

Graduate Student Advising Statement

Cesare Orlandi
Department of Pharmacology and Physiology
University of Rochester
Cesare.Orlandi@urmc.rochester.edu

This advising philosophy statement aims to improve communication and transparency in our working relationship. It serves as a flexible guideline informed by our ongoing interactions, not as rigid requirements. It can be updated as needed. Importantly, it does not replace existing program, departmental, or university policies. It is your responsibility to be aware of applicable policies, and I will gladly direct you to the appropriate resources.

Mentoring Philosophy

My primary goal as a mentor is to ensure the success of my trainees. I work towards this by fostering a supportive and inclusive lab environment that welcomes individuals from diverse backgrounds to excel. I believe that creating a culture of mutual respect and collaboration enables our team to produce high-quality scientific work. I strongly advocate for empowering each trainee to take ownership of their research projects, as I see this as the key to driving significant advancements in our field. It is my responsibility to guide trainees in developing critical thinking skills and effective scientific communication abilities. I offer direction in experimental design, scientific writing, and provide ongoing feedback through regular one-on-one meetings and opportunities for project discussions at lab meetings, departmental venues, and international conferences. I am dedicated to providing a work environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, and free from harassment. I encourage open communication where trainees feel comfortable expressing their needs.

Specific Guidelines

Working hours

Achieving success as a science student demands significant dedication, persistence, patience, creativity, and even some luck. Typically, this entails committing at least 40 "productive" hours per week in the lab, which includes designing experiments, refining techniques, conducting research, and analyzing data. Moreover, additional time is necessary for reading literature, building collaborations, and drafting scientific documents like thesis proposals, manuscripts, and grant applications, as well as preparing research presentations. Realistically, you'll often find yourself working closer to 50 hours per week, and sometimes even more, to excel. Remember that many talented students across various institutions are putting in this level of effort, if not more. Whether you see it or not, you are competing with them for publications, fellowships, and ultimately, career opportunities.

Research doesn't always fit into a 9-5 schedule. Sometimes, experimental work requires weekends or evenings. The key is to use your time in the lab efficiently. It's crucial to distinguish between merely being present and being productive. Among the many skills you'll gain during your PhD, mastering time management is one of the most valuable. I am here to discuss strategies for managing your time and prioritizing tasks effectively. Good time management is essential for maintaining a healthy work-life balance. I encourage trainees to pursue outside interests and hobbies, prioritize their well-being by eating well, getting enough rest, and taking care of their mental health. Make the most of your vacation time and university holidays to recharge. This approach ensures that you bring your best to the lab each day and do not feel like your work is consuming your life entirely.

Trainees are expected to work full-time in the lab, and maintaining regular hours is strongly recommended. Consistency in your schedule helps streamline the workflow for everyone, avoiding unnecessary disruptions and time-wasting searches for items like PCR primers. While there are exceptions such as exams, writing assignments, or personal commitments, students are generally

expected to prioritize their lab work. This includes conducting experiments, analyzing data, staying updated with literature, and honing professional skills.

Time off

Vacation. Students are encouraged to utilize their allotted two weeks of vacation time per calendar year, in addition to the 7 official University holidays as per University policy. Please note that semester breaks are not automatically considered holidays. I expect students to notify me of their vacation plans at least two weeks in advance and to carefully consider whether it is an appropriate time to be away from the lab. Factors such as the availability of reagents, animal models, equipment, and upcoming deadlines should inform your decision regarding the timing of your vacation. Vacations exceeding two weeks **may** be accommodated with my approval, provided they do not disrupt any experimental plans.

Personal time. Trainees are allotted personal time for illnesses, mental health concerns, family emergencies, and short-term disability. If you are unwell, please stay home and notify me via email. In case of a family emergency, prioritize your family, and then inform me when possible. You have the right to privacy, and there's no obligation to disclose the specifics of your situation. Any information you share will be kept confidential at your request.

Resources: [University Health Services](#) has several locations, including in the Medical Center (Room 1-5077, UR Medical Center) the [UR Employee Pharmacy](#), which provides common over-the-counter medication and prescription medicines, is nearby. Mental Health Counseling is provided by the [University Counseling Center](#) Medical Center, Room 1-5091A.

Family Leave. The lab adheres to University policies regarding trainee leave after the birth or adoption of a child. Graduate students are entitled to up to 8 weeks of leave following childbirth or adoption. For more information see the [family-friendly policy page](#). Postdocs serving as primary caregivers receive up to 8 weeks of paid leave, compensated at their current funding level. Parental Leave also contributes to the annual entitlement for Paid Family Leave (PFL) and Family Medical Leave (FMLA), with all leaves running concurrently. Both parents are eligible for Paid Family Leave. Further details on PFL and FMLA can be found on the Office of Human Resources [leave administration web page](#).

Conduct of Research

Research practices. All trainees are expected to explicitly reject questionable research practices, and conduct their research in a way that is transparent, rigorous, and ethical. They should be familiar with, and abide by, the University of Rochester's [Policy on Research Misconduct](#). Academic misconduct can be reported online at <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/about-us/values-culture.aspx>.

