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Salerno Lab Compact – more like guidelines, not binding rules

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Welcome to our lab. This document describes my expectations for students and postdocs, and is meant to facilitate discussion around expectations of me and fellow lab members. That is, the compact is simply meant to make the lab work better through helping to establish norms of community. While designed for grad students, the majority of the compact applies to undergrads, postdocs, and other affiliates as well.

Priorities: These are mine, but directed at/for you (i.e., these are what I envision as priorities of labmembers). You may not put them in this order, but they all warrant your consideration.

- Emotional and mental wellbeing of everyone in the lab – take this seriously (see below)
- Creating the environment and providing the tools to learn and practice rigorous, hypothesis-driven science (see below)
- Advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice goals through research and mentorship, particularly in support of student empowerment and belonging (see below)
- Together meeting the timelines of student project and degree requirements
- Fulfilling all teaching and other obligations external to the lab – it is students' responsibility to make sure these are made clear (to them, and to me)
- Providing/receiving adequate professional development specific to individual career goals
- Establishing and maintaining partnerships that support equitable research (see below)

Expectations: All members of the lab, myself included, are expected to conform to these principles of professional and scientific conduct.

- [CSU principles of community](#) – students are expected to be good humans, to all humans, at all times
- Take action in support of our lab [diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice goals](#); feel welcome to add or contribute to these (see also Chaudhary & Berhe (2020) and Arif et al. (2021))
- Open advisee-advisor communication regarding all academic issues – students are expected to raise any questions or concerns when they arise, and I will do the same (my door is always open; but see below for other channels of communication and reporting)
- Professional communication, respectful discourse, positive interactions – these expectations go beyond the CSU principles of community to ensure the lab is a supportive and productive community
- Participation in lab meetings and activities, contribution to discussions, support of colleagues' science

- Mentorship – there's a hierarchy, sometimes good and sometimes bad but it's there; here we focus on the good side of this hierarchy and expect that all lab members actively mentor their junior colleagues
- Shape your environment to your needs – what I mean here is that I don't expect my mentorship or the lab's support to be sufficient in all dimensions for everyone, so take the freedom to cultivate whatever additional professional and personal relationships that you need (i.e., I encourage you to cultivate outside mentors and scientific support networks)
- No student or other labmember should tolerate any form of bias, harassment, or discrimination; it is my responsibility to support and protect you and to hold others accountable (see here for [CSU's anonymous reporting system](#))

On being a global scientific citizen: This expectation warrants its own section. If labmembers conduct fieldwork, and/or interact with anyone outside the campus: (i) during all professional interactions, you are expected to behave respectfully, with appreciation of knowledge that others hold and biases and legacies that you/we inherently carry; (ii) during all research activities, you are expected to abide by local norms and laws, establish community relationships before any research is conducted (and ideally before any research is designed), gain informed consent from all relevant parties prior to any data collection, and establish an agreement regarding returning research findings to communities. Results-sharing agreements and the associated products are considered a requirement of degree completion. As a part of community engagement and results sharing, students are expected to product an audience-appropriate research brief for each thesis, chapter, or paper, and integrate this into their results sharing. See David-Chavez (2018), Ibbett & Brittain (2019), and Brittain et al. (2020); also, Russ Bernard (1988) establishes accepted norms of community research.

Deadlines, degree benchmarks, and degree requirements: I am a relatively new advisor, and many students have never done this before. This means no one should assume that anyone knows what to do, or by what date. Students are responsible for understanding and following HDNR, GDPE, WCNR, and CSU requirements for their degree. These include deadlines and requirements for courses, credits, progress reviews, committees, signatures, and thesis completion.

We will hold 1-on-1 big-picture planning meetings at the beginning and end of each semester. Students will maintain their pptx degree plan docs, which inform these meetings. If you prefer to also to maintain an individual development plan, [here is the one we use from GPDE](#).

Regarding the products of a degree (this is important), PhD students are expected at to submit at minimum three papers to peer reviewed journals by/around the completion of their program, and MS students are expected to submit one.

Scientific integrity: We are growing up in academic environments that incentivize malpractice and zero-sum competitiveness. Bad outcomes include data mining, p-value hacking/star gazing, poor inter-human

behavior, and general tension among what should otherwise be collaborative, supportive relationships. You are expected to push back against this by doing good science and supporting its creation by others.

Funding: Upon acceptance into the lab and grad program, students will receive an informal offer letter from me that lays out funding, along with uncertainty. HDNR or GDPE will provide formal offer letters for annual GTA positions. Students are responsible for managing their own funding, although I will be right there with you to help figure the knowns and unknowns; funding is a standing topic in semester planning meetings, aided by your degree plan doc. Students are expected to apply for external funding opportunities.

Data: You must form your own modes of data management and curation. It is extremely important to follow good practices. I'm happy to help you formulate practices, but ultimately you need to figure out what works for you. The only universal rules are that (i) anonymous data must stay anonymous, the same goes for data that should be deidentified; (ii) all data and projects (scripts) must be backed up and secured; and (iii) sharing lab/project data outside of lab must be discussed with and cleared by me. We have various data management plans and sharing agreements associated with different projects, with which you should be familiar (and adhere to where relevant) and use to shape your own practices.

