

Sokol-Hessner Lab: Undergraduate Research Assistant (RA) Expectations

Research assistantships (RAships) vary in the level of responsibility and independence expected. Much of this is driven by the student's motivation, time, and interest. The more you put into the experience in this lab, the more you'll get out of it.

Mutual expectations

- We will use the following modes of communication:
 - *Slack* - most daily communication, extended written conversations. Conversations about projects will generally take place in those specific channels, and private conversations will take place in direct messages.
 - Please enable notifications, have the Slack app installed (e.g. on your computer, smartphone), and configure your account to ensure you have an actual presence on Slack.
 - *Email* - for larger/longer communication that is less conversational and/or includes people from outside the lab.
 - *Zoom and phone* - for live, remote meetings. We will try to use Zoom when possible to maintain social connection & interaction, relying on the phone when needed.
 - *Text messages* - for emergencies only. Phone calls may also be appropriate for emergencies.
- Conversations will remain professional. While we may share aspects of our lives as part of working together, generally personal information should be volunteered only, and not requested, and privacy should be a general expectation if such sharing occurs. Please feel no pressure to share any personal information.
- We will uphold the DU Honor Code, be honest and ethical, respect and support members of the lab including the identities they hold, conduct ourselves professionally, and be receptive to constructive feedback.
- We will maintain personal lives...
 - All members of the lab are encouraged to take vacations or breaks, especially between terms and during parts of the summer. If you decide to take a vacation or trip *during* an active term, please put your vacations, as soon as they are known, in the lab calendar, and inform Dr. Sokol-Hessner that they've done so. Between terms, unless otherwise discussed, you are not expected to be working in the lab.
 - Members are also encouraged to consider their weekends and evenings their own time - you may make the choices you need to in order to balance your personal and professional lives.
 - Members are encouraged to have and enjoy their relationships with family and friends as part of being a whole, healthy person.

- If ill, isolate from other members of the lab, take the time required to heal and recover, and ensure that any time-sensitive responsibilities are met either by you or someone else.
- When unforeseen challenges or opportunities for important or difficult feedback arise, we will attempt to address them as quickly as possible, directly with the person(s) involved, in constructive, positive, and supportive ways that actively involve perspective taking, validation, patience, and belief in one another and our ability to grow.

Expectations of me

- Timely feedback on what you write or analyze. Feedback will be constructive (focused on ways to improve), and may vary from high-level, abstract feedback to very detailed concrete feedback depending on the document, time constraints, and other context.
- Support in your professional goals, be they academic or otherwise.
- Will make time to meet with you and talk about your research and your progress.
 - Both structured times & impromptu when possible.
- Will check in with you periodically about big-picture professional goals, progress, and potential or actual issues.
- I'll be understanding about challenges or bumps in the road while not giving you a free pass, and nudging and guiding you toward how to do better.
- I will provide a safe, intellectually stimulating, supportive, respectful, and effective environment for you to grow as a scientist.

Expectations for you

- You'll work as independently as possible, identifying next steps, completing requested actions, sharing information or documents as needed, without follow-up from me or others.
- You will seek out meetings and help (from me or others) when you need it, in addition to regular meetings to keep me up to date on what you're doing.
- You'll be a good lab citizen by contributing to the lab, sharing your knowledge, perspective, and experience, and working with other members of the lab.
- You'll document what you do and how you do it, and share those as needed with me (or other lab members or, e.g. on GitHub).
- You'll check in with me about vacations/sickness/etc.
- You'll attend lab meeting and occasionally lead/present at lab meeting.

A few suggestions

- Remember to periodically revisit long-term requirements and goals to ensure you're on track.
- Keep an eye on your mental and physical health – without those, nothing else is possible.
- Seek support from and interaction with multiple lab members, including other RAs, PhD students, and the PI. Don't be shy to ask for what you need.

Let's...

- Meet weekly
- Have a special meeting at the start of each term to identify what the goals are for that term, and reflect on recent progress, challenges, and opportunities.

We have discussed the above on _____, 20____.
MONTH DAY YR

Student: _____
SIGNATURE PRINTED NAME

PI: _____
SIGNATURE PRINTED NAME