Larson Affective Neuroscience Lab Mentor-Mentee Agreement

Broad Goals of the Lab Research Program

The Affective Neuroscience Laboratory is dedicated to understanding the neural bases of healthy and pathological emotional processing. Broadly our work has focused on characterizing individual differences in emotional and cognitive processing that confer risk for anxiety. One of our most prominent lines of research at the moment is to prospectively characterize neurocognitive-affective risk factors for PTSD among acute trauma survivors, initially focusing on adults and now including youth. Another core line of research is to examine cognition-emotion interactions, particularly as they relate to anxiety. Newer research also focuses on social determinants of health and how they are related to brain structure and function, and health outcomes following trauma. We use neuroimaging, psychophysiological, behavioral, and self-report tools to examine these questions.

What I Expect From You

As your advisor it is my job to train and mentor you. I will contribute to your professional development and progress in your degree. I will help you set goals and work toward achieving them. I view this as a collaborative process, and you as a junior colleague. However, I cannot do the work for you. Broadly, I expect you to:

- Learn how to plan, design, and conduct high quality scientific research
- Learn how to present and document your scientific findings
- Be honest, ethical, and enthusiastic
- Be a team player, be engaged within the research group
- Work hard – don't give up!
- Treat your lab mates, participants, supervisees, lab funds, and equipment with respect
- Respect and affirm individual differences and diversity
- Help train others in the lab on techniques you have expertise in
- Take advantage of professional development opportunities
- Obtain your degree

Be a Team Player

One of my highest priorities is for the lab environment to be collaborative and collegial. While you are building your own career, no one does this alone. Support and collaboration from each other makes this journey more enjoyable and results in better science. Thus, I expect each lab member to be respectful of the workspace and efforts of everyone in the lab.

Everyone in the lab will take on jobs to help keep the lab functioning (e.g., handling data backup, IRB management, supervision of undergraduates). You are expected to do your part to keep the lab functioning. Sometimes computers or equipment breaks. It's everyone's responsibility to notify me when something needs fixing. You are expected to participate in all lab meetings and to support others in the lab through shared insight and expertise.

There may be times when you will be asked to help another student with their project; or to mentor/train another student. This is good experience! You will most likely supervise undergraduate research assistants. Please do your part to provide them with a strong learning experience and shape their development as scientists.

Team science means decisions must be made about who takes the lead on specific projects and who earns authorship on each paper. We will discuss, as early as possible, issues of authorship and project "ownership." Sometimes as the project evolves, changes in authorship are warranted. Again, this will be discussed as needed. I

ask that you initiate conversations about involvement in projects or papers if I have not and you are interested in being involved.

Part of your professional development is to learn how to work with others and resolve conflicts. I can help you with this. If you feel that you have been treated unfairly by another student or a staff member, please come to me to help resolve the conflict. Depending on the situation I may help advise you on how to proceed or may become directly involved.

Communication

Open lines of communication are key! If you have a style of communication that you prefer, please let me know. No single style is expected to work for everyone; no one style is expected to work all the time. That said, everyone is expected to respond promptly to emails from anyone in the group, to show up on-time for meetings, and to be prepared to take notes.

Getting the Science Done & Developing Research Skills

I expect you to make steady progress towards your research goals. During the academic semester, there may be times when your progress is less steady due to course or other demands; however, overall it is important to manage your time so that these activities do not lead to a complete lack of productivity.

Lab work and progress will be managed by deadlines. These deadlines can be managed in a number of ways, but everyone is expected to work their best to meet/manage those deadlines. Deadlines will be set at one-on-one meetings in an ongoing fashion, and adjusted as needed. These deadlines will be mutually agreed upon. We will set annual goals, but also short and medium-term goals as projects develop. For graduate students, there is to be a balance between time spent in class and time spent on research.

As long as you are meeting expectations and do your part with expected data collection obligations, you can largely set your own schedule.