The Orlandi lab is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment where everyone feels valued and respected. We strive to create a climate of collaboration trust, openness, advocacy for others, and mutual respect, free from bullying, harassment, or any other type of harmful behavior. Trainees are encouraged to actively participate in fostering a climate of collegiality, belonging, and acceptance by recognizing and honoring the diverse backgrounds and life experiences of all lab members.

All trainees and staff are responsible for ensuring the efficient operation of the lab. This involves timely ordering and sharing of reagents, proper maintenance of equipment, and contributing to general lab upkeep such as cleaning and preparing solutions as needed and without being asked. Established protocols can always be improved if appropriate controls and comparisons are applied. **Please read manuals, instructions, and data sheets of reagents and equipment. Do what is recommended!**

Record keeping. Reproducibility lies at the core of the scientific method. Maintaining thorough and clear records is crucial for others to understand and replicate your work, ensuring the integrity of scientific research. Show kindness to those who follow by keeping organized and detailed notebooks. It's essential that your notes can be decoded and provide relevant details for presentations, publications, etc. However, I expect more than just the minimum effort. Your notes should be organized to the extent that another team member can easily follow your work. While you're welcome to keep electronic and/or hard copies

of your work, **all records must be accessible to me at all times**. Please remember that all lab notebooks (electronic or physical) and data are the property of the lab, not individual trainees.

Data management. All original data should be found in at least two places. Generally, one will be your computer or the computer on which the data was recorded and the other will be the Box drive. If you're unsure how best to implement this for new data types, please let me know and we will find a solution.

Communication. The default method for electronic communication with me is through my university email address cesare_orlandi@urmc.rochester.edu. Please try to respond to any inquiries received outside of normal work hours as soon as possible the next day you are back in the lab. If there is an emergency (e.g. lab fire or flood), please call or text me, regardless of time, at 561 401 1372.

Cleaning. Everyone in the lab is responsible for cleaning their immediate area, whatever major equipment they use, emptying unneeded items from the fridge/freezers, defrosting, backing up data, and other tasks as needed. Periodically, the lab will agree on a date when everyone will spend the day working together to clean and organize the lab.

Lab meeting. Our lab meetings are held every Friday at 8:45 AM in room 1-8513. Lab meeting attendance is mandatory. You are encouraged to present your recent data, new ideas, practice talks, or lead a journal club discussion on relevant papers. The idea is to create a safe environment for discussing our work and to get helpful feedback from colleagues. Please use this [Google signup sheet](#).

Relationships

Advisor-trainee relationship. Advising trainees in their research endeavors and nurturing their professional growth are top priorities for me as an academic scientist. I maintain an open-door policy and encourage trainees to approach me with any questions, problems, unexpected findings, small victories, or if they need advice. Whether in the lab, hallway, or office, feel free to stop me for a discussion. If I am not available in person, please reach out via email, and for urgent matters contact me by phone or text.

Trainees are required to schedule a weekly meeting with me. During these sessions, we review your work from the past week, troubleshoot experiments, and establish goals for the upcoming weeks. To facilitate this, you should bring copies of your protocols, raw data, and analysis. Trainees need to attend both lab meetings and one-on-one meetings punctually and be ready to discuss their results. I am equally committed to being prepared and respecting your time. Chronic unpreparedness for meetings is unprofessional and disrespectful. We should both honor each other's time and efforts.

I expect trainees to work independently and take the initiative to problem-solve on their own. Senior students are encouraged to offer guidance generously to newer students. If a mentoring relationship becomes overly time-consuming for you, please inform me, and I will address the issue. Conversely, trainees who require more frequent guidance are welcome to seek it from me. Ultimately, my aim is for all trainees to develop into independent researchers and teachers by the time they leave the University.

Trainee relationships. Time spent in the lab can be rewarding, especially when research progresses well, although it is often challenging. Working as a supportive team enhances the experience. I expect all trainees to foster a collegial environment, offering helpful interactions, providing honest feedback, and accepting constructive criticism graciously. Professional conduct, kindness, understanding, and respect towards lab mates are essential. Being a good lab mate involves leaving shared spaces as you found them, if not better. Clean up any mess you make and replenish supplies when needed. Trainees are expected to train others. Teaching complex concepts or experiments to others is the most effective way to solidify your understanding. Training and mentoring others are invaluable transferable skills essential in any career. This is an ideal time to develop and refine these skills.

While consensual intimate relationships may occur between trainees, it's crucial to balance personal privacy with transparency to ensure individuals' protection and mitigate potential conflicts of interest. Individuals are prohibited from engaging in intimate relationships with anyone over whom they exercise academic authority. University guidelines can be found here: [Faculty Policy on Intimate Relationships](#).

Department participation. Effective communication and networking are invaluable for future job searches. Trainees should seize every opportunity to enhance their communication skills. This includes asking questions in seminars, presenting posters at retreats or departmental functions, leading discussions in journal clubs, conducting lab demos for new students, attending speaker lunches, and actively engaging in departmental activities. These experiences not only facilitate learning, scientific discussions, and networking but also foster friendships and professional connections that can be beneficial for future career endeavors. Participation in these activities is expected from all trainees.

