The Unofficial Guide to Graduate Student Success in the ERP Program

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Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the Endocrinology-Reproductive Physiology Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. On behalf of the faculty and current graduate students we hope that you will have a positive experience in the program. As a new student you have many new people to meet, techniques to learn and policies and procedures to absorb. This document covers some issues that you will not find the "official" student handbooks from the Graduate School or program that will help you become a successful graduate student. Many of the items addressed are general in nature and can be applied to most laboratory situations, however be sure to discuss specific policies and procedures with your major professor. As always, please do not hesitate to contact either Tiffany Bachmann, Program Coordinator or Dr. Ian M. Bird, Program Director with any questions. Our doors and email boxes are open and we want to hear from you.

Getting and staying in-touch

As a new graduate student, after you obtain your student id number and register, the next essential task to complete is to establish your email account. This can be accomplished by activating your "Wisc" account through DoIt . The "Wisc" activation allows you access to your student records MY UW portal (fees, fines, holds and related information), register for classes and has a host of other handy features such as a calendar that you can view on-line anywhere you have a web connection.

If you need to get in touch with either the Program Coordinator or Director, email is preferred. You are much more likely to get a quicker response by email than to track either of us down by phone.

A lot of business and information is conducted by email, so be sure to read the messages from the Program Coordinator on a regular basis. Email is the most efficient method to share information about the happenings in the Program and communicate with a large group. Also, the Program has a web site (www.erp.wisc.edu) with up-to-date documents and information, take some time to look around, the answer might be waiting in cyberspace.

We are also regularly at the weekly ERP seminar and are happy to meet with you following the presentation.

Planning for Success

You have to plan for success as a graduate student. Careful planning requires that you are aware of the timelines for completing certain steps such as the formation of your committee, registration requirements and the host of other deadlines that will be announced. If you are unsure how they affect you, ask. Your advisor is there you keep you on track in the lab, but is most likely unable to keep track of the numerous deadlines and administrative procedures for each of his/her students. You are welcome to contact the

Program Coordinator at any time to review deadlines or procedures relevant to the ERP as your situation warrants.

The second critical step in planning for success is the formation of your Certification Committee no later than the first year of enrollment. This committee is comprised of 3 faculty members for the MS degree or 5 for the PhD degree or for MD Fellows. The purpose of the committee is the same for each degree, to ensure that you have a knowledgeable group of faculty members to oversee your development as a scientist. The selection of members is described in the "official" ERP student handbook. They will help you develop an academic plan that meets your career goals as well as ensure you leave the ERP Program as a capable member of the scientific community. Be thoughtful in your selection of committee members and keep them informed on a regular basis of your progress. Plan to meet with your committee at least once per year.

Once your committee has been established, regularly review the composition to ensure you have the right members on it. Committee membership can be changed as circumstances dictate. Speak with your faculty advisor and Program Director to make changes to your degree committee.

After your Certification Committee has been formed and approved, you must meet with them to approve your course study. Complete the Certification proposal as found in the "official" student handbook or on the web. Typically this meeting is an hour and half long with time to discuss the elements of your project, determine what courses are necessary for you to obtain the knowledge needed to complete the project or address any other concerns.

Other Important Events to Plan For:

Preliminary Exam:

If you are a PhD student in the second semester of your second year, you should begin to discuss the Preliminary Exam with your supervisor. Ideally this would completed during the third year or no later than the beginning of the fourth year of graduate study. The completion of the Preliminary Exam indicates that you have completed the fundamental course work necessary to complete your research project and are ready to devote the remaining time of your graduate career to your research project. You should not expect to complete the preliminary exam and defend your thesis in the same semester or in reality even the following semester under normal circumstances.

The actual exam is taken in two distinct parts, a written "grant format" proposal and the oral exam. Specific details are discussed in the "official" ERP Student Handbook. Scheduling the oral exam takes some time to coordinate schedules, allow yourself plenty of lead time to schedule a date and prepare the document.