Communicating and Disseminating Your Work

I expect that everyone will learn how to plan, design, and conduct high quality scientific research. You should join at least one scientific organization and keep up with the literature so that you can have a hand in guiding your own research. The 'currency' of a scientific career is published papers, they are the engine that drives a lot of what we do and you will be expected to publish. Ideally, papers will be published as you move through your degree program, not only at the end. Over time, you will be expected to take a lead role in authoring scientific papers.

Conferences are another important venue for sharing your findings with others. Although the availability of travel funding varies over time, I encourage you to submit your work for presentation at least one conference per year. Travel fellowships are available through the Graduate School. If grant funding allows I can also provide financial assistance. Feel free to suggest conference presentation options. I will also help you identify and apply for these opportunities as appropriate.

Obtaining Your Degree

It is your responsibility to determine the requirements for your individual graduate program. This information is available in the student handbooks. I can help you find these resources but you must take the initiative to make sure all requirements are met on time in order to advance in your degree (e.g. for preliminary exams).

Vacation

Your research or teaching assistant appointment does not include any formal vacation, sick, holiday or other leave. That said, please do take a reasonable amount of time for all of these purposes. Discuss your plans

with me in advance. As long as you are making good progress and able to contribute meaningfully and consistently to lab projects I encourage you to take time off.

What You Should Expect From Me

I will work hard for the good of the lab group, and have the success of the group as a top priority. I will work to ensure that the lab is a welcoming work environment.

In addition to mentorship, my primary role is to bring in grants, largely based on the work that you do!, and to steward our resources so that we all benefit to the maximum extent from our joint efforts.

My Foundational Values as a Mentor

Mentorship is a complex, multifaceted process. Good mentorship for one student might look very different from good mentorship for another student. Each student comes from a slightly different background, has a slightly different situation, and has different goals. I will do my best to be **understanding of your individual circumstances.** It will help if you keep me informed and remember that graduate school is a job with commensurate expectations.

You should expect me to **be your advocate**. If you have a problem, come and see me. I will do the best I can to help you solve it.

My goal is to be **support you** and also to **challenge you as you pursue your goals** (and program requirements). I have found that there are times when I push students and times when I have students pull back from some tasks and goals. I do this because in my judgment that is in your best interests considering where you are at right now and what your goals are. However, this should always be a decision that is mutual and based on discussion.

You will quickly learn that many of your experiments will not work. That is perfectly normal. Research is not easy. There are many pitfalls and many failures. I will do my best to support you through this process and help keep you excited about your work. Only with perseverance will you generate high quality results.

It is my job to provide **constructive criticism and guidance**, including in areas where I see room for growth. You should not expect to be given specific detailed instruction about each task (although that may sometimes happen), but rather enough guidance and feedback for you to develop your skills. This will often involve connecting you with others in the lab and beyond to learn new skills.

You should expect me to be **professional and appropriate**. I can be casual, and I enjoy humor – I can be flip and sarcastic. However, you should expect any interaction to be professional and appropriate. I will strive to create an environment where you do not experience hostility, harmful criticism, or boundary-crossing behavior from me or anyone in the lab. More specifically on the latter point, you should not expect harassment, personal requests, or for me to request directly or indirectly that you help manage my tasks that are otherwise unrelated to the you, whether professional or personal. I will ask you and all students to help with tasks that contribute to the functioning of the lab. I will strive to make the lab a welcoming place for individuals from all backgrounds and support and affirm their unique experiences. I ask that all lab members strive to do the same.

Availability, Communication & Responsiveness

You should expect me to **be available for regular meetings** (the current standard is 1 hour every other week for individual meetings). At these meetings we will talk about what you have done lately on your projects, what you have read, plans for grant, conference or fellowship submissions, and other aspects of professional development. You should prepare an agenda for these meetings. I will bring agenda items as well. Ideally, when we begin

discussing a project's status, remind me where we were at or what we had decided at our last discussion. I will do my best to answer questions that you have, and help you solve problems that you experience in your research.

