

Residential Landscape Ecology Lab Expectations

Based on guidelines from the Burgin Lab (KU), the Reisinger Lab (UF), and the Smyth Lab (UF)

Goal of document: This document explains the expectations for me, your advisor/supervisor, and for you in our contributions to the Residential Landscape Ecology Lab. Our work focuses on the ecology of urban and urbanizing landscapes and on the development of strategies to enhance the ecological functionality of these landscapes. My job as an assistant professor and state extension specialist is to conduct research that makes tangible contributions to the broader academic community and ensures that results are disseminated to relevant stakeholders. Your work will contribute to these goals. Your success is my success, and vice-versa. I aim to foster an open, collegial, and productive work environment. I hope you will enjoy working in the lab, and will learn from me, other lab members, and your colleagues across UF. Below, I list (1) the expectations that we should have of one another and (2) some additional considerations about being a lab member and graduate student.

What you should expect from me

- Expect to **meet with me regularly** (~weekly) throughout the year.
- Expect me to **ask for your honest feedback** about the lab, your graduate experience, and your thoughts of me as a mentor. I can't improve anything if you don't tell me about it.
- Expect me to **give you my honest feedback** about your work, your progress, and your strengths and weaknesses.
- Expect me to **provide timely feedback** on your work (e.g., grant proposals, manuscripts, thesis chapters, posters, etc.). Although you should anticipate a 2-week wait for comments (but I try to get comments to you sooner). If there is a set deadline for submission of the document, it is your responsibility to give me enough time in meeting that deadline.
- Expect me to **listen to your concerns and help you solve problems. I am your advocate** and will do whatever needs to happen to solve problems. Sometimes a problem requires a push from a faculty member rather than a graduate student. I'm happy to step in and support my people, because we're a team and we're in this together.
- Expect me to **send you opportunities for funding and professional development.** We can strategize which to pursue.
- Expect me to **serve as a reference and write letters of recommendation** for you. But if you do need a letter from me, please provide at least 2 weeks' notice and instructions on how the letter should be submitted. In addition, I will be honest and let you know if I do not feel that I would be a good letter writer for a given situation.
- Expect me to **ensure a safe, supportive, and inclusive lab environment.** If you have any concerns about the lab culture, safety, etc., I want to know as soon as possible. *However, please know that as a faculty member I am legally obligated to report any instances of harassment or abuse, although all information will remain confidential.*

- Expect me to **act as a model of professionalism in academia**, and you can look to me for guidance on issues related to conflicts of interest, equity and fairness, research and professional ethics, or mentoring.
- Expect me to **provide you with networking opportunities** through my collaborative network, scientific meetings, workshops, and other professional venues. I will do my best to tailor this to your stated career interests.
- Expect me to **help you find other resources or other mentors** when you need support beyond my abilities. Nevertheless, do not wait for me to pursue these resources. UF has a wealth of knowledge and resources. Take initiative and pursue them on your own.

What I expect from you

- **To be present in the lab daily** unless the duties of the position require you to be elsewhere. I don't necessarily expect you to arrive at 8am daily (i.e., if you aren't a morning person, coming in a later is okay). However, I feel that a regular presence of all lab members helps to build a sense of lab community and facilitates teamwork.
- **To be honest, open, and timely with communication.** I will not judge you for not knowing something or for making mistakes; everyone makes mistakes. But I do require that you tell me about mistakes as soon as possible to set a course for correction.
- **To follow all guidelines regarding research ethics and academic honesty.** Not doing so ruins careers and can result in your dismissal. *Please ask questions frequently and often on this topic so that I can point you in the right direction or to useful resources.*
- **To be resourceful.** You are all here to learn. You typically learn things better when you must work through the problem on your own. And I don't have all the answers either. So, ask questions, but be sure to search for answers on your own first.
- **To be a full part of this lab community.** We are a team and should encourage and support each other. We should celebrate each other's' successes and failures. This means that I expect everyone to be present at, and prepared for, weekly lab meetings. Please notify me if you are unable to attend. Preparation helps us all succeed.
- **To occasionally fail.** That sounds harsh, but failure is a part of academia. If you aren't failing, then you aren't aiming high enough with your goals. Papers get rejected. Grant proposals get declined. It's not always fair, but you should celebrate each failure just like each success, because it means that you're pushing yourself. I suggest keeping a list of your failures so that you can better reflect on how you are improving.
- **To respect my time as I respect yours.** If we have a meeting scheduled, I expect you to be on time or to let me know if you will be late. I will do the same.
- **To be prepared for our weekly update meetings.** I find that these regular meetings and short-term goals set at each are a good way to ensure long-term success. Coming into these meetings prepared will ensure a productive, efficient meeting. I also expect students to send me requested documents with sufficient time for me to read prior to our meetings.