Scheduling your final seminar:

For each degree, you must present a full-length seminar to the ERP Program faculty and students. Some guidelines for planning your final seminar:

1. Your final seminar is to be given during the same semester you defend your thesis unless there are extenuating circumstances. **Prior approval is required to deviate from this standard.**
2. Ideally the majority of your committee members would be present at this seminar.
3. You must inform the Seminar Committee that the seminar is to be formally announced as a thesis defense seminar.

A few words about being an MS or PhD student

We feel that we must make mention that there are subtle differences in expectations for MS and PhD students, although you should always aim for a higher standard.

As an MS student, we understand that this is a starting point to further career development. Generally speaking, it takes approximately two and half years to complete the degree and write a satisfactory thesis for the MS degree. Depending your situation it may take a bit longer, although 2.5 years is a reasonable goal. To achieve this goal, it is imperative that you find a suitable project early in the process and have your course of study certified by your advisory committee. You will find that as an MS student your work will be more supervised and structured by the major professor.

Students entering the PhD track are expected to go further, having a more detailed understanding of both techniques and the principles which underlie them, awareness of the literature in the study area but also related fields, and ultimately an ability to perform independent research to advance the field. As part of the progress to PhD, contributions of original knowledge to the field is expected under normal circumstances, often taken to mean, that papers will have been published or at least submitted prior to defense.

Demystifying the Research Assistantship: Protocols

Just a reminder that if you have a Research Assistantship (RA) position you are required to enroll for 8-12 credits each fall and spring semester and 2 credits during the summer to maintain your RA benefits as indicated below. If you have achieved dissertator status (passage of the preliminary exam) then you must register for 3 credits until you deposit your dissertation.

Over 95% of ERP student's graduate education is supported by a research assistantship (aka RA) appointment. This type of funding allows you to receive a monthly stipend for your laboratory work as well as paying for your tuition and major portion of your health insurance. The RA does not cover the segregated fees; you must pay these every semester. Generally most faculty appoint their students to a 50% RA or higher

percentage which provides the benefits mentioned above as long as you remain in good standing.

What does a 50% RA really mean? It is best to consider an RA a "job" where you have obligations to fulfill in-order to receive financial and educational compensation. A 50% RA is interpreted to mean that your supervisor is employing you for on average of 20 hours per week to actively contribute to the aims of the grant proposal from which your stipend comes from and is related to your thesis work in some capacity. As such, you are expected to establish a mutually agreeable work schedule, to notify your faculty member of any changes in work schedule, and use your time in the laboratory efficiently to accomplish the goals and objectives specified. This is your "job" and is in addition to your course work and other obligations.

Your major professor has a responsibility to ensure the grant dollars are being spent on the research it was intended. Time spent on personal pursuits including homework, studying for exams, unrelated web-surfing and email is not consistent with any grant objectives and is not acceptable. If you find that you have too much time on your hands, realize that your supervisor will notice this too. Be proactive and seek productive tasks to fill your time when lab activities are slow.

Pay and other benefits

Vacation: As noted earlier your paycheck will more than likely come from your major professor's research grant and you will be paid on a monthly basis. A 50% RA for 20 hours per week would equal 1040 hours of work per 12 month period, giving you two weeks of leave time in a given year at the discretion of your supervisor. Be considerate when asking for time off and note that requests for time off to study is a red flag. If you have extended vacation plans and do not plan to make those hours up, you must contact your payroll coordinator in your primary department to adjust your level of appointment and stipend. Be sure to speak with your major professor about your plans in advance.

Sick leave is also another gray area not covered in the "official" manuals. Common sense should prevail on when to call in sick to maintain the health and safety of both you and your colleagues. Research Assistants do not have a formal sick leave policy so be sure to talk to your advisor on how and who should be notified if you are absent because of illness. If you need extended sick leave to care for immediate family members, you may want to consider a leave of absence. Talk to the Program Coordinator and your advisor if you want to pursue this option as deadlines and payroll issues should be considered in advance.

