

Lewis Lab Community Handbook

7/30/2026 | Version 2



This is a living document that describes our community expectations, rules of engagement, conflict resolution, and the general responsibilities of lab members by stage. All things related to the Lewis Lab community are found in the Handbook. This book and the Lewis Lab protocol book are available online on our website. The text and ideas are from, or borrow from, the labs of: Matt Barber, Mandy Gibson, Eric LoPresti, Katja Kasimatis, Nicole Gerardo and Jaap De Roode. The individual development plan is structured on myIDP through Science Careers and AAAS.

Note: Throughout this document, “I” refers to the principal investigator of the lab (Jordan), while “you” refers to you.

Table of Contents

A. Mission Statement.....	3
B. Lab Values.....	3
C. Welcome and Onboarding Information.....	4
D. Code of Conduct.....	5
E. Dealing with Conflict.....	6
F. Reporting Incidents in the Lab.....	7
G. Mandatory Reporting.....	7
 H. Expectations.....	 8
For all members.....	8
For the PI.....	9
For Undergraduate Students.....	10
For Graduate Students.....	10
For Postdocs.....	11
For Everyone else.....	11
 F. General Lab Policies.....	 12
Authorship.....	12
Data Management.....	12
Ethical Conduct.....	13
Letters of Recommendation.....	13
Open Science.....	13
Safety.....	13
Field Responsibilities.....	14
Wet Lab Responsibilities.....	14
Project Outline and Task Sheet.....	14
<i>Template</i> Project Outline.....	15
<i>Template</i> Individual Development Plan.....	16

Mission Statement

In the Lewis Lab, our mission is to conduct scientific research at the intersection of Evolutionary Biology and Ecology befitting of a Tier 1 Research University, while providing exceptional scientific training to mentees in a supportive environment.

Lab Values

Our goal in the Lewis Lab, as a collective, is to actively contribute to creating a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable scientific community, both within EEB and beyond. We believe that science and society benefit from maintaining this community while upholding rigorous standards. This is because, just like in ecosystems, diversity is vital to maintaining a range of functional abilities and resilience. Science is driven by our questions, and asking these questions from diverse viewpoints and lived experiences can improve our holistic understanding of the phenomena we study. In our lab, we facilitate this by including, listening to the perspectives of, and showing cultural appreciation for individuals representing a diversity of races, ethnicities, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender identities, abilities, ages, religious beliefs, and immigration experiences. Given our location in South Carolina and the demographics of our state and USC students, this becomes even more important than it would be elsewhere. Members of the Lewis lab, including the PI (me), are expected to abide by the lab code of conduct. Students are also expected to abide by the university's wider [code of student conduct](#).

Lastly, we honor and acknowledge that the University of South Carolina- Columbia occupies the ancestral land of both the Cherokee and the Congaree peoples. We also acknowledge that the University was constructed with the use of slave labor from 1801(as South Carolina College) to 1865, including much of the old main campus.

Welcome to the Lewis Lab

Welcome to the Lewis Lab! We are happy to have you working with us. This document describes our community expectations, rules of engagement, conflict resolution, and the general responsibilities of lab members by stage. It will also give you onboarding tasks you need to complete before joining the lab, as well as those you may find helpful when joining the lab group and our larger department. At our core, we are an evolutionary ecology lab with a heavy interest in host-parasite interactions. Our three main questions are: 1. What ecological factors influence adaptation, 2. How do these factors operate in species interactions, especially host-parasite interactions, and lastly, 3. What influences and determines the distribution of parasites in the environment? We answer these questions through a combination of microbiology, experimental evolution, and fieldwork.

