

Mentor-Mentee Compact for Zaganjor Lab

Goals: The overall goal of our lab is to discover metabolic dysfunctions that progress into disease. Specifically, we study the role of mitochondrial signaling in cancer and type II diabetes. It is my hope that these basic biological findings will ultimately have translational impact and benefit the society. Our studies rely on interdisciplinary approaches consisting of cellular and animal models, biochemical tools, screening, metabolomics, and imaging technology.

My primary job is to further the research. This includes: 1) training research assistants, students and postdocs to be critical and hypothesis-driven scientists, 2) obtaining funding, 3) disseminating the findings through publishing and presentations/teaching.

As part of your Ph.D. training you will have the opportunity to train as a researcher and develop your career path. You will perform the experiments, analyze the data, create figures for presentations, write primary manuscripts and review articles as well as present your findings.

Expectations: It is a privilege to have students in the lab that are interested in the same scientific questions as I am and work tirelessly toward achieving our mutual goals! It is my job to contribute toward your professional development on many levels. I can help you set goals and achieve them if we work closely together. What this requires of you is:

- Learn how to plan, design, and conduct high quality scientific research
- Learn how to document your work in your lab notebook
- Learn how to present your work in a public setting
- Be honest and ethical
- Be collaborative and a good lab citizen- engaged with our research group and with our research community at Vanderbilt and nationally
- Treat your labmates, lab funds, equipment, and mice with respect
- Work on science that is exciting to you and when needed ask for help
- Take ownership in building a positive and collegial lab environment you enjoy working in

Our Team: Though everyone in the lab will have their own project with the goal of publishing first author papers, we will work as a team helping each other succeed. Your labmate's success is also your success! Science does not progress in isolation- I cannot emphasize this enough. As part of working as a team, we will:

- Attend and actively participate in all group meetings.
- Be critical of the science, but polite and gentle to the presenter.
- Strive to be the very best lab citizen.
- Be proactive in re-ordering common supplies, sign up for shared equipment, communicate and resolve issues as they arise.
- Please be respectful of your labmates. Respect their individual differences in values, personalities, and work styles.
- Be a good collaborator. Engage in collaboration within and beyond our group. Acknowledge the effort of collaborators - In your slide presentations and as we write papers together, it is imperative that we acknowledge the individuals who have helped us along the way.

Research skills:

- Experimentation: Vanderbilt is an amazing place full of opportunities for you to learn new research skills. Some of these will be from your labmates in our own lab, but many will be from collaborators, students in other labs, core lab personnel, etc. Please take advantage of these opportunities.
- Presentations: Challenge yourself by finding opportunities beyond what I or the department require of you. The more often you present your work, the easier it will become and the better you will be.
- Literature: Take ownership and be the expert. No one should know more about your project than you! However, this is a long process, so don't be too hard on yourself!
- Lab notebooks: Maintain a detailed lab notebook that is indexed in the front.
- Training others: Mentoring and training other students (undergrads, rotating, summer) is a valuable experience for you. Please embrace the opportunity.

Our relationship: The success AND happiness of my lab members is of paramount importance to me. I want you to enjoy your time in the lab and I want to have a good relationship with you built on respect, transparency and trust.

My expectations of you:

- Good, productive communication: If things are not going well or if you need help, please communicate this, I want to help. If things are going great, I want to hear about that too!
- Be mindful of deadlines: I will do my best to get your written materials back to you in a timely manner. However, you must do your part to get drafts to me in a way that gives me enough time to get them back to you. We will need many iterations on important documents such as your research proposal, grants, and manuscript. Be prepared to start months in advance of deadlines.
- That you will work hard when you are able, and that you will accept that productivity ebbs and flows throughout your time in graduate school. Don't be hard on yourself when things don't work, your personal life takes up space, or when you are feeling burned out.
- You will communicate with me when any of the above situations arise so that I may support you in whatever way necessary through the Graduate Life Coach, the University Counseling Center, or project/experimental trouble shooting.
- That research assistants and trainees will take allotted vacation time, and that you will take advantage of your sick/wellness leave when appropriate.
<https://medschool.vanderbilt.edu/bret/parental-leave-policy/>

What you should expect from me:

- I will work tirelessly for the good of the lab. The success of every member of my group is my top priority – this means you!
- I will be available for regular meetings and informal conversations.
- I will help you with graduate-related work. I will come to all of your committee meetings, presentations, etc.
- I will communicate with you openly about authorship and will do my best to provide you collaborative opportunities within and outside my lab so that your Biosketch will be strong when you leave my group.

- I will teach you to communicate. While your primary goal is to complete the research required of you for your degree, communicating these data in an organized, comprehensive, and understandable way is equally important. I will teach you how to write and I will teach you how to give a good presentation.
- I will encourage you to attend national conferences at appropriate times in your graduate career.
- I will strive to be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful of you. I recognize that we all come from different backgrounds and walks of life and have different goals. I will not treat everyone in the lab identically, but I will strive to be fair. I view my role as fostering your independence, confidence, critical thinking, and creativity.
- I will support all your future career plans and try to help you achieve them.
- I will lead by example. I will be transparent with you regarding the joys and difficulties associated with my job.

How we will all contribute to the lab culture:

- We will foster a culture in which lab members feel comfortable approaching each other for assistance, support and the exchange of ideas.
- We will foster a lab culture in which new members are made to feel welcomed.
- An important part of creating an inclusive lab environment is allowing each other the space to grow and the opportunity to make mistakes. Cancel culture serves no one, so when an area of opportunity presents itself, members will:
 - Hold each other accountable when something harmful has been said in a way that will lead to mutual understanding.
 - Recognize that impact is more important than intent. Not intending to cause harm does not absolve one of it.
 - Take responsibility for understanding WHY something said/done is problematic.
 - Apologize by acknowledging the impact of one's words and actions, taking responsibility, expressing genuine remorse, and allowing the other person the time and space to process.
- We will create a culture that values each person, and accepts them for their most authentic selves in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity. This means that the lab will engage in formal and informal discourse surrounding important social and human rights issues that impact scholars both inside and outside of academia.