Maternity/ parental leave (both men and women) should be discussed as soon as reasonable plans can be made. Graduate Students with RA appointments do not fit the definition of a "regular employee" who is covered by formal maternity/ parental and Family Medical Leave policies. This type of leave is negotiated directly between the student,

advisor and payroll staff. In many cases opportunities to work from home on projects that do not involve coming to the lab on daily basis can be arranged (writing a paper, analyzing data, etc.) to meet the needs of both you and the aims of the grant. Direct and continuous communication between you and your advisor is essential during this period of time.

It is worth repeating, that your RA support is contingent upon funding available and making satisfactory progress in your research.

Pay Increases: Your monthly stipend is based on a percentage of $38,064, the current approved rate for graduate research assistants in 2007/2008. While the base amount of $38,064 does not change, a pay increase by your advisor can be made by increasing the percentage of your appointment up to the maximum 75% level. It is important to keep in mind that many factors influence the percentage of appointment you have including: total amount of funding available to your advisor through grants and departmental sources, the number of other students and staff supported by your advisor and departmental policies and customs.

We encourage your faculty member to consider a stipend increase when additional funds are available or when you become a dissertator (PhD students). Other circumstances may also warrant a percentage of appointment increase. While the ERP Program would like every student to receive the same level of support whenever possible, it is simply not possible for us to establish or enforce a uniform stipend rate among the trainers.

Attainment of an external fellowship, grant or other award in your own name is one additional method to secure a pay raise during the award period. Fellowships, grants and awards are publicized through many venues including the Graduate School Fellowships Office, websites of professional and scholarly associations and through the various federal grant agencies (NIH, NSF, USDA). These awards require an application so advanced planning is essential. The use of your preliminary exam document (PhD students) should be an excellent foundation to make revisions to submit an application.

Security of Funding

In time you will see that in order for your major professor to continue his/her research pursuits, funding from external sources such as NIH, NSF, USDA and the private sector are critical to the lab's existence. Many of the grants your faculty member works with provide funding in three or five year periods. Towards the end of the funding period, they will be looking for additional funds to sustain the project to conclusion. The faculty are very skilled in negotiating the grants process and will do their very best to find funds to continue or enhance their research, however, there is no guarantee the same pool of money will be available again or the same project will be viewed favorably by the grant agencies.

Don't despair, there are emergency and contingency resources available for short term gaps. If funding becomes an issue, talk to the Program Coordinator or Program Director as a break in funding will impact your health insurance and tuition remission eligibility. The sooner the concern is brought to our attention, the more options we have available to assist you.

If you are intent on working with one faculty member and RA funds are not available, you may consider taking a teaching assistantship (aka TA). The ERP Program's general guideline is that first year students are not encouraged to TA as it places a significant burden on the individual who is trying to take courses and establish a research project in the lab. Most TA positions require approximately 30 hours a week to mange including reviewing course materials, lab notes and discussion groups. This is done in addition to your course work and time in the laboratory. PhD students who are in the middle to end of their graduate student career are welcome to consider a TA position to gain experience in the classroom.

There are many opportunities to gain teaching experience including the K-Infinity fellowship, the Delta Project among others. If you are interested in pursing one of these extra curricular activities, speak to your advisor first to ensure these additional commitments do not interfere with your research work or are a distraction to completing your degree.

Satisfactory Progress

Success in graduate school is heavily dependent on satisfactory progress towards degree. The Graduate School Academic Guidelines has a formal definition of satisfactory progress on page 70 of the 2006-2008 Handbook that you should become familiar with, but you should also understand what satisfactory progress means to your faculty advisor in terms of your performance in the laboratory. The ERP Program developed an annual evaluation form to be completed by both the student and advisor with a structure similar to a performance evaluation that you would experience in the workplace. We can not overstate the importance of regular, ongoing communication with your faculty member about both your research project and personal goals.