Lab Location

Coker Life Sciences Building (CLS) Room 403

Lab Mailing Address (Letters and the like)

Biological Sciences, 715 Sumter Street Room 403, Columbia, South Carolina, 29208

Lab Shipping Address (For ordering Equipment)

631 Sumter Street, GSRC Room 109, Columbia, South Carolina, 29208

Weekly Meetings

Lewis Lab Meeting: Varies by semester. For FA26, Fridays from 2 to 3 pm. Room TBD

Weekly Biology Department Seminar Series: Mondays from 4 to 5 pm. CLS 005

Graduate Student Lunch with Seminar Speaker: Mondays from 12 to 1:15 pm. CLS 403

EEB Seminar Series: Fridays from 3:30 to 4:30 pm. CLS 202

*Graduate students and postdocs are expected to attend the Bio department and EEB seminars. Undergraduates should attend when possible.

Required Environmental Health and Safety Trainings

[USC EHS Website](#)

1. Biosafety Level 2 for Labs: In person. Every two years.
2. Compressed Gas Safety Online. Every two years.
3. Hazardous Waste: In Person the first time, then online. Yearly requirement.
4. Introduction to Chemical and Lab Safety: In Person. Every four years.
5. Personal Protective Equipment: Online. One time only.
6. Shipping Biological Materials: Online. Every two years. (Grad students & postdocs).

*Please send all completion certificates to me for my records.

Email Lists

Email Jeff Dudycha to be added to the EEB Group Listserv. For grads and postdocs, let me know if you do not start getting emails from the Allbio listserv group, and I'll get you added as soon as possible. Undergraduates are not added to this group.

Code of Conduct

To realize our goals of excellence and inclusiveness, we strive to create a safe, equitable, and collaborative environment for all lab members. Harassment for any form of identity, such as but not limited to: sex, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, disability, including mental illness, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, religion (including the lack thereof), or socioeconomic status, will not be tolerated. This extends to our lab guests as well. Relatedly, sexual language and imagery are not appropriate for any lab event or venue, including talks, workshops, parties, Twitter, and other online media.

Community Standards.

- Treat your colleagues with respect.
- Listen to your colleagues' viewpoints and ideas.
- Do not judge your colleagues for not knowing something or asking questions. We are all learning together, and asking questions is vital to that process.
- Be respectful of your colleagues' professional and personal time.
- Do the right thing. If you make a mistake (and we all do at some point), do your best to acknowledge it and to correct it if possible.

Practice honest, clear, and transparent communication.

- We can only grow as scholars if we are honest about what we know and understand.
- Acknowledge that we all make mistakes and break things from time to time. Take ownership and grow from the experience.
- Follow through on the commitments that you make to your colleagues.
- Practice proactive conflict management to prevent harmful gossip and passive-aggressive behaviors from developing in the lab.

Model a good work ethic.

- Working hard does not necessarily mean working an excess of 40 hours a week, but it does mean working in the hours we are here.
- Science is hard, and things often do not work the first or second time. Critique is also an essential part of the process. Try to be resilient as we learn from this process.
- We are humans, and we make mistakes. Do not hide from these.

Consider what you know and don't make assumptions.

- If you feel unsafe or something doesn't feel right, stop! Afterward, please discuss it with me so we can figure out a way to avoid a similar situation in the future.
- This also extends to interpersonal situations. Don't gossip and don't assume the intentions of other people in the lab.

Dealing with Conflicts in the Lab

As we work together, conflict will inevitably arise. Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing. However, when conflict arises, we believe that: 1) it should be resolved fairly and expeditiously, 2) everyone involved should feel heard, and 3) everyone involved should grow as a result. The following principles will govern how we deal with conflict as a lab:

1. Deal with conflicts as they arise. The lab, as a whole, will be happier and healthier if we do not let conflicts fester.
2. If you are comfortable, speak directly with the person about the unwelcome or unwanted behavior. Otherwise, speak with me to develop a plan to address the situation in a safe, comfortable manner. To prevent harmful gossip, one should not involve other lab members in the conflict unless necessary.
3. Use constructive language in conflict. Facilitate fruitful conversation by using phrases that focus on your experience (i.e., "I" statements), not assumptions about the other person. Phrases like "What I heard was..." and "When you said X, I felt Y..." provide new information to the other person (your experience) and invite conversation and clarification. In contrast, phrases like "You always say/do..." and "You are X" are assumptions and generalizations about the other person. This is unfair, shuts down conversation, and exacerbates conflict.
4. Be willing to listen and grow. If a lab member calls you on something, listen and work to understand where they are coming from. View it as a chance to grow. Be open to changing your words and behavior, even if it does not seem like a big deal to you.
5. Be mindful of power imbalances between roles in the lab. Navigating these structures can be difficult, and you should not hesitate to ask for assistance from someone more senior than you if more appropriate.
6. If you feel like someone outside of the lab is needed to facilitate a resolution, please seek the resources available through USC or the department chair.
7. Remember, our goal is to amicably resolve conflicts and reach mutually beneficial solutions. Keep this in mind as we navigate conflict.