Progress and feedback: We will hold 30-minute weekly advisor-student meetings (and there are the semester beginning/end big-picture meetings). The point of weekly meetings is to keep us both on track. Students are responsible for scheduling and leading these meetings. Regarding making me the advisor you want, please feel welcome to give me feedback in the way that makes you most comfortable: in person (again, my door is always open); anonymously through Mike Manfredo, Department Head; anonymously though my mentoring committee (Tara Teel, Brett Bruyere, Kevin Crooks); or, through any other channels you see appropriate.

Cultural and scientific malpractice: Any act of harassment, discrimination, or scientific misconduct is potentially grounds for removal from the lab.

The nuts and bolts (lab norms, just setting the baseline)
- Read lots of science, don't assume others have read or should read what you have read, and push back as hard as you can against anxious feelings of not having read enough
- Work hours and location are set by individuals and respected by all – create your own environment to do good science
  - Notably, recent years have come with a shift to working remotely. While I'm ok with this, most advisors feel that remote work is a barrier to doing good science and feeling supported. Grad school and postdocs are group processes, which tend to work better in person. Try to be on campus, at least on a set schedule, and work together.

- - If I feel individuals' ways of working are less productive than they could be otherwise, then I will bring this up (don't take it personally)
- Attend weekly lab meetings
- Access professional development resources from the [National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity](#)
- All students are expected to submit grant proposals for research and travel funding; this holds regardless of funding situation (it makes you better at science)
- Respond to all lab-related emails within three working days (an appropriate response is "I'll respond to this email by *xxxDate*"); I need this level of communication to stay on top of things
  - Respect different work habits in the lab
  - I expect prompt responses to communication during normal work hours; I do not expect responses outside of normal work hours
- Because of varied work habits and timezones, communication happens at all times – it's the responsibility of the individual to silence or turn off alerts if you don't want a WhatsApp at 3am (for instance)
- We are colleagues and we do science together – provide timely input on chapter drafts, presentations, and manuscripts of labmembers
  - We are also busy – friendly reminders are or should be welcome (see 3-day point above)
- We've tried Slack, and currently use Teams to try and share relevant stuff
  - Appropriate Teams material/usage: sharing papers, jobs, conferences, day-to-day logistics and chatter – this is an effort to cut down on emails
  - Most communication that's relevant beyond a 24hr-ish period should be emailed, at least to me

Getting started: These points are all specific to showing up in Fort Collins and a student or postdoc's first few months.
- My expectations for 1ˢᵗ-semester students are:
  - Complete all coursework; take everything you need from classes, while remembering that grad school grades don't matter much
  - Complete all GTA/GRA requirements
  - Participate in all lab functions (see above)
  - Participate in all required departmental and CSU functions
  - Be thinking hard about your research project
- Students will not have additional lab-related responsibilities outside of those stated just above, unless they are tied to your funding (i.e., you won't be expected to do extra stuff like copy edit papers or do my admin)
- Incoming students are not expected to read-up before arriving; it's better to show up rested and excited
- Students are expected to arrive in Fort Collins in time for their degree program (and GTA) orientation, which is typically the week before the start of classes
- We will set up a meeting once you arrive, and we'll cover all the things that need to be covered, including scheduling the weekly 1-on-1s for the semester, planning tools, etc.

Collaborations and authorship: You are free to work on whatever and with whomever you choose. However, we will discuss together all substantive collaborations (i.e., those involving data sharing, proposals, presentations, papers) and authorship; it's the responsibility of the student to keep me informed on these things as they arise. You must get written approval prior to submission from all people listed as authors on a piece of science. I will be listed as a co-author on all student science from their degree. We will together discuss additional co-authors, erring on the side of most inclusive. The Weltzin et al. (2006) *FrEE* and Walker et al. (2020) *IJCREI* papers are great sources to consult.

Mental Health: I am borrowing this section from a much smarter and well-balanced professor. Certain attributes of graduate research may challenge your mental health. Specific factors driving this include:
- Low pay and quality-of-life issues, particularly as a function of living in an expensive place
- Uncertainty in your research; at some point in your research it is likely that certain questions will be more challenging to answer than anticipated, or that you will feel you have spent days/months/years toiling with little to show
- Burnout; i.e. feeling the need to work endless hours to make up for the above issues
- Uncertainty in your post-graduate degree career

All graduate students come across most of these challenges at some level. I strongly encourage everyone to take an active and pre-emptive approach toward the maintenance of their mental wellbeing. If there is anything that is causing undue stress, or preventing you from performing at your potential, please do not hesitate to let me know; I am here to help. You should also be familiar resources on campus (e.g., mental and emotional health network; see also the NCFDD link above). Most importantly, we are a close community and exist to help one another.

Signatures below indicate that we've read and understood the compact, and have discussed any questions or uncertainties.