- **To be a good lab citizen.** Running a lab is a huge collective effort, and we all contribute to the success of the lab. I expect everyone to contribute to the overall lab upkeep. No one else is going to do these things for us, so look around, see what needs doing (and realize that others are probably doing things for you already) and pitch in. Chipping in will ensure our lab does not become a tragedy of commons.
- **To actively pursue funds to support your research,** even if we already have resources available. Procuring external funds is one of the most important aspects of your training - learning to sell your ideas - and it takes a lot of practice. Submitting proposals and applications will require you to improve as a writer and as a thinker.
- **To be a good role model and to mentor to less senior lab members.** Learning to mentor and supervise is critical for developing the leadership skills needed in most careers.
- **To keep on top of your coursework and degree requirements.** I will help you select courses that will benefit your chosen career path, but ultimately completing these courses and ensuring that you have met all degree requirements is your responsibility.
- **To contribute to a positive, collaborative, and productive environment within the department, and within CLUE.** Attending departmental seminars, participating in professional development opportunities, attending socials (when possible), and contributing to graduate organizations and to SFFGS and CLUE symposium are all things that I expect of you to enhance the overall atmosphere of these groups and to assist in building your professional network. View your fellow students as collaborators, colleagues, and resources rather than competitors.
- Unless I explicitly say so, **official documents need my approval before submission.** These include conference abstracts, posters, manuscripts, grants, reports to agencies, etc. Please ask if you are unsure.

Additional Considerations

You should have a life outside of graduate school: I expect you to focus on your personal well-being, because a happy, energized person is a more productive person. If you need to re-arrange your schedule to achieve this, please let me know. If you are struggling with physical or mental health, you are welcome to discuss this with me and I am happy to discuss strategies and resources for achieving work-life balance.

Vacation: Graduate assistants are entitled to five (5) days off per semester appointment, which is credited to you at the beginning of each semester. While it is sometimes difficult to get away from work, I advise you to take this time. However, taking these days requires my approval. Please give me at least 2 weeks' notice (or more) when wanting to take time off. Approval is contingent on your progress, and you are required to make all preparations to ensure the continued success of your project in your absence.

Communications: I encourage you to contact me with questions as they arise. All members of the lab have my contact information (email, office phone, cell phone). However, note that I follow the same guidelines for work-life balance. So, please don't expect me to respond outside of the normal work week. Also, if you see my office door closed, it typically means I am working

on something time sensitive. Please do not disturb me unless it is an emergency. Otherwise send an email about the issue and I will respond when I can.

Professionalism: A professional work environment is crucial to lab success. I don't mean that you need to dress in a particular way or never curse. I mean that we interact with one another in a professional manner - no gossiping, no projecting bad moods onto others, no snarky comments. Your lab members are your current and future colleagues and collaborators. I expect you to respect and maintain healthy colleague-colleague and mentor/supervisor-advisee/employee boundaries. In addition, I expect all to value diversity. That is, everyone will contribute to a work environment that is welcoming and respectful to all regardless of ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.

Professional development: Take advantage of professional development opportunities that will help you meet your career goals. These opportunities include seminars, presentations, writing proposals, joining/forming journal clubs, career training, etc. I can help to guide you on what opportunities will be most beneficial.

Evaluations: Each year we will have a formal meeting to discuss your job performance, individual development plan, and progress in meeting degree targets (see below). Evaluations can be uncomfortable, but you should look at them as a positive opportunity to learn how to improve. During this meeting I will also ask you to evaluate me as an advisor. I appreciate open, honest critiques that can help me to make the lab a better place to work, and that can help me to help you in meeting your goals. Note that this evaluation discussion will contribute to the formal performance evaluation that I am required to submit to the department annually.

Program Targets for Ph.D.

End of year 1:	Well-written draft dissertation proposal, Committee formed First committee meeting to present proposal ideas
End of year 2:	Written and Oral Preliminary Exams Completed Submission of final dissertation proposal
End of year 3:	Update committee meeting Draft of Dissertation Introduction and first two chapters completed First completed chapter submitted for publication
End of year 4 (mid Semester):	Dissertation completed Defense Submission of Dissertation to Graduate College

Program Targets for M.S. (thesis based)

End of 1 st semester:	Committee formed An initial committee meeting to explain project is a good goal
End of year 1:	Well-written draft thesis proposal, 2 nd committee meeting to present proposal ideas
End of year 2 (mid Semester):	Thesis completed Defense Submission of Dissertation to Graduate College