your full-time job! You should expect me to be flexible to accommodate other things that take priority in your life, including but not limited to: classes, coursework, exams, other jobs, extracurricular activities, and important family/social commitments. I will expect you to treat your work with me as one of your (many) priorities.

Career planning

My true goal is to support your pursuit of a path that will make you feel fulfilled. I am most qualified to help you pursue a career in research of some kind, but I will help you work towards other career goals in any way I can. I will support your career progression by discussing your career options with you, helping you network, writing you letters of recommendation, and helping you learn how to succeed in or out of the academic arena. If you would like me to write a letter of recommendation for you, I expect you to ask me at least XX weeks before the deadline. I also recognize that sometimes you will find out about an opportunity at the last minute. If this happens, please still bring it up with me and we can discuss whether or not it is feasible for me to write you a letter.

Agreement

I, _____, have read [insert name]'s lab expectations and understand them. I will hold myself and [insert name] accountable for striving to meet these mutual expectations.

_____ (signature) _____ (date)

_____ ([Insert name]'s signature) _____
(date)