If your personal goals or circumstances have changed since beginning your course of study, it is vital you speak directly with your faculty member as soon as possible. In having this conversation, both you and your faculty member will be able to develop a mutually agreeable plan to adjust the research project workload and establish a timeline for completion with your advisory committee.

Sometimes it is not the degree goal that is a concern, but the laboratory environment has changed thereby impacting your progress to degree. If you find you would rather be elsewhere or anywhere but in the lab, we advise that you sit down and talk to your advisor

about your concerns; chances are your advisor has noticed this change in you and is waiting for you to come forward. Diminished productivity hurts not only you in your degree completion, but also the rest of the lab who may be counting your work to move forward in other projects. Chronic or unexplained absences are unprofessional in the workplace and could be grounds for termination or removal of funding.

See also the section on Life Balance in this document.

Schedules

One of your responsibilities as a graduate student is to arrange a mutually agreeable work schedule with your major professor and lab members. Having a relatively predictable schedule allows everyone in the lab to plan accordingly to meet deadlines and accomplish project goals. Some labs are very flexible with work schedules others require that you be in the lab at set hours due to experiments, animal needs or other circumstances. Be sure to clarify these expectations during the early weeks in the lab.

In turn, your major professor also has an obligation to inform you of his/her schedule as much as possible. The lab does not shut down while the supervisor is away; there is an element of trust that you and your lab members will continue to function in his/her short-term absence. A post-doc or lab technician should usually be around to help you trouble shoot urgent problems, otherwise make note of your question and discuss it upon return.

Meetings

Part of the learning experience is getting regular feedback from your major professor. During your first weeks in the lab, establish a regular meeting time with your major professor. This forum provides you an opportunity to discuss questions, results, ideas and up-date him/her on your progress with limited interruption. Once you agree on a time, be prompt and prepared for each meeting. In early meetings, the major professor may direct the conversation by asking about the project results, unexpected problems or surprises, however as you become more comfortable with the lab and your major professor, you should take the lead in the conversation.

You will also be expected to participate in lab meetings and journal discussions with your research group. These are forums to present work, trouble-shoot, congratulate each other and plan for the next phase of the project in addition to a social occasion.

The Program Seminar and other activities

Due to the highly diverse nature of the ERP Program, the weekly seminar series is the central gathering point for students and faculty. The seminar format of student presentations alternating with an invited guest speaker is designed to give you the opportunity to present your work in a friendly and supportive environment as well as to learn from respected scientists in the field. It is also important that the seminar have a

robust turn-out of students and faculty at each meeting. The more students and faculty come together out-side of their lab groups, the greater synergy the program will produce. This gives the appearance that the Program is strong and vibrant in the University community.

The Program Director and Program Administrator are regularly at each seminar and are happy to meet with you to address concerns. A little advanced notice will help us secure a meeting room where we can address your concerns in a confidential manner.

Authorship and Publications

Each lab has established practices for determining authorship credit and should be reviewed by all individuals involved in the project. If you are unclear about the procedure ask for clarification. There are many resources available from NIH and professional societies on authorship and conflict of interest. Take some time to review these guidelines throughout the course of your career.

Research Facilities and Computer Usage

Research Facilities:

Faculty members have research facilities available to meet the aims of their individual research. When entering the lab, take note to follow the appropriate procedures and protocols of the lab. If you need training on a specific technique or piece of equipment, ask for assistance.

Computer Usage:

In most labs, each student will have a personal computer with the appropriate software installed to meet the needs of preparing documents, proposals, and graphics. You should not alter the configuration or install programs not authorized by your major professor or network administrator. This includes the installation of "instant messenger" programs, games, or applications that would potentially interfere with the security of the data or functionality of the machine. The supervisor or network administrator reserves the right to delete files or applications that interfere with the stability or functionality of the machine.

