Terri Tobias looks at her mentor and sees her own potential.

Terri was first introduced Andrea Porras-Alfaro as a graduate student with a project that wasn't quite working out. Although she was working with a different professor at the time, Terri was guided through the difficult time by Porras-Alfaro. "She sat me down and explained that we didn't have the funding for the project I was working on," says Terri, recalling how Porras-Alfaro pointed out the difficulties of working on a project without the resources needed. Then, Porras-Alfaro went a step further. "She took the time to help me through it," notes Terri of the difficult news, "then ask me about my favorite part of biology and offered me a project I might be interested in. That's what drew me to her lab."

As soon as she agreed, Terri knew she had made the right decisions. "She allows you to be independent *and* gives guidance," she explains. Before signing on, Porras-Alfaro required Terri to do a week's worth of research on the project. "She takes the time to really help you learn how to do good, quality science, and she teaches the skills needed to be a successful collaborator."

Because of her graduate experiences with her mentor, Terri has opted to stay on as Porras-Alfaro's PhD student. "Andrea has taught me the importance of mentoring," she says, noting that it's not just about doing the experiments anymore; it's also about communicating and sharing the science behind them. "I've learned how to be a good mentor through her." In fact, Terri and several other of Porras-Alfaro's lab students have already begun to follow in her footsteps by taking part in outreach science programs for 3rd graders and high school students. "It's something that she was doing on her own time, so it's something that we decided to do, too," says Terri. "It's not hard to get children excited about science."

It's as straightforward as that, according to Terri. "She's very passionate about what she does with both science and teaching, and that's just contagious. She's like fungi," Terri laughs. "Her enthusiasm just spreads in the lab." Porras-Alfaro has also fostered a supportive environment, much like that of a family. Once a week, the lab partakes in what Terri calls "Science Friday:" students and professors take turns cooking, and everyone gets together to eat and discuss a paper. These meetings allow student to interact and learn about the latest molecular technologies. "We're all friends," says Terri. "She's fostered an environment where we help each other."

When asked about Porras-Alfaro's impact on her, Terri says, "I have become a much better scientist, a much better person, and a much better teacher. She has not just taught me how to be a good biologist, but she has also taught me about patience in teaching."

"Everybody needs a little guidance," she says, before diving into a story about her manuscript writing experiences. "It's really tough. I turn in a draft and it comes back with more red than black." But as disheartening as that is, Porras-Alfaro has a way of turning it around and reminding her students about the underlying pleasure of

science. “She asks, ‘What do you think the story of this data is going to be?’” Terri recalls. “She takes the pressure off of compiling data and writing it out.”

“I wish everyone realized how important mentoring was in any professional field,” says Terri in closing. “Mentoring leads to success.” It’s as simple as that.