Responding to Incidents in the Lab

1. Lab members asked to stop any misconduct are expected to comply immediately. Justification for the request does not need to be provided, nor does the reporting party of the incident need to be identified.
2. If you are being harassed, notice that someone else is being harassed, or have any other concerns, please contact me as soon as possible. If you are not comfortable contacting me directly, you may report your concerns to one of the relevant USC offices that are prepared to respond to harassment complaints.
3. We expect lab members to follow this code of conduct at conferences and workshops and related social events, and whenever they are representing the lab in a professional context.
4. Again, harassment or bigotry of any kind will not be tolerated and will likely result in the beginning of the process to facilitate your removal from the lab.

Dr. Lewis is a mandatory reporter

I will not pry into your personal life much, but I will inquire if I sense you are struggling. I do want to hear from you if you are experiencing physical, mental, family, or other challenges so I can help with any necessary accommodations. As your mentor, my job is not just to facilitate your academic success but also to help ensure the process does not have an overly negative impact on your mental and physical health. However, please bear in mind that I am a mandatory reporter, meaning I am required to report to the University any cases of harassment or abuse involving a student. In these instances, I cannot guarantee that our conversation will be kept confidential. Please consider this before you inform me of anything that falls along these lines.

Lab Expectations

We are a team. I view my relationship with trainees and postdocs as a partnership. My job is to ensure people in the lab get the training and opportunities they need to advance in their chosen careers, whether in academia, industry, teaching, or other. I am privileged to lead our team and serve as your mentor and colleague. In that role, I hold myself to high standards. In turn, I have high expectations for you, because I am invested in your development as a scientist and a community member. These expectations often go unspoken in labs, creating friction and a culture of exclusion. Here, I aim to make these expectations explicit, for myself and for you, so that all of us can be happy, successful, and productive colleagues. I am more than willing to discuss any of these at your convenience. Further, if you think something is missing from this document, please let me know.

Expectations for all lab members by me

In addition to abiding by the code of conduct and following lab policies, I expect you to:

- Actively participate in weekly lab meeting by being on time and engaged. Graduate students and postdocs should be presenting updates on their work once a term.
- Participate in the weekly department seminar and EEB seminar, even when the topics are outside your area of research. I strongly recommend that you engage with visiting speakers through lunches and/or meetings when possible. These can be invaluable.
- Meet with me regularly to discuss your progress and challenges. I expect you to be prepared for these meetings. Additionally, I encourage you to use this time to tell me if you are juggling too much so we can discuss options to prioritize your work.
- Complete an individual development plan (IDP) at the beginning of each academic year. It is your responsibility to schedule a meeting with me to discuss both documents in detail. See the IDP template in this handbook.
- Write and submit manuscripts as appropriate. I expect you to publish your research as you complete projects and not to wait until the end of your time in the lab. This is obviously less possible in certain cases, and will be discussed as needed.
- Proofread committee reports, fellowship applications, or manuscripts for other lab members as they need them to be read.
 - Maintain a set of clear, organized lab notes and organized data files, code, etc. in accordance with the “Data Management” policy. All lab notes and data files are considered lab property and should stay with the lab when you leave, unless another arrangement is mutually agreed upon with me.
 - Ensure that, whatever time you come in or leave, there is overlap with normal Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm work hours. A great thing about academic work is that we can have flexible hours and workplaces. But, as a community, we also need to spend time

together to facilitate interactions and prevent ourselves from working in a vacuum.

- There may be times when a project requires more hours, but I do not expect you to work more than 40 ish hours per week. Obviously, there will be times when this needs to be compromised on for our success, but keep this as a general rule.
- For safety reasons, try to avoid doing dangerous wet lab work when no one else is around. If a project necessitates significant work during off-hours or the weekend, please inform another lab member or me.
- Vacations and time off are important for mental health. Please notify me if you will be absent for more than one workday and speak with me in advance of any extended leave. You are responsible for arranging worm or bacterial care during your absence. If you will miss sampling or field work, you are required to arrange for it to be conducted without you.
- Be resourceful. Do not always rely on someone for help by default. Try to problem solve on your own first. Then ask questions.
- Be proactive. You are responsible for your learning experience, so take ownership.

Expectations for All Lab Members of Me

In addition to abiding by the code of conduct and following lab policies, I will:

- Value you as a person and care about your well-being.
- Help you develop project ideas, interpret results, write, and proofread manuscripts.
- Help you develop an IDP that supports your career goals.
- Meet with you regularly (roughly every week) to discuss your progress and challenges.
- I will be honest with you about your progress and support you in a timely manner. The frequency of these meetings will depend on your career and project stage.
- Listen to your concerns and help you problem-solve. I will step in and advocate for you when it is necessary or mutually agreed upon.
- Write your letters of recommendation. Please see the “Letters of Recommendation” policy for details on how to help me do this.
- Help you network by assisting in drafting emails to colleagues and potential mentors, and introducing you to colleagues at meetings.
- Work with you on posters and talks.
- Help you find appropriate funding and proofread your fellowship applications or grants.
- Support graduate students and postdocs to travel to one meeting per year. Technicians and undergraduate students may put in requests for specific conferences that they believe will further their careers.
- Work hard to secure grant funding for the lab and will communicate the lab funding status annually.

- Model professionalism in academia.
- Provide mentorship where appropriate and wanted, both career and scientific.

Specific Details for Undergraduate Students

My expectations for undergraduate students differ slightly. As a student, your primary responsibility is your classes. Lab work is supplementary and should not get in the way of your classwork. To this end, we generally ask students to volunteer for at least one semester for no more than 4 hours per week (outside of lab meetings). If you are a rising senior who is just joining the lab, we can work around this, but it will require communication between you and me. In addition to abiding by the code of conduct and following lab policies, I expect you to:

- Actively participate in weekly lab meetings when your schedule permits by being on time and engaged. Undergrads who have been in the lab for more than one term should start presenting updates on their work once a term.
- Meet with your primary mentor regularly to discuss your progress and challenges. If I am not your primary mentor, then I expect you and your mentor to schedule a group meeting with me once a term.
- Maintain a set of clear, organized lab notes and organized data files, code, etc. in accordance with the “Data Management” policy. All lab notes and data files are considered lab property and should stay with the lab when you leave, unless another arrangement is mutually agreed upon with me.
- Ensure that, whatever time you come in or leave, there is significant overlap with normal Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm work hours.
- For safety reasons, avoid doing wet lab work when no one else is around. If a project requires work during off-hours or the weekend, please inform your mentor and me.
- Vacations and time-off are important for mental health. I ask that you please notify your mentor if you are going to be absent for more than one work day and speak 10 with me in advance of any extended leave.
- Be resourceful. Do not always rely on someone for help by default. Try to solve problems on your own first. Then ask questions.
- Be proactive. You are responsible for your learning experience, so take ownership of it.

Specific Details for Graduate Students

Additionally, I expect graduate students to:

- Apply for pre-doctoral fellowships and travel awards.
- Present a poster or talk at least one meeting per year.

- Participate in the mentorship of at least one undergraduate student.
- Actively consider the next steps of your career and timelines for those steps.
- Seek advice from your committee and me on issues related to your professional and academic development (e.g., classes, TA-ships, conferences, and funding) and seriously consider the advice you receive.
- Pursue research that aligns with the lab research themes so that I can best mentor you and help you succeed.

