

The Mentoring Philosophy of Xavier Drexel

I view a mentor as an individual who commits to guiding, teaching, nurturing, protecting and otherwise supporting another individual in one or more aspects of his/her life journey, including professional life, personal life and the balance of the two. This is the commitment that I bring to my mentoring relationships. In our relationship, my goal is to help you to learn, that is, to acquire relevant knowledge and skills that you can be apply in a variety of situations throughout your personal and professional life. Although our mentoring relationship is arising in the context of a summer undergraduate research experience, I am invested in you and your success for as long as you need me to be. For this reason, I believe that you, as the mentee, should also be fully invested in your own success.

To demonstrate our commitment to this relationship, we will agree to regular communication. We will work together to define “regular” and also to agree upon what form(s) of communication will work best for us. In all communication, we will review and reiterate what was communicated to ensure that we have the same understanding. Further to that point, we will use checklists (which will include all actions items for the two of us) to try and prevent anything from being missed or forgotten. We must also agree to be honest with one another. Maintaining honesty in our relationship will allow us to prove ourselves trustworthy to one another, which will, in turn, allow us to build a solid foundation upon which to build our relationship. To this end, I will establish a safe and welcoming environment for you within our lab community.

My ultimate goal for you is that you build the confidence needed to become an independent researcher. To promote achievement of this goal, I will afford you more autonomy (with my continued guidance) in decisions about the direction of your research as you gain knowledge and experience. This process will help you to gain confidence in your ability to direct an independent research program. Understand that independence does not mean isolation. You will find that collaborations with other investigators are an excellent way to advance your research. To this end, I will provide you an introduction to the people, conferences and scientific literature of the community to which the work of our lab belongs.

As your mentor, I will, to the best of my ability:

- Be available to you;
- Provide a forum for you to express your thoughts, feeling and concerns;
- Answer all of your questions and concerns;
- Ensure that the research you do is an important part of the work of our lab;
- Provide resources and avenues for you present and publish your work to the greater scientific community;
- Work with you to map out short- and long-term goals (and the steps needed to achieve those goals);
- Help you find solutions to issues and problems without attempting to solve them for you;
- Train you in the techniques, policies and ethical standards of our lab; and
- Encourage you to establish a life outside of our lab and its research activities.

Just as I, as the mentor, have obligations to our mentoring relationship, so do you, as the mentee. You should be committed to:

- Investing the time it will take to conduct your research and keep up with the literature in our field;
- Actively listening and being open to constructive feedback;
- Being respectful of the time invested in your success by the members of our lab community;
- Being thoughtful and responsible in your words and actions
- Keeping appointments and meeting deadlines or providing an explanation ahead of time of why the appointment cannot be kept or the deadline cannot be met; and
- Taking part of the responsibility for the success of our relationship.

I have had a number of successful mentoring relationships, and I have learned and grown from each of them. However, each mentee is different in the background and experiences they bring to the relationship. All aspects of the uniqueness that you bring to the lab group will be embraced to enhance our diversity and the work of our lab. This approach will also support you in navigating the diverse environment of the scientific community. I expect that our relationship will afford both you and me the same benefits – to learn, to grow and to be successful.