## Setting Expectations Tip Sheet

| Specific | • Could your expectation be broken down into steps or pieces in order to be understood?  
|          | • Does it need to be? |
| Measurable | • If you cannot tell if someone met your expectation or not, it’s not written well enough yet. |
| Action-oriented | • Is there actual behavior or conduct associated with your expectation? |
| Realistic | • Do current and future lab members think your expectations are manageable/realistic? |
| Equitable | • What assumptions might I be making?  
|          | • Are there barriers that prevent some people from meeting this expectation? |
| Inclusive | • Am I inviting people to bring their diverse experiences and perspectives?  
|          | • Do my expectations create a lab culture in which differences are valued?  
|          | • Despite good intentions, do my expectations exclude anyone? |

## Tips for EQUITABLE expectations:

1. **Equal** is not necessarily equitable:
   - **EQUALITY**: Equality refers to a state of ‘sameness’ where all people have the same rights/opportunities/treatment.
   - **EQUITY**: Equity refers to a state in which we all get what we need to succeed based on where we are, where we’ve been, and where we want to go. Equity is also tightly associated with principles of justice and fairness. Equity considers the contextual experiences of people and recognizes that resources and power are not always distributed equally, and that each person has different resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

2. Constantly think about how you can empower each member of your lab by removing barriers to their success:
   - Start with leveling the playing field by clearly communicating what may now be unstated expectations or norms.

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• Be mindful that individualized guidance can be helpful – people learn in different ways.
• Learners report that sometimes they do not fully understand what is expected of them, or what is being asked of them. Sometimes they don’t have equitable access to the resources, skills development opportunities, or knowledge to “figure it out.”
• Having standardized central resource of processes, procedures, background materials, presentations, etc. is helpful to remove the challenges to the transfer of knowledge in an ever-changing environment.

**Tips for INCLUSIVE expectations:**

1. Value the people doing the science, not just the science they do.
   • This is one of the biggest issues that our trainees report, especially minoritized trainees.
   • Get to know and respect the lived experiences of the members of your lab.
   • Recognize (and celebrate) the fact that their lived experiences inform how they do science, when they do science, and why they do science.
   • Do your expectations make it clear that they can be successful in your lab as themselves? Or do you set standards for what it means to be a successful scientist that may leave people wondering if they’ve ‘got it’ or ‘fit the mold’?
     • Are you asking people to assimilate into ‘the way it’s always been done’ or are you allowing people to bring their diverse experiences and perspectives into the work they do?
   • Consider ways that you can allow for alignment of their personal and professional values and identities.

2. Be careful about what assumptions you make.
   • Especially important about behaviors you see, and the conclusions you make based on those behaviors.
   • Don’t assume people know all that they “need to know.” Consider having a structured way to ensure that every member of your lab is able to learn the key information they need to know.
   • Assumptions can leave people out without you being aware of it.
   • Even if it seems that students are doing “just fine” does not mean that they are not frantically trying to keep things together.
   • Apparent ‘low productivity’ can result from many things – consider asking (respectfully) instead of assuming why someone is seemingly unproductive. **Reach out to Grad Div for help with this!**
   • Open-Door policies are not as clear or inclusive as you may think. Don’t assume that everyone feels comfortable with complying with such a policy,

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or even understands the nuances of subtle cues and signals that you display (ex. door ajar vs. door shut). Just because you say your door is “always open” does not mean that people perceive your door to actually be “always open” for them.

3. **Big pitfall = Deficit Thinking** (see Grad Division DEI Primer for more details on this concept).
   - Deficit thinking can manifest in several ways:
     - Assuming certain learners lack experiences, resources, abilities, potential, intrinsic motivation for science, etc. or that they need extra help (often stemming from your own implicit and/or explicit biases).
     - Assuming failures and/or lack of productivity are the result of an inherent flaw or deficit of that person.
   - An anti-deficit approach involves considering if systems/structures in which the person is working are restrictive or pose barriers to that person’s success, and then makes efforts to address those restrictions/barriers.

4. **Relational aspect = important for learners**
   - Learners generally say that they want to get to know their faculty. That connection is an important component of expectations.
     - Mentorship is a two-way interpersonal relationship. Get to know your learners so that you know what their personal and professional values are, and then allow them to come to know those aspects of you.
   - Your explicit (and implicit) expectations allow students to understand more than just what you expect of them and others – those expectations, and how you uphold them, tell your learners who you are and what you’re about.
Tips from UCSF’s Office of the Ombuds

- A lot of problems they see come from the need for clear expectations, especially with regard to roles and responsibilities.
- Clear expectations give:
  - PI standards/baselines to refer back to when having difficult conversations.
  - People in the lab cleat sense of what is expected of them, a way to know that they are doing things well.
- It is important to get feedback from the members of your lab to really assess whether your expectations are as clear as you think they are.
- Don’t take it personally if someone does not think something is clear – it should be expected that others think differently than you and have a different perspective than you.
- Adopt a growth mindset – one where you always have room to grow. You are not limited in your capabilities to make clear, equitable, and inclusive expectations.
- From Ombuds perspective, best practice is to clarify, especially what do we do in the lab when there is a conflict between people (when that is not there, it allows conflict to escalate).
  - Problem then is how to support people when they need skills on how to get help to carry out that expectation? (PIs can then suggest resources to help one develop conflict competence.)
- Assumptions are consistently problematic:
  - assumptions happen on all sides of any conflict
  - assumptions leave room for uncertainty, inequity, and further escalation of conflict
  - it is tricky to rely only on past experience when working with students because our past experience is inherently limited
  - good practice is to set clear expectations that can apply widely/fairly while consistently evaluating those expectations with your team in order to adapt quickly (both actions promote inclusivity).