Specific Details for Postdocs

Additionally, I expect postdocs to:

- Apply for external funding either through individual postdoc fellowships or by contributing to larger grant writing.
- Participate in the mentorship of at least one undergraduate or graduate student.
- Have an open dialogue with me about what projects you hope to take with you when you leave the lab, so we can develop a mutually agreeable plan.

Specific Details for Anyone Else

If you do not fit one of the categories above, then you are likely an A. Summer research student, B. Post-Baccalaureate technician, or C. Lab manager or technician. Each of these roles has components that are unique to them and are not spoken to directly in the instructions above. In this case, please speak with me so we can determine how your specific role and situation influence expectations and responsibilities.

General Lab Policies

This section outlines some other important policies for research in the lab and interpersonal relations in our team. This is not an exhaustive list and will change over time in response to feedback from lab members.

Authorship

Following the US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Research Integrity guidelines, authorship is limited to those who make significant contributions to the work being reported. This includes anyone who

- was intimately involved in the conception and design of the research,
- assumed responsibility for data collection and interpretation,
- participated in drafting the publication, and
- approved the final version of the publication.

However, where these lines fall exactly is debated and can vary by lab. In our lab, we follow the authorship standards set forth by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICJME). Accordingly, authorship status can be granted by:

1. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND 2. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND 3. Final approval of the version to be published; AND 4. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved. Projects evolve over time and can create side projects. Authorship inclusion and author order will be re-evaluated in accordance with the authorship rubric. In our lab, we will always be clear about authorship.

Data Management

All data will be preserved in the Lewis lab Google Drive and in the relevant Lewis lab notebooks. Experiments should be logged in lab notebooks in a timely manner and should include all details necessary to perfectly replicate an experiment. Any raw data files are the property of the lab and should remain either in a lab drawer or in the write-up room. All raw sequence data will be preserved in the Lewis lab on backup hard drives and on OneDrive. Raw data will also be made publicly accessible on public databases (Dryad, etc.). Protocols newly developed or substantially altered from published versions will be made publicly accessible as supplemental files at publication.

Equipment used that impacts the data interpretation (e.g., sequencing platforms) will be given in the “Materials and Methods” section of all publications.

Ethical Conduct

Never manipulate or selectively exclude data to achieve an expected or desired result. This is fraud. Never use text or context from elsewhere (even your own writing) without proper citation. This is plagiarism. Do not steal others' work and claim it as your own. It would be embarrassing for me to publish and teach bioethics while my own trainees wantonly plagiarize and manipulate data.

Letters of Recommendation

If it is my first time writing you a letter of recommendation, then please give me at least 14 days notice. When you send me the request, please include your updated CV, a brief description of the purpose of the letter, anything that is not on your CV that you think might help me, and anything you would like me to highlight. If I have previously written a letter for you, please give me at least 5 business days notice, along with a brief description of what the letter is for and any changes in your CV of which I should be aware. If it is not the first time I have written for you, but the letter requests responses to specific prompts, please give me 10 days notice. For postdocs applying for faculty jobs, please talk with me before application season to develop a communication system.

Open Science

Our science is publicly funded; therefore, it is important that we share our science openly with the public. Our lab will make preprints available and publish open access when possible. All code and data files will be made publicly accessible (e.g., on Github, Dryad, or NCBI). All protocols will be collected for sharing when requested by other research groups.

Safety

Your health and safety are important. Everyone must adhere to the lab safety codes as established by EHS and maintain current training status. You should not work in the lab if you are feeling sick, on medication that may impair your ability to work normally, or on drugs. You should avoid doing potentially dangerous work when alone or during off-hours. Your physical and mental health are equally important. Communicate with me so I can help you arrange accommodation.