Conflict resolution. Conflicts within a group can arise, but early communication is crucial for minimizing them. If you have any concerns about your interactions with me or others, please don't hesitate to discuss them with me. If you prefer confidentiality, please make that clear at the beginning of our conversation. If you're uncomfortable talking to me directly, I suggest reaching out to the department chair, graduate program director, or an ombudsperson. You can find a list of other available support resources and individuals to speak with [here](#).

Professional Development

Goal Setting and Accountability. Setting goals is a valuable professional practice to develop during your training period. It is beneficial to have multiple goals of varying lengths and difficulties. It is important for me, as your advisor, to be aware of your current goals to better support you. I am here to assist you in defining your goals and adopting practices to hold yourself accountable. I understand that goals can evolve, so please inform me promptly if they change. I will help you track your progress through our weekly meetings, project reports at lab meetings, and yearly evaluations.

Publications. For PhD students, the goal is to publish at least three high-quality first-author papers during their degree. I expect my trainees to increasingly demonstrate independence in directing each project based on the collected data. Our regular meetings will be used to shape the narrative of our research and determine if it is ready for publication. I pledge never to delay publication for non-experimental reasons. Advisees need to understand that their publication record is ultimately their responsibility; they will reap what they sow in terms of hard work and diligence. Your publication record significantly impacts your CV and influences employers' decisions about you. A strong publication record enhances your chances of securing future opportunities.

Authorship. Whenever possible, authorship is determined early in the process. Anyone making a significant contribution to the study, such as developing the original idea, experimental design, data collection, analysis, manuscript writing, or assisting with resubmission, will be listed as an author. As a general rule, you will be listed as an author if the final manuscript would not be the same without your contribution. The first author typically leads project execution, manuscript writing, and revision oversight. Even if they leave the lab, the first author retains primary responsibility for the publication process. If new experiments are needed due to reviewer comments and the first author has left the lab, someone else may complete them, and any potential revisions to the author list/order will be openly discussed. While I make authorship decisions, it is an ongoing conversation as your work progresses.

Literature. A thorough understanding of past and current scientific literature is essential for a successful research career. Therefore, I expect my students to dedicate significant time each week to reading scientific literature directly related to their research projects and broadly relevant to the field. Starting with articles published from our lab is recommended. Additionally, staying updated on recent advancements in the field is crucial. Trainees should regularly search the PubMed database and subscribe to article alerts using platforms like Google Scholar, MyNCBI, BioRxiv, or PubCrawler. These tools allow you to set up customized keyword searches and receive alerts about relevant articles, ensuring you stay informed about important developments in the field.

Conferences/Meetings. Subject to funding availability, I anticipate all lab members to participate in at least one conference annually. If the lab covers your conference expenses, I expect you to present either a poster or talk and share your insights with the lab at the next lab meeting. Trainees are encouraged to apply for travel grants or awards if eligible. While the decision to present at a national or international

meeting will be mutual, I reserve the right to assess the appropriateness of presenting your findings based on various factors, such as competition for research funding. Generally, our lab attends conferences such as the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET), Great Lake GPCR retreat, and Gordon Conference on Phosphorylation and G-Protein Mediated Signaling Networks.

Grant writing/funding. Securing funding for research and supporting trainees' stipends/salaries is my responsibility. However, grant proposal writing is a crucial skill regardless of career path. Thus, trainees are expected to participate in the preparation of federal grants and progress reports for the lab.

Career Development. I am fully dedicated to supporting trainees in their career aspirations. While technical competence in certain methods is valuable, the most critical skills include designing and troubleshooting experiments, evaluating scientific studies, and developing critical thinking, communication, and time management skills. Participation in activities and events sponsored by the Center for Professional Development, such as [myHUB](#) and [URBEST](#), is strongly encouraged, especially for those interested in pursuing careers in pharma, biotech, or non-traditional science fields. Trainees are expected to discuss their evolving career goals with me so that I can assist them in identifying potential opportunities or internships that align with their research progress.

Collaborations. Science thrives on collaboration, and our impactful discoveries are made possible through the support of collaborators both within and outside the University of Rochester. You are encouraged to explore new collaborations to enhance our research efforts. However, please remember that all materials and data belonging to the Orlandi lab are confidential and cannot be shared outside our group without my explicit permission. If you are approached by a collaborator or prospective collaborator seeking data or information, refrain from sharing any such details without obtaining my consent first.

Leaving the lab. Before you leave the lab, you must document everything. This includes reorganizing freezer samples for easy retrieval, updating inventories of plasmids, primers, and antibodies, disposing of unnecessary samples, and cleaning your workstation. Most importantly, every trainee must ensure that all primary and analyzed data are saved in a location accessible to the rest of the lab. Trainees have a responsibility to future lab members to maintain complete and accurate lab notebooks. Please allocate sufficient time to ensure this is achieved before leaving.