

Crandall Lab Mentor-Mentee Compact

Adapted by Dr. Raelene Crandall from the Note: W.H. Freeman Entering Mentoring Series, 2017

I value and enjoy professional and intellectual relationships with students. I find that these relationships are more positive and productive if guidelines are established early in the relationship. This document clarifies the expectations I hold for my mentees and what my mentees can expect from me. It is not a contract but rather a means of describing my expectations of you and what I think is reasonable for you to expect from me. We will discuss or clarify the lists as needed. As you will see, I try to communicate directly and clearly. I hope that you will as well.

What I expect from my mentees:

I expect that you and I will work to clearly communicate our expectations of each other to foster a strong working relationship. This includes being open and honest about our strengths and weaknesses and their implications for working together most productively.

I expect you to be the driver of your educational experience. I expect you to understand what is expected of you from our program and the graduate school, determine how to best achieve your academic and professional goals, and advocate for yourself.

*I expect you will read the [UF Graduate Student Handbook](#) and update yourself on that information at each stage of your program. It is your responsibility to ensure you are following the guidelines of the program (taking the appropriate coursework, meeting deadlines, etc.). I am here to help you determine how best to do so, but it is not my job to keep track. I can help *interpret* the Guidelines, but I expect you to take the initiative to review program guidelines first before asking for my guidance. I also recommend meeting with our graduate coordinator once a semester to ensure you are following the guidelines.*

I expect that if something is happening in your life that is getting in the way of your graduate work, you will tell me so that we can problem-solve how to get the work done, determine realistic timelines, etc. You can decide how much to share with me—but I need to know the general scope of the constraints to help you minimize the impact on your professional development and timely progress.

I expect you to show up to meetings prepared to share three things you accomplished last week and three things you will accomplish in the coming week. We will typically have one 30-60-minute session a week, but if there is something you need to talk about sooner than our next meeting, you should contact me to schedule an appointment.

I expect you to be accountable for your time and make consistent progress. Part of attaining a graduate degree is learning to be independent and manage your time wisely. Procrastination can be a nasty habit to break, so try to avoid falling into that trap. Work done hastily the night before or the day of a meeting often lacks intellectual reasoning and creativity.

Be respectful of other people's time—Show up prepared and respond to inquiries in a timely manner. I expect you to respond promptly to emails from collaborators and me – within one business day, preferably. If you have not made progress, be honest and cancel our meeting rather than waste my time.

I expect that you will be open to receiving constructive criticism of your work – or that you will commit to improving your ability to learn from constructive criticism of your work. You are a student because you

have things you want to learn, and learning from critiques of your work is often the best way to improve. I hope to model taking constructive criticism well – test me!

I expect you to ask questions and disagree with me. This is your life, your career, and your graduate program. If you do not understand something or disagree with my comment or suggestion, you need to communicate that to me. Be your own advocate.

I anticipate that you will attend and participate in lab meetings. The people you meet in graduate school will likely become your future colleagues and advocates. Work on campus when possible (at least 3 days a week) and interact with other lab members and graduate students to build your network. When we are in person, we are more likely to share research ideas and perspectives to gain a more robust view of scientific thinking and philosophy.

I encourage your feedback. I am a flawed individual, and I will make mistakes. I am still a work in progress, actively trying to become a better mentor and individual. If I say something that angers or upsets you, I hope you will let me know so we can discuss it. One or both of us will likely benefit from that conversation.

I expect you to seek out and take advantage of opportunities other than those I present to you – for example, attending professional development sessions offered by the graduate school, the teaching academy, and institutes and centers on campus. This is a part of you taking control of your professional goals.

I expect you to follow lab, field, and truck protocols to ensure a safe and equitable environment. The lab has procedures for checking out and using equipment and driving the truck. In addition, we have field safety protocols that should be followed at all times. When you join the lab, you will need to complete the required field and lab safety training within one month. These include:

- UF_EHS809: Hazardous Waste Management
- UF_EHS861: Chemical Hygiene Plan/LATCH

You can find the links and information here: <https://www.ehs.ufl.edu/training/ehs-courses/>

I expect you to work hard towards your professional goals while also working towards a sustainable work/life balance. Both hard work and work/life balance are essential to sustaining a successful professional career over the long term.

What my mentees can expect from me:

I am eager to help you achieve your goals and am committed to supporting and advocating for you. I enjoy helping others achieve their goals, and my mentees are my priority.

I will help you navigate your way through the graduate program. Although you are ultimately responsible for your deadlines and progress, I am pleased to help you interpret the guidelines and plan strategies to meet your professional needs.

I will make time for you. I am very busy with various duties, but my mentees are my priority. If you need to meet with me sooner than planned, I expect you to contact me and tell me so. You should trust that I will be honest and tell you what I can and can't do regarding the timing of that meeting.

I do not expect you to be just like me. I am here to help you develop the career that you want for yourself. That may be in academia or not. I am open to you having career goals of various types and am committed to helping you achieve them.

Life is too short not to follow the path you want. I believe that graduate programs are not for everyone. If you decide that you may not want to continue with your graduate degree during your study, I encourage you to talk with me about it. There are good and bad reasons for doing a graduate degree. I am open to you changing your goals and deciding that this is not your right path. I am willing to help talk you through your options.

I prefer text messaging for quick inquiries. For longer inquiries, I prefer an email or meeting. I try to respond to inquiries within one business day when I am in town. If you haven't heard from me in a couple of days, or if it is urgent, please resend your message, as it may have gotten lost in the e-pile.

I will promptly return comments on written work and code. I can typically provide comments within one week of receiving them. I do appreciate when mentees make a timeline, so I know when I will be receiving drafts. This also allows me to be upfront about my schedule and timeline.

I expect that I will not be your only mentor. I would hate to think you would be limited by only my advice and guidance. I encourage you to find others, including members of your graduate committee, who can mentor you to meet your different needs. It is important to network, learn from others, and build a team of mentors to help you reach your goals. I will not be jealous but rather pleased if you get advice and assistance from others. Inevitably, you will get conflicting advice from me and others, and we can talk about that too.

I will encourage you to develop a strong, supportive committee and meet with them regularly. Your committee should also be advocates and mentors. Use them (wisely)! You should have a committee meeting every 6-12 months, during which you will present your progress and provide a written summary of your accomplishments.

I will be honest about the strengths and weaknesses of your work. For better or for worse, I am usually straightforward and direct with my feedback, and you can expect that from me.

I understand that my role as mentor changes over time as a mentee needs change and as a mentee moves towards independence. I will aim for clear communication about my changing expectations of you, and you should aim for clear communication about your changing needs and concerns. Towards this end, every spring the School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences asks each graduate student to complete an Individual Development Plan to report on their progress over the previous year and to highlight plans for the following year. We will use this to discuss your progress and goals thoroughly.

I am prepared to guide you through your graduate program. I can directly help you with specific topics or refer you to other people or opportunities to meet your needs.

I will provide funding or help you find external funding. Graduate students are expected to apply for grants to help fund travel to conferences and supplies/equipment needed to complete experiments. Writing grant proposals is an excellent skill to learn regardless of your future goals. I will forward grant announcements as I see them, but I also expect you will search for them.

Consequences for not meeting expectations:

Academia may seem like a no-consequences arena to push boundaries, but I assure you it isn't. If you do not produce tangible products, and I do not assist you in doing so, we both suffer consequences. First, I will not falsify information in letters of recommendation. If you do not meet deadlines, fail to accomplish grant objectives, or poorly communicate, I will be honest about that in recommendations. Second, we are both judged by the work we produce. Research results mean nothing until they are

published. If you seek a job before you have published, people will wonder why you and I have not been able to complete a project together. Thus, it benefits our careers and reputations if you succeed.

In extreme cases (and after trying to resolve issues), I will not renew your graduate assistant contract if you have consistently failed to produce tangible work. This is like any job. You should not expect to keep the job if you do not do the work. Many students would love the opportunity for a graduate degree, but you were given a chance. Make the most of it! Also, most graduate students are hired on a grant and will be expected to complete work related to that grant. If you fail to produce tangible products for a granting agency, the lab will not be in good standing with the agency, and it will impair future funding and job prospects.

Summary:

Although I have listed many expectations from both the mentor and mentee side, much of this comes down to several simple principles. Like any job, several actions will ensure success:

1. Be accountable for your time.
2. Take the initiative to further your education and attain your goals.
3. Use open and honest communication.
4. Be respectful of other people's time.