Field Project Responsibilities

Conducting research off campus can introduce additional challenges to our safety. USC has provided a [field research safety guide](#) to help establish minimal roles and responsibilities for all field personnel and to provide safety guidance. Before heading into the field, you should develop a [field safety research plan and](#) keep it in the lab manual. Beyond this, please keep equipment clean and maintained as required, make sure the use of any shared equipment is planned in advance, and coordinate travel in advance. Other resources can be found [here](#). Generally, if you are conducting field research, you should always have a copy of the field safety plan, the research summary protocols, and some kind of USC identification.

Wet Lab Responsibilities

Be a good lab citizen: Do not use your colleagues' reagents, plates, or anything else without asking. If you notice that we are running low on an item, please email me and/or add it to the lab needs list online. Plan ahead for large experiments and ensure all materials are ordered or prepped in advance. Coordinate in advance with other lab members to use microscopes or large equipment if a project necessitates monopolizing it for long periods of time.

Care of lab equipment: We all share equipment. What you do with it can affect others' work. Please be careful. If something breaks, let someone know. If you break something, spill something, or otherwise cause mayhem: don't worry about it, we've all done it. But report it and work to fix it. Cleanliness is key: We can all do our best science safely when the lab is clean and organized. Clean up after yourself and strive to leave no trace when you are finished for the day. Put equipment, reagents, and other items back in their proper place so others can easily find them

Project Outline and Task Sheet

When starting a new project, it is helpful to outline the steps needed to advance the project and create timelines to keep yourself on track. Whether you decide to use bullet points, a chart, or just notes, this should be done. Here are some useful elements for your project task sheet: Project working title, authors and potential authors, author contributions (planned and realized), Main goal of the project, tasks that need to be completed, status of tasks, dates completed or to be completed, target journals, anticipated submission month, and potential funding sources. It may also be helpful to write a small 3-5 sentence intro to the background info pertinent to the project. (See template on next page)

Template: Project Task Sheet**Project:** Working Title**Brief Description (3-4 pages):** What are we doing and why?**Authors:** Anticipated list**Goals(s):** What are the goals of this project? (One sentence per goal)

Task	Stats	Date
List the experiment or task(s) that need to be completed (e.g., background research, worm rearing, colony isolation, experimental evolution, sequencing, data analysis, writing)	Is this task: • completed • in progress? • In prep? • Planned?	Specify the: • completion date • anticipated date

Target Journal(s): List 2-3 potential journals, if the project is at that stage, and what kind of paper it would be.**Anticipated Submission Date:** Month only, assuming project is at this stage.

Template: Individual Development Plan

An IDP is a structured planning tool designed to help you:

- identify long-term career goals that fit with your interests, skills, and values,
- make a plan for improving your skills,
- set goals for the coming year to improve efficiency and productivity, and
- Structure productive conversations with your mentor about career plans and development. As such, it is crucial you approach it honestly and thoughtfully.

In preparation for the upcoming academic year, please review the resources available through [myIDP](#) and complete the [myIDP questionnaire](#) (make sure to save your results). Then complete the reflection questions listed below. Please take these reflections seriously and give them the time and consideration they deserve.

All graduate students and postdocs are expected to complete an IDP at the beginning of *each* academic year. Please schedule a 1 hour meeting slot to discuss your IDP and plans for the year. Send your myIDP results and reflection question to me at least 3 business day in advance of our meeting.

Reflection Questions

1. Looking back on the last academic year, what are the three accomplishments that you are most proud of and why?
2. Looking back on the last academic year, what are three challenges that you feel like you could have handled differently? How would you approach similar challenges in the future?
3. Do you think you are making appropriate progress in your graduate degree or postdoc? If not, what changes can *you* make to get back on track? What changes can *I* make to better support you?
4. Reflect on your myIDP results:
 - a. Have your career goals changed in the last year?
 - b. What opportunities are available in the lab, department, or university to help you strengthen your skills? Are there any opportunities outside of USC that you think would be beneficial to your career goals?
 - c. Are there any research skills or professional development opportunities *not* listed in your myIDP results that you are interested in pursuing?
5. For each of the projects on which you are currently working, please complete a "Project Task Sheet" (Before this page). Depending on the project, you can chose to outline the anticipated tasks for the next 3-6 months.