If you are using your personal computer to connect to the campus network, you are responsible for following the campus computing guidelines regarding software licenses and virus protection as well as ensuring your data is safely protected. Each student has a personal online file storage area available through the MY UW portal. This is a secure way to store information, but have it accessible wherever there is an internet connection. Talk to your faculty member, network administrator or designated computer support people before hooking up your laptop.

Lab notes and related documents:
A hallmark of good science is keeping and preparing proper documentation of your work, however if you are being paid from a research grant, as most students are, your laboratory notes are the property of the granting agency and managed by the PI of the project, therefore your notes are NOT your own.

The Graduate School offers a 1.5 hour seminar on keeping laboratory notes. Check the Graduate School website for dates and times.

Student Travel

Developing your professional network is an important aspect of student training. One method is attending an annual societal or professional organizational meeting. Participation at these events is an excellent way to meet colleagues, learn new about new developments in the field from the leading experts, share your own research and discuss research in a relaxed atmosphere. It is expected that PhD students in their 3rd year or later will have presented at one meeting or conference.

To that end, all students are encouraged to submit abstract and poster materials to societies and professional organizations for presentation. Your major professor can advise you on groups relevant to your area of interest. When you have an accepted abstract or poster, you are eligible for a $300 travel grant from the ERP Program to offset your costs. Keep in mind that only one travel grant per fiscal year is available and you must contact the ERP Program Coordinator with a copy of your abstract and confirmation letter to release the funds.

Where to turn for help and answers to your questions

There are many resources available to assist you with questions and trouble shoot problems; the key is to find the "right" place to go. Here are some suggestions on how to proceed and who to contact:

Speak with your advisor:

- Establishing a work schedule
- Lab protocols and when techniques are in question
- Course advising and project development
- Selection of Certification members
- Satisfactory progress in the lab

Primary departmental staff:

- Payroll and benefits
- Authorization for research credits
- Building keys/ security passes and permits (including parking)
- Departmental e-mail accounts and mailboxes

ERP Program Coordinator:

- Any question pertaining to the ERP Program including: course requirements, warrants, degree deadlines, the seminar, symposium and student progress issues
- Student records
- Travel funds and reimbursements
- Program Policy
- Student affairs issues or concerns
- Registration Holds placed by the Program Coordinator
- Satisfactory Progress in the Program including annual student evaluations

ERP Director:

- To review faculty members on your advisory committee
- Program policy
- Student affairs issues or concerns

The Graduate School:

- Questions about academic affairs not addressed by the either the Program Coordinator or Director – includes harassment, ethical misconduct, academic misconduct etc…
- Fellowships and awards
- Degree conferral including review of PhD dissertations, deadlines, minimum degree requirements and residency requirements

Life Balance

We offer you some advice on seeking a balance between your academic and personal life. First you must realize that just because you want a graduate degree, doesn't mean you will get it. Considerable time, effort and sacrifice will be required to make this a reality. You have to establish your priorities.

Many problems that arise often have less to do with the student's ability to succeed in the course work and have more to do with external factors. One common problem is that the student's social/personal life interferes with course work or time in the lab. It is your responsibility to let your family, friends, significant others and parents know that you have commitments to your academics and lab work. Lost time on your social/personal life can not be recouped.

Graduate students with families can have an especially difficult time maintaining a reasonable balance between academics and family. We understand that as a parent, you have a significant responsibility to provide for your child. You should take great care in

establishing a work schedule that is realistic and achievable for your situation. If care giving duties are causing significant problems for you or members of your lab, ask yourself if it is fair to transfer your work onto others? Colleagues will understand that once in a while your family responsibilities take precedence over lab work as long as you get back on track and don't use this as a crutch to avoid making a decision on where your career is going. In cases where there is a serious illness of a parent, child or spouse, an extended leave of absence may be requested. Specific guidelines are available from the Personnel Office or the Program Office.

