

# Memorandum of Understanding

## for Graduate Students in Ron Coleman's Laboratory at California State University, Sacramento

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Date: August 6, 2012

The purpose of this document is to spell out the requirements and expectations that I have for graduate students in my lab. I put a tremendous amount of time, energy and resources into my students because I want each of them to succeed to their fullest potential. To make this possible, I expect each student to recognize and understand that working towards a Masters degree is not just about adding something to their resume, and it is certainly not about taking a bunch of courses; it is about being part of our research lab and being part of the Department and University. I expect students to contribute to the betterment of each and all of these in any way that they can, e.g., assisting fellow students, volunteering for such things as Open House, serving on departmental committees if possible and doing and presenting great research.

The student must realize that while it is essential that the student meet the coursework requirements for the degree, I regard the coursework as of secondary importance relative to the thesis research.

The student must realize that ultimately the student is responsible for meeting all the requirements of their degree, including keeping on top of deadlines, procedures, etc. I try to assist whenever possible, but ultimately it is the student's responsibility to make sure that everything is done and done correctly.

## General Rules

### Research

1. The student will engage in publication-quality research. The research topic will be worked out in collaboration with myself. A student not engaged in publication-quality research will not be allowed to Advance to Candidacy nor to apply for Graduation. This kind of research requires a minimum of 10-20 hours a week devoted JUST to research (this is in addition to classes, working, etc).
2. I expect to be involved in the intellectual development of the research and to provide guidance throughout. The work will be submitted for publication, **PRIOR to graduation**. I expect the student to be the primary author on this work with me as a co-author. If a student has other contractual agreements associated with the work, such as might exist with funding bodies or government agencies, I must be informed of these prior to the student joining the lab. I will not accept a student under any circumstance which prevents me from being an author on the thesis research due to other contractual agreements. \*\*\*\* If a student has not prepared a manuscript for publication within 6 months of graduating, I retain the right to write the manuscript and submit the material with my name as first author.
3. I expect each student to seek out and take advantage of opportunities to present their research at conferences, symposia, student research competitions, etc. as oral or poster presentations.

Initials \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## Funding

4. I expect each student to seek out and apply for any available sources of funding to assist in their graduate career, such as small research grants. At a minimum, this means applying for Sigma Xi student research grants **twice a year**, unless the student has already secured research funding. I expect students to apply for any other "small money" grants that are applicable to their area of research, e.g., American Cichlid Association Jordan Fund, North American Native Fish Association (NANFA) research grants, etc. A beginning student is excused from these applications for their **first semester only**.

5. The student will be involved in the operation, maintenance and development of the lab and laboratory group. This includes attending lab meetings and helping maintain the fish room and other facilities. Any student with fish in the fish room is expected to care for them and must clearly arrange for their care if the student is unable to do so such as when the student is out of town. Such a student is also expected to contribute to the general maintenance of other fish in the lab.

## Timeliness and Progress

6. I expect the student to be motivated to complete the program in a reasonable period of time. This period of time will differ depending on individual circumstances, but the key point is that the student must be working toward this goal. If a student does not show progress on a research topic for an entire semester, that topic becomes available for another student to pursue.

7. I expect the student to keep me informed of their progress. This will involve regular one-on-one meetings and semester-end reports. Every student will produce a progress report at the end of each semester and at the end of the summer. The report will detail what progress has been made in the past and plans for the future. These are due on **May 15, August 15, and December 15**. The format of these reports is specified in another document.

8. The student is expected to read all correspondence from me and **respond in a timely manner** to any requests for information, e.g., within a couple of days. A week later is NOT a timely manner.

9. The student is expected to regularly check the lab web pages and to alert me to any problems, misinformation, etc. Students are encouraged to create their own web page describing their research.

10. The presentation portion of the Advancement to Candidacy meeting will be "open" to the public, i.e., I do not condone nor accept such meetings as being "closed" and will not attend such a meeting.

11. The student will provide me with final printed copies of all abstracts, proposals, manuscripts, applications, permits, awards, etc. I place these in the student's individual folder as part of their permanent record. You are not to look in this folder without permission.

12. At the end of a student's degree, the student must return any keys which they have been assigned; provide me with a hardbound copy of their thesis (at their expense), and make every effort to attend their own graduation ceremony.

13. Before I will sign off on a thesis, the student must have completed any obligations, e.g., final reports, articles, presentations, to funding agencies/organizations or made arrangements to the satisfaction of the funding organization such that I am not liable to complete any obligations.

14. In the event that a student leaves the lab without graduating, all items related to any research conducted in connection with the lab, e.g., data, samples, are to be left in the lab in an orderly manner. The student relinquishes all rights to those materials.

### **The Lab Environment**

15. I expect students to maintain the lab in a neat and orderly manner, i.e., don't leave stuff in the sinks, do your best to keep desks looking presentable. We share this space with each other so leave the lab how you would hope to find it. This applies in particular to the aquarium rooms. Do not leave dirt, gravel, etc in the sinks or in the buckets. Do not leave nets lying around. The aquarium rooms must always be "inspection ready" because we are regularly inspected by the campus veterinarian and health and safety officers.

16. The lab is **NOT** a silent working place. Go somewhere else for that.

17. My office is in the lab. I maintain an open door policy at all times if possible. You are free to ask me questions any time I am in the lab unless I explicitly say not to (which is very rare) or I shut the door to my office (which is extremely rare). A big part of the success of our lab is because I try to be freely available to all my students. Evenings in particular are excellent times to have a chat. There may be times when we are chatting when someone else has an urgent need to interrupt. I ask that you understand and be patient – there will come a time when you have a similar need.

### **Written Materials**

18. It is not my place to do basic editing on your writing. In other words, any documents you have me look at should have **ALREADY** been checked for spelling and grammatical errors. NEVER ask me to look at something "for the basic idea" when you have not checked the spelling and grammar first. Correct spelling and grammar are integral to the meaning of a document and I cannot evaluate something without those being correct.

### **Consequences**

A student not abiding by the above general rules may be removed from the lab at any time with no further obligation on my part to the student.

### **Certification**

I, (print name) \_\_\_\_\_

certify that I have read, understand and agree to abide by the statements in this document.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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