Last updated: July 2024

**Graduate Student Mentoring Plan**

Merkle Research Group

Department of Zoology and Physiology

University of Wyoming

The following mentoring plan is an agreement between \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (student) and Dr. Jerod Merkle (advisor/mentor/sponsor), dated \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The objective of this mentoring plan is to:

1. Detail the expectations of the student and advisor,
2. Outline how the student’s program of study and research will unfold, including the identification of reasonable timelines, and
3. Provide a means to assess progress, productivity, and success.

This document is expected to be reviewed and updated every 6 months. Students are expected to take the lead in developing the plan and keeping it updated, including scheduling a meeting with Jerod every 6 months. This document has 7 sections. But first, a few words about what it’s like working with Jerod.

Jerod’s mentoring philosophy. The role of a mentor is to teach, sponsor, encourage, and counsel a person for the purpose of promoting the person’s professional and/or personal development. Overall, I am here to help you make the transition from the short-term nature, predictable closure, and tight structure of undergraduate coursework and technician positions to the unfamiliar, loosely structured, and relatively open-ended world of research. Nonetheless, once you are in the Merkle Research Group, I will support you in any way possible to the extent that I can. The most important thing to me is that you succeed. I will tailor my mentoring style to each person based on their background, motivations, career goals, and current life situations. Note that while I am a good listener, and care deeply about the mental health of my mentees, I have no training in therapy; for professional mental health support, you should visit University of Wyoming’s resources: <https://www.uwyo.edu/student-success/resources/mental-health/index.html>.

I lead by example – I model professional work ethics and responsibility through my own work. I am generally hands off and provide a lot of freedom for my mentees, but also want to be involved and co-develop the research. I see clear communication as key to success in research, and while I communicate a lot, I fully expect the student to be the main communicator in our relationship. I strive to be available, open and accessible, and approachable to my mentees. I will give you positive feedback on your successes, but know that I will also be honest and communicate where you need to improve (while providing guidance on how to improve). I will guide you through the scientific process, but also encourage and push you to reach lofty goals in a reasonable amount of time with the least amount of stress possible. Be aware that our relationship will change over time, particularly as the student transitions to more of an independent researcher, writer, data analyst, leader, and communicator.

**Section 1. Expectations**

**Expectations of the advisor**:

* Adhere to The Merkle Research Group’s Vision, Philosophy, policies and expectations.
* Provide financial support (stipend, travel, research funding, etc.) whenever possible.
* Provide logistical support (permits, field vehicles, research assistants, office supplies, etc.) whenever possible.
* Facilitate collaborations and a network of contacts when applicable.
* Facilitate additional mentors/advisors (e.g., post-doc or practitioner) when applicable.
* Assist with the design and implementation of the student’s research.
* Proofread manuscripts, grant proposals, and presentations in a timely fashion.
* Meet with the student to discuss the student’s research project and other aspects of ecology on a regular basis.
* Hold the student to high standards while encouraging efficiency and completion of projects.
* Provide an attentive ear and moral support.
* Provide career advice and assist in finding positions for students after graduation.

**Expectations of the student**:

* Adhere to The Merkle Research Group’s Vision, Philosophy, policies and expectations.
* Be responsible for department paperwork for program progress and graduation (including taking the correct number of classes and forming your graduate committee). In other words, the student is responsible for complying with all institutional policies, including academic program milestones. Forms can be found [here](https://www.uwyo.edu/registrar/graduate-students/Graduate_Student_Forms.html) and [here](https://www.uwyo.edu/pie/student-resources/index.html).
* Take care of paperwork for travel, purchasing, annual reports, and related logistical items related to the student’s project.
* Work with the advisor to search and apply for funding (via grants), when necessary or relevant.
* Update Jerod Merkle on progress each week.
* Become familiar with the primary, secondary, and most recent literature related to the student’s project.
* Maintain detailed, organized, and accurate records of the research conducted (most importantly, documenting your work via clean, organized, and repeatable R code). Back-up all data and code on google drive.
* Publish thesis or dissertation chapters in a timely manner for top-tier peer-reviewed journals.
* Present results at professional conferences (both local and national), and at meetings run by relevant partners and collaborators.

**Section 2. Student goals, including** short-term (during graduate degree period), long-term (5 years out from graduating), and career:

**Section 3. Funding outlook and plans:**

**Section 4. Publication plans**:

**Section 5. Collaboration plan**, including how you will work with and communicate with the collaborators/partners on your project:

**Section 6. Overall work plan. How is the student going to achieve the goals? When to expect parts of the student’s program of study and research to be completed. This should be a semester by semester (including summers) list of bulleted items that includes all of the following:**

* Proposal: date of first outline, first draft, and final draft to advisor. Date of proposal defense.
* Comprehensive exams (for PhD students): dates the student will study for comps and date the exams will occur. PiEE bylaws are here: <https://www.uwyo.edu/pie/bylaws.html>.
* Each chapter: Date(s) of data collection or field work, date of initial analyses, completed analyses, and then date of first outline, first draft, and final draft to advisor. Date submitting publication. Note that it usually takes 3-6 months between first outline and final draft of a manuscript.
* Professional conferences and outreach plans
* Coursework

**Signatures**: Signatures below indicate a thorough understanding and mutual agreement to this mentoring plan.

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Graduate student Date

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Advisor (Jerod Merkle) Date