While your studies and research is of great importance to you, it is also essential to have a few non-lab interests to fill your time with. These outside interests can be a great stress reliever when your lab activities are leaving you frustrated. There are many free or low cost activities to take advantage of; check out the campus calendar for events, the Isthmus newspaper or the many bulletin boards around campus for announcements. Don't forget you have access to the campus fitness facilities (the NAT, SERF, the Shell) with a swipe of your campus id card. Schedules are posted on the Recreational Sports home page.

Final Comments

This guide is an evolving document created to give students some guidance on issues that may not be addressed in other "official" or formal documents. Each lab will have its own policies and procedures that take precedence over these general guidelines, however most of the comments provided here will be helpful to new students just entering the program.

As always, if you are unclear about any procedure or expectation, ask your major professor, the Program Coordinator or Director for assistance.

The Unofficial Guide- Part II
Laboratory Etiquette

We hope that part one of this guide has provided you with some helpful tips in making the transition to graduate studies. Part two will provide tips in making the laboratory experience a positive one for everyone involved.

Joining a Lab

Selecting a lab is one of the biggest challenges you face. Your objective should be to find an environment that you are comfortable in, provides the type of training you seek and will further your career. Before you make a final selection, determine what is important to

you – availability of the supervisor, the training style of the faculty member (a lot of oversight, guidance when asked or needed, general independence), laboratory reputation, publication record, resources available, and the environmental factors that are not objectively quantifiable like personality, structure, competitiveness. Each lab has it pro's and con's, your goal is to find the one that is right for you.

You will more than likely find someone in the lab who is more than willing to vent their frustrations with the lab or the supervisor, keep in mind that you are not the cause of these problems and cannot solve them. Spend the early weeks in the lab concentrating on getting acclimated to the environment, planning your project, and learning techniques and protocols. Speak with your advisor about any concerns as they arise.

Basic Guidelines

The laboratory is a communal place where you will interact with a variety of people including undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, technicians, other support staff and post-docs. As a researcher, you are expected to develop and maintain a professional relationship with those that you work with.

1. Wear appropriate protective clothing (lab coat, safety glasses, gloves, coveralls, masks etc.) and follow all safety protocols in the laboratory. If you need training or are uncertain about a procedure, ask.

2. Keep your work area and bench clean. Chemicals and other agents can remain on the work surface for weeks and contaminate another experiment. Promptly clean up spills and broken glassware following safety protocols. Do not leave the mess for someone else to find.

3. Leave both the equipment and the lab area in better condition than you found it. If you used consumable supplies, re-stock them. Also if you notice supplies are running low, let the appropriate person know to re-order them.

4. Return cleaned and dry equipment to its proper location when not in use.

5. If you find that the equipment is not working, notify the lab manager or your supervisor. Again, don't leave it for someone else to find.

6. Plan ahead if you have large project that will prevent others from using the equipment at peak periods.

Interpersonal Guidelines

Aside from following the basic guidelines above, developing and maintaining effective interpersonal relationships with your co-workers is essential. Often a productive lab group

can unravel because of a communication problem, either real or perceived. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

1. Keep the "water-cooler" discussion to a minimum in the lab. Discussing your weekend exploits are not appropriate topics of conversation in a work area and can be misinterpreted by others passing by. Catch up with your friends at lunch or after hours.

2. Remember sensitive topics of politics, religion, gender issues or cultural differences are not issues for discussion on lab time. These subjects invariably cause good relationships to become strained.

3. Keep personal business to a minimum on lab time. It is understandable that there are times when other businesses or individuals will need to reach you during work hours, but be considerate and discrete when you are discussing a sensitive subject such as medical information, finances etc in a communal area. If you have a cell phone, be considerate of others around you. Continue your call where you have some privacy or schedule time to return the call away from the lab.

4. Remember that personal opinions are just that. Everyone is entitled to theirs just as you are to yours. Opinions do not necessarily represent fact.

5. Lab time is not personal time to "convert" other people to your cause. This is against state work-rules and could be considered harassment.