In addition to these meetings we will have lab meetings, MTOP meetings, and other ad hoc meetings as needed. I am readily available by email. Also feel free to text or call. For shorter questions, you should expect a response from me within a day or so. For responses on manuscripts, I strive to provide feedback within 1-2 weeks. On occasion this is not possible. I will keep you posted if it will take me longer to review your manuscript.

Dissemination of Research

You should expect me to help you learn to **disseminate your work**. You will prepare a poster or a presentation for at least one scientific meeting while you are in my research group (in reality, this ends up being at least one per year). It will be my responsibility to help you put it together and practice presenting it. Similarly, I will help you learn to write about your research, mainly by providing feedback on drafts of your thesis and papers.

You can expect me to do my best to **promote you (as a scientist and psychologist) and your work**. I will do my best to help you in your professional development and in your efforts to communicate your work. I will do my best to adequately fund our lab's work and to disseminate its results.

What I Can't Provide

At this point I no longer have substantial periods of time to do direct training on data collection and analysis techniques, or to learn how to conduct sophisticated new analyses. I do continue to do some of this, but largely this knowledge is passed on by more senior trainees or staff. And much of this knowledge will necessarily be self-taught. One of the best qualities you can have as a student and as a scientist is to be willing to put in the time to train yourself on new techniques.

I am not up in the lab every day. Nor will I see you every day. I strive to be responsive and open to communication, but I won't always be just steps away for consultation.

I will not micro-manage your projects or work. I also will not be completely out of touch with what you are doing. I will stay up to speed on your projects and goals in order to provide consultation and guidance so that you can appropriately conduct the work.

I do not currently have sufficient funding to fully fund all conference attendance. I do cover costs when I am able. I encourage you to obtain funds from the graduate school, SAC or other sources.

I cannot always provide summer support. I do when I have funding to do so – that is my first priority for available funds.

What If You Have Concerns about My Mentorship

First, I ask that you to understand that I am human. There may be issues from time to time that interfere with my ability to meet these stated expectations for mentorship. However, if there is a persistent issue that is interfering with your progress and well-being, that is unacceptable. I strongly encourage you to talk with me about mentorship concerns and I will strive to listen openly. If you feel that you need more guidance, tell me. If you feel that I am interfering too much with your work, tell me. If you would like to meet with me more often, tell me. If you find you need additional assistance in managing our mentor-mentee relationship, or feel you need a new mentor, you may speak with the graduate program coordinator, the program ombudsperson, or any faculty member you feel may help you navigate the situation.

Before signing this agreement we should discuss a plan for action in case conflict does arise.

Annual Evaluation

We will routinely discuss goals and progress on scientific and professional development goals in our individual meetings. In addition, each year we will sit down to discuss progress and goals. At that time (or any time), you should remember to tell me if you are unhappy with any aspect of your experience as a graduate student here. Remember that I am your advocate, as well as your advisor. I will be able to help you with any problems you might have with other students, professors, or staff.

I will tell you if I am satisfied with your progress, and if I think you are on track to graduate by your target date. It will be my responsibility to explain to you any deficiencies, so that you can take steps to fix them. The annual evaluation will be a good time for us to take care of any issues before they become major problems.

Goals & Challenges

Please discuss your goals (long-term, productivity, skills, etc.) with Chris now and regularly!

What are your goals for your career, for graduate school, for this year, for this semester?

What challenges do you see in meeting these goals?

What steps will you take to meet these goals?

How can I help you meet these goals?

Concerns? Adjustments?

Before signing this we should discuss any concerns you may have or discuss possible adjustments to any of the expectations stated above. Discuss a plan for handling conflict. Let Chris know if there is anything you've shared with her that is strictly confidential.

Trainee's signature & date:

Chris's signature & date: