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## Promote working-in-the-lab atmosphere in this group

1 message

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To: alfredgroup@uci.edu

Hi all,

I found one thing: Our group does not have the atmosphere for doing research in the lab. I know all of you work during off-hours (e.g., in the nights and weekends), but somehow you generally chose to do research at home, instead of in the lab. For students belonging to a research group, this is **NOT ideal** as the main benefits of forming a research group, instead of you guys working individually, are

- **(B1)** as a group we can **share group-level resources** such as the physical lab space, facilities, software/hardware, and even connections, so that an individual student can access a richer set of resources to achieve success; and
- **(B2)** as the members in a group focus on similar research topics, they can **more conveniently find peers sharing similar career goals and passion** to learn from (especially beneficial for junior students), discuss existing, and brainstorm new ideas, which can help an individual student grow faster.

Doing research in the lab is the only way to give you both such group-level benefits, especially the latter (B2). I think I told you guys multiple times: some of my best ideas came from ad-hoc discussions/debates with labmates in the late night. Personally I looove to work in the lab: can more easily hangout with friends to see what each other is doing, talk about random/interesting thoughts, and do something silly in the lab (we created foosball tournaments and I even wrote a player ranking system for just our lab based on chess ranking rules) :) Also such a working atmosphere in the lab can better promote hard-working vibe in this group, which can benefit all of you. This will also better form deep friendships that will last probably life-long, which I experienced and enjoyed a lot myself.

I know for benefit B1 you can overcome it by remote access. However, I believe that working in the lab will make it easier to access and debug, not to mention that the connectivity is generally better. If you want to work, then why not work in the lab? Working the home sounds like to be only an excuse to invite network connectivity problems and hardware access difficulties, so that you can feel comfortable with low productivity. Moreover, how about benefit B2?

I know it is possible to do research at home. However, I believe the productivity for doing research in the lab should generally be better than doing the same thing at home. The reason is simple: Home is intended mostly for relaxing and enjoying life, while office is intended for work. This is why we have difference spaces for work and life. I know some of you, especially the senior ones, can also do research productively at home. However, first, you will lose benefit B2 above; even if you do not need discussions, the other labmates, especially the junior ones, may benefit a lot by learning and chatting with you. Don't appear to be so selfish. Second, if you do plan to work, why doing it at home? It will only create excuse for you to be distracted.

I also know that some of you are roommates so can already discuss with each other when working at home. However, first, I believe your research productivity is not as good as in the lab based on my chat with some of you. Second, again, if you want to have such research-oriented discussions, why not bring it to the lab so that the other labmates can also join?

**The current problem is the group atmosphere:** If everyone chooses to go home after dinner and never come to the lab in the weekends, then the ones who want to be benefitted from group-level resources and peers will feel discouraged, as working alone in the lab feels miserable. This will make it impossible to even start forming the more beneficial working-in-the-lab group atmosphere. **Thus, from today, I strongly encourage all of you to work as much as possible in the lab during nights and weekends, if you do plan to do research in such times.** If you sincerely want to work, then do not give yourself excuse to be comfortable with low productivity from working at home. Note that for weekdays the A/C should last till 10 PM, so the current lab should be comfortable for working at least till 10PM (in reality should even go far beyond that, e.g., till 11 or even midnight, as the temperature will not change too soon after that. Also we can buy heaters if you feel it is too cold). Regarding going home late during nights: one of the advantages of Irvine is its safety, so it would be great to leverage that. Now we finally get covid more under control, then please start to form more proper working habits, especially when you belong to a research group.

On my side, I will try my best to provide a more enjoyable working environment and group-level resources for you,

to make it more attractive for you to choose to work in the lab. **Please take some time to reflect and propose here any actionable ideas/suggestions that you think can better make you prefer to work in the lab than doing the same work at home.** Possible suggestions can be for example having monthly budget for having snacks/drinks in the lab; buying fans/heaters to the lab (for weekends without A/C); buying standing desk frames; buying plants; bigger fridge; etc. The only requirement for such a proposal is that you believe that this can make you (and others) to feel more likely to choose lab for doing research instead of home. Do not worry too much for budget: As I believe that working-in-the-lab is the right atmosphere for students in this group, I will try my best to accommodate to provide you guys a better learning environment.

Let me know what each of you thinks.

Alfred

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Stay safe,  
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