

Whitehead lab personnel policy (Fall 2009)

Undergraduate students

- actively participate in all laboratory group functions
- conscientiously and consistently contribute to animal care → TOP priority is the health of the animals
- work as a group to support a sustainable schedule, and adhere to it
- faithfully commit to the schedule, and be available and willing to contribute beyond the schedule in emergencies.
- if scheduling conflicts arise, be proactive, and be a good communicator
- once animal duties are satisfied, opportunities may arise for laboratory work
- laboratory work will initially involve duties that support the work of RAs, students, and post-docs. Self-sufficient projects are the goal, but may take a couple of years to be realized. Assignment of an individual project is possible only after several semesters of dedicated work in supporting roles, sufficient demonstration of commitment, demonstration of enthusiasm, and demonstration of attention to detail. Opportunities may arise to be included as an author on publications that emerge from lab contributions when appropriate.
- rarely, opportunities may arise to attend research conferences, as long as the student is primary author and is presenting

Research Associates

- actively participate in all laboratory group functions → some exceptions for part-time employees
- faithfully commit to the contracted work hours
- be flexible and available and willing to contribute beyond scheduled hours in emergencies or crunch times → hours will be compensated during non-critical periods
- non work related activities (surfing the web, personal email, online shopping, texting your friends, etc...) confined to lunch break or after hours
- be proactive in troubleshooting and technology development
- contribute to training new lab personnel
- is expected to be a leader in the laboratory, in helping foster an atmosphere of exploration, learning, and a positive work environment
- opportunities to work on self-inspired or self-motivated projects, as long as they are of mutual interest, and only after assigned duties are fulfilled.

Graduate Students

- actively participate in all laboratory group functions
- responsible for own schedule, but are expected to be in the lab at least 8-10 hrs per day, and on weekends and evenings when necessary
- be flexible and available and willing to work beyond personal schedule in emergencies or crunch times
- will typically be assigned to a project for the first 1-2 years for training purposes, and to help fulfill research objectives of funded projects

- during the training period of the first 1-2 years, students are encouraged to develop own research ideas. These ideas may be acted upon if feasible, of mutual interest to the PI, and fall under the broader umbrella of the research program of the Whitehead lab. Projects that explore beyond the scope of funded projects are encouraged, but not necessary. If projects remain within the general scope of funded projects, the student must still contribute original ideas.
- when encountering challenges with the science or bench work, first sit down and think about solutions yourself, then look for answers in books or the literature, then solicit advice from fellow lab-mates, students, and post-docs, then seek advice of the PI. I (the PI) am always happy to talk about troubleshooting or the science, but show that you have thought about the issues before you come see me.
- if project involves live animals, student is ultimately responsible for those animals, even if others are assigned day-to-day care.
- student is expected to produce at least 3 first-authored publications. Student may or may not be first author on papers that they contribute to during their 1st or 2nd year training period, depending on the scope of their contribution.
- expected to write fellowship grants throughout their tenure → for research money, stipend funds, travel funds, etc...
- encouraged to train and supervise undergraduate trainees.
- encouraged to attend research conferences, especially in the last few years of their tenure. Lab will only pay for travel and fees if funds are available, and if the student is primary author and presenting (platform talk or poster). Even if this is the case, student is expected to still apply for travel funds

PostDocs

- actively participate in all laboratory group functions
- responsible for own schedule, but are expected to be in the lab at least 8-10 hrs per day, and on weekends and evenings when necessary. This is expected even when traveling to interview for jobs.
- be flexible and available and willing to work beyond personal schedule in emergencies or crunch times
- expected to write fellowship grants throughout their tenure → for research money, stipend funds, travel funds, etc...
- is typically hired to work on a specific project, on which their goal should be to earn primary authorship of emergent publications.
- side projects are possible and encouraged as long as either 1) the project that they were hired to contribute to is complete or rapidly progressing, or 2) the postdoc secures their own research funding.
- encouraged to train and supervise graduate students or undergraduate trainees.
- when encountering challenges with the science or bench work, first sit down and think about solutions yourself, then look for answers in books or the literature, then solicit advice from fellow lab-mates, students, and post-docs, then seek advice of the PI. I (the PI) am always happy to talk about troubleshooting or the science, but show that you have thought about the issues before you come see me.
- is expected to be a leader in the laboratory, in helping foster an atmosphere of exploration, learning, and a positive work environment

- encouraged to attend research conferences. Lab will only pay for travel and fees if funds are available, and if the postdoc is primary author and presenting (platform talk or poster). Even if this is the case, postdoc is expected to apply for travel funds

Collaborators

- the Whitehead lab collaborates with several other groups, and their participation with our group is of strategic importance to the success of our research program
- any interactions with collaborators should be polite, helpful, and enthusiastic → if your interactions with collaborators starts to have problems, please seek advice of the PI
- in the interest of maintaining long-term relationships and to advance the science, we often do things for collaborators that are not of immediate benefit to ourselves.
- collaborators have agendas and obligations of their own that may extend beyond our immediate mutual interests, and we must be mindful of those (because we also have our own agendas)
- effective communication is critical for maintaining active and fruitful collaboration → this includes timely distribution of presentation abstracts and manuscript drafts, and mindful inclusion of comments from collaborators, and distribution of data as it emerges (where appropriate) so that everyone can contribute their particular expertise to analysis, interpretation, and deciding what to do next
- we must be careful to avoid considering collaborators as powerless middle authors that only exist to advance our own agendas. That is, “win-win” thinking is critical.

PI

- I answer to the funding agencies. I have an obligation to ensure that public dollars are well-spent; that the science that emerges from my lab is productive, rigorous, and cutting-edge.
- ultimately responsible for research funding, accounting, scientific oversight, oversight of the animal colony, and training and oversight of personnel
- be available to discuss personnel and scientific issues at most times of the day
- is first author or senior author on publications that emerge from projects funded by the PI
- foster and encourage an atmosphere of exploration, learning, and good communication, and a positive work environment
- I must approve all abstracts, manuscripts, or any representation of the research that comes from the lab
- be timely, conscientious, and constructive in my comments on abstracts and manuscripts
- be available to talk about and comment on student and post-doc research ideas and grant applications.
- be timely in writing letters of recommendation