6. Be a team player. There will be times when you are asked to pitch in and help another colleague meet a deadline or project goal. Do so willingly and to the best of your ability. Keep in mind that one day too, you will need help from your colleagues.

7. Get to know the post-docs and technicians. They have a wealth of experiences to draw from and are excellent resources to help you with your project.

8. Communicate regularly with your supervisor about the project, both the good and bad.

9. Remember that you are responsible for your own work. Support staff members are resources and are not to do your work or clean up after you.

10. Lean to be self-sufficient in handling routine tasks in the lab including clean up, re-stocking the paper trays, filling supplies, photocopying, mailing items etc. No task is beneath you.

11. Respect is not given out easily; it is earned over time through your actions.

Other Issues

Music in the Lab:

People have varying degrees of tolerance for listening to music in the lab. Ask your supervisor what the protocol is and be sensitive to the desires of the group. Some music is not appropriate for the workplace, if you are unsure, don't bring it. Choices of music in the lab should never become issues of contention. Choices and volume should be acceptable to all, and volumes should not be set to be audible beyond the room. Likewise, music at your desk should not disrupt others in the area. The growing popularity of personal MP3 players or iPod's allows you the freedom to listen to your own music without disturbing your colleagues, but they can also isolate you from the conversation (both good and bad). While listening to your personal music device, when someone approaches you with a question or to engage in conversation, take both ear phones out and give the person in front of you your full attention.

Dress:

The lab is your workplace and your dress should reflect this. Dress comfortably so that you can do your work with minimal distraction for yourself and others. Wear a lab coat or other protective clothing as needed. Remember that your clothing and personal appearance does leave an impression upon people, both positive and negative. You don't have to dress like a runway model, but you shouldn't look like you just rolled out of bed either, and personal hygiene becomes an issue if you become offensive. Your lab or building location (ie. Clinics, hospital) may have additional dress code guidelines, ask your supervisor what is appropriate or consult appropriate handbooks or websites for guidance. You may want to consider keeping a change of clothes at the lab incase of a spill or other contamination.

Telephone Usage:

A phone in the lab is provided for the express purpose of conducting lab and work related business. We accept the fact that there may be occasions where a personal call is received or made, however the lab phone number should not be given out as your "social number" to family and friends nor should you be placing social calls from the lab. Many buildings have a lounge area where personal calls can be made.

You may find that having a cell phone is a convenience or even your primary phone, however, this can be a distraction for others in your work area both because of the continued disruption of incoming calls or simply the voice level used when carrying out a conversation. When you are in the lab, if you must have your phone on, turn the ringer volume down or set it to vibrate and answer the call quietly and discreetly then return to work. We urge you to turn your phone off during lab hours so you can fully concentrate on the job at hand; many plans have voice mail included with the service. Also, don't leave your phone unattended at your desk so it rings non-stop, either take the phone with you or turn if off. Keep the calls to a minimum.

Email:
Each enrolled student is provided with a campus email address (@wisc.edu). Some departments may also have an email server and issue you an email address (@department.wisc.edu) which ever campus email address you use should be used for professional communications. Messages should be written using standard, business spelling and punctuation. Save the instant messaging shorthand for friends using another email addresses. Use special fonts, color coding, and formatting tricks minimally.

Think carefully about the contents of your email message before hitting the send button. Remember the reader only sees the words in front of them and does not hear your tone of voice or non-verbal expressions. What seems harmless to you; might be offensive to your reader.

Conflict Resolution-
Don't let little problems escalate into bigger problems that impact the functionality of the lab. If you have a concern, bring it up with the individual directly and try to work it out in a professional manner. If this is not possible, then address it with your supervisor to seek assistance. Refer to the Graduate Student Handbook for proper procedures for issues dealing with harassment, academic misconduct, ethical conduct etc.

Professional counseling resources including the Ombuds Office and your health care provider can also assist you in addressing individual concerns.

