SUMMARY

Running a Productive Lab with Graduate Students

Tips for running a productive lab while providing high quality supervision for your graduate students

1. Try to determine if prospective students will be a good fit for you and your lab, before agreeing to supervise them. Many of the problems that arise in the student/supervisor relationship can be avoided by only taking on students with whom you are most likely to be compatible.

   a) Discuss with potential students your own mentoring style to see you are compatible
   b) Contact referees directly to ask additional questions about the student
   c) Meet the student before agreeing to mentor them. Face to face if possible, or by Skype
   d) Start recruiting early
   e) Assess the level of mentorship a student will require, and if you are capable of providing at this level.

2. Provide thoughtful onboarding for new students. Providing students with the necessary information, training, and expectations helps ensure that they reach a high level of productivity quickly, and can help prevent conflicts and bad habits from developing.

   a) Utilize the Checklist of Expectations for Graduate Student and Supervisor.
   b) Discuss with the student their research and career goals early in their training. Utilize My GradSkills workshops, Transformative Talent Internships and the Versatile PhD
   c) Have students get into a publishing mindset early in their program.
   d) Help students remain busy during the first days and weeks
   e) Meet with your students often

3) Have productive lab and/or group meetings. Try different models until you find one that works for your group

   a) Single Presenter- Trainees take turns presenting their research
   b) Round Table- All group members discuss what they have been ‘up to’ since the previous meeting.
   c) Skill Training- You or another expert may present training on specific skills

4) Help your group work together as a team. A high level of productivity is more likely to be achieved when members of the group work together collaboratively.

   a) Discuss with your student the various strengths and expertise of the different members of the lab
   b) If you notice disruptive personalities in your group, try to address the situation early
   c) Provide students with various lab responsibilities, careful not to treat the student as a technician
5) **Assist students to be self-motivated.** It is best if students develop their own motivation and excitement for their research. Supervisors can help to establish an environment in which students are more likely to be self-motivated.

a) Help your students take ownership of their project  
b) Communicate to your students that you consider their research to be exciting and worth pursuing  
c) Help them experience success by reaching short and intermediate term goals  
d) Be aware of burnout, and address promptly if observed  

6) **Conflict avoidance and resolution.** A productive research group is more likely to be achieved when members of the group respect one another and enjoy working together.

a) Be loyal to your students  
b) Be as transparent as possible regarding differing opportunities for your students  
c) Encourage students to work hard so that they can reach their own goals, not your goals  
d) Encourage students to inform you when there are problems  
e) Access the various workshops and resources that are available on campus to resolve conflicts

7) **Fully commit to a mentorship role**

a) Recognize that you have made a long term commitment to your students  
b) Help graduate students to obtain skills, training and experience that can be valuable in a wide range of occupations  
c) Accept time commitment involved in supervision