Professional Development-
Seek professional development opportunities throughout your graduate career through networking, giving presentations, publishing and honors and awards. These accomplishments will distinguish you from similar applicants. Look for mentors at each stage of your development. While your advisor may be a mentor, make connections with other people too.

Handling the networking, presentations and publishing your work can be guided by your advisor and through structured activities of the ERP Program. Seeking honors and awards is based very much your initiative and effort to both seek opportunities and follow through on applications. While you can not control the final outcome once an application is submitted, not applying assures you that you will not be a recipient, regardless of how valuable your work is.

There are several types of honors and awards that are valuable assets to your CV or résumé when applying for the first position following graduation.

Training Grant Funding: These awards are made to support a period of your graduate education, in some instances used to bring new talent into the field, other cases, to

support the critical scientific activity of a designated research project of interest to the grant agency. Benefits of Training Grant support generally include payment of both tuition and fess, a share of the health insurance premium and fixed stipend for typically two years pending satisfactory progress. Institutional awards made to existing programs will have a fixed number of positions that can be funded in any given budget year. A call for applications of eligible students will be announced before a selection committee makes final recommendations to the PI. Selection of applicants typically involves consideration of the student's academic credentials, a description of the research project or statement of interest, career goals / interests and recommendations by other faculty members. Current NIH training grants can only directly support US citizens and Green Card holders.

Individual Fellowships: Like training grant funding, individual fellowships serve a similar purpose in funding a portion of your graduate education. Individual fellowships are an attractive funding source because they directly support the student and in some cases be portable to another institution. Individual fellowships include both internally and externally funded opportunities from private funds/foundations, professional societies and government agencies and can be open to both US citizens/ Green Card Holders and International Students. Selection criteria of recipients varies by type of fellowship and organization, but most likely be based in part on your academic credentials, letters of recommendation, research project and career goals. Additional criteria may include membership within a group or organization, potential for career success, a personal or telephone interview or other activity. The amount of financial support for the fellowship can be a few thousand dollars to a multi-year award that covers tuition, fees, insurance, travel and supplies.

Travel Awards: Many professional societies sponsor competitive travel awards to help defray the cost of graduate students attending a meeting. When submitting your abstract for an oral or poster presentation, you should also consider applying for a travel award. A typical meeting in a major metropolitan area including airfare, registration, and hotel expenses can cost over $1000; funds to defray the costs from your both your advisor's grant plus your own out of pocket expenses can be the difference between going to the meeting or not. Some meetings will formally recognize travel grant recipients at the business meeting, banquet or in the program.

Honors/Awards: It can be difficult or even uncomfortable to seek public recognition for your efforts so in many instances your actions and commitment to an activity or career will be noticed by others who can support your recommendation/nomination. Of course there are many, many well-deserving graduate students and advisors who should be recognized for their efforts, but are overlooked by selection committees. What is a student to do? If you know about honors and awards given by a particular organization, share the information with your advisor and colleagues about the nomination process. Sometimes awareness that an activity exists is all that is needed to get the process started. If you

know that someone has recently received and award, circulate the announcement to others in your group; again this might prompt others to look into submitting a nomination.

Leaving a Lab –

There are situations when transferring labs is in your best interest, at the completion of one degree, faculty retirement or in worse case situations irreconcilable differences. If you find that you are going to leave a lab for whatever reason, keep the following items in mind:

1. Give your supervisor reasonable notice.
2. Establish a transition period to complete projects and tasks as appropriate.
3. Inform your payroll person. A break in payroll can negatively impact your benefits, tuition remission, and fees.
4. Return all lab property, keys, notes and documents. Remember that your lab notes are the property of the granting agency under the stewardship of the PI.
5. Keep the departure as positive as possible. Don't spread negative comments about former co-workers, the faculty member or staff.

Final Thoughts

We hope that Part II of this guide is helpful for you. Most of these items can be applied to almost any laboratory environment on campus. Keep in mind that each lab environment has pro's and con's. Your goal is find one that works best for your situation.