**Mentor-Mentee Compact**

***The broad goals of my research program***

As part of my job as a professor, I am expected to write grants and initiate research that will make tangible contributions

to science, the academic community, and to society. You will be helping me carry out this research. It is imperative that

we follow the scientific method (develop and test hypotheses) and conduct ourselves in an ethical manner. We must always

keep in mind that the goal of our research is to report our work through publication in scientific journals and

presentations at conferences. I also value outreach and informal science education, both in the classroom and while engaging with the public. I expect you to participate in this component of our lab mission while you are part of the lab group.

***What I expect from you***

Another part of my job as a professor is to train and advise students. I must contribute to your professional development

and progress toward your degree. I will help you set goals and hopefully achieve them. However, I cannot do the work for you. In general, I expect you to:

• Learn how to plan, design, and conduct high quality experiments

• Learn how to present and document your results and to draw appropriate conclusions

• Be honest, ethical, and enthusiastic

• Be engaged within the research group and both Neuro/DRS programs on campus

• Treat your lab mates, lab funds, equipment, chemicals, and biological samples with respect

• Take advantage of professional development opportunities

• Obtain your degree

• Work hard and don’t give up!

Remember, what we do takes time, and mostly doesn’t work on the first try. Plus, when it does work, we have to verify the results (rigor and reproducibility are key fundamentals!).

***You will take ownership over your laboratory experience***

• *Acknowledge that you have the primary responsibility for the successful completion of your laboratory work*. You

should maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, scientific curiosity, and ethical

standards.

• *Ensure that you meet regularly with me and provide me with updates on the progress and results of your*

*activities and experiments*. Make sure that you also use this time to communicate new ideas that you have about

your work and challenges that you are facing. Remember: I cannot address or advise about issues that you do

not bring to my attention.

• *Be knowledgeable of the policies, deadlines, and requirements of the graduate program, the graduate school,*

*and the university*. Comply with all institutional policies, including academic program milestones, laboratory

practices, and rules related to chemical safety and biosafety.

• *Actively cultivate your professional development*. There are a variety of resources on campus and online to

support professional development for students. I expect you to take full advantage of these resources, since part

of becoming a successful scientist involves more than just doing academic research. You are expected to make

continued progress toward your development as a teacher, as an ambassador to the general public representing

the university and toward your discipline, with respect to your networking skills, and as an engaged member of

broader professional organizations. When you attend a conference, I expect you to seek out these opportunities

to make the most of your attendance. You should become a member of one or more professional societies such

as the American Chemical Society, the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and the

American Crystallographic Association.

***You will be a team player***.

• *Attend and actively participate in all group meetings, as well as seminars that are part of your educational*

*program*. Participation in group meetings does not mean only presenting your own work, but providing support

to others in the lab through shared insight. You should refrain from using your computer or phone during research

meetings. Even if you are using the device to augment the discussion, it is disrespectful to the larger group to

have your attention distracted by the device. Do your part to create a climate of engagement and mutual respect.

• *Strive to be the very best lab citizen*. Take part in shared laboratory responsibilities and use laboratory

resources carefully and frugally. Maintain a safe and clean laboratory space. Be respectful and tolerant of, and

work collegially with, all laboratory colleagues: respect individual differences in values, personalities, work styles,

and theoretical perspectives.

• *Be a good collaborator*. Engage in collaborations within and beyond our lab group. Collaborations are more than

just publishing papers together. They demand effective and frequent communication, mutual respect, trust, and

shared goals. Effective collaboration is an extremely important component of the mission of our lab.

• *Leave no trace*. As part of our collaborations with other research groups, you may be using equipment that does

not belong to our lab. I ask that you respect this equipment and treat it even more carefully than our own

equipment. Always return it as soon as possible in the same condition you found it. If something breaks, tell me

right away so that we can arrange to fix or replace it. Don’t panic over broken equipment. Mistakes happen. But

it is not acceptable to return something broken or damaged without taking the steps necessary to fix it.

• *Acknowledge the efforts of collaborators*. This includes other members of the lab as well as those outside the lab.

***You will develop strong research skills***

• *Take advantage of your opportunity to work at a world-class university by developing and refining stellar research*

*skills*. I expect that you will learn how to plan, design, and conduct high quality scientific research.

• *Challenge yourself by presenting your work at meetings and seminars as early as you can and by preparing*

*scientific articles that effectively present your work to others in the field*. Our ‘currency’ in science is published

papers, they drive a lot of what we do and because our lab is supported by taxpayer dollars we have an obligation

to complete and disseminate our findings. I will push you to publish your research as you move through your

training program, not only at the end. Students pursuing a PhD degree will be expected to author or make

major contributions to at least one journal paper submission. Students pursuing a doctoral degree will be

expected to be lead author on at least two journal papers submissions, preferably three or four.

• *Keep up with the literature so that you can have a hand in guiding your own research*. Block at least one hour per

week to peruse current tables of contents for journals or do literature searches. Participate in journal clubs.

Better yet, organize one!

• *Maintain detailed, organized, and accurate laboratory records*. Be aware that your notes, records and all tangible

research data are my property as the lab director. When you leave the lab, I encourage you to take copies of your

data with you. But one full set of all data must stay in the lab, with appropriate and accessible documentation.

Regularly backup your computer data.

• *Be responsive to advice and constructive criticism*. The feedback you get from me and your colleagues is

intended to improve your scientific work.

***You will work to meet deadlines***

• *Strive to meet deadlines: this is the only way to manage your progress*. Deadlines can be managed in a number

of ways, but I expect you to do your best to maintain these goals. We will establish mutually agreed upon

deadlines for each phase of your work during one-on-one meetings. For graduate students, there is to be a

balance between time spent in class and time spent on research and perhaps on outreach or teaching. As long

as you are meeting expectations, you can largely set your own schedule. It is your responsibility to talk with me if

you are having difficulty completing your work and I will consider your progress unsatisfactory if I need to follow-

up with you about completion of your lab work.

• *Be mindful of the constraints on my time*. When we set a deadline, I will block off time to read and respond to

your work. If I do not receive your materials, I will move your project to the end of my queue. Allow a minimum

of one week prior to submission deadlines for me to read and respond to short materials such as conference

abstracts and three weeks for me to work on manuscripts or grant proposals. Please do not assume I can read

materials within a day or two.

***You will communicate clearly***

• *Remember that all of us are “new” at various points in our careers*. If you feel uncertain, overwhelmed, or want

additional support, please overtly ask for it. I welcome these conversations and view them as necessary.

• *Let me know the style of communication or schedule of meetings that you prefer*. If there is something about my

mentoring style that is proving difficult for you, please tell me so that you give me an opportunity to find

an approach that works for you. No single style works for everyone; no one style is expected to work all the time.

Do not cancel meetings with me if you feel that you have not made adequate progress on your research; these

are likely the most critical times to meet with a mentor.

• *Be prompt*. Respond promptly (in most cases, within 24 hours) to emails from anyone in our lab group and show

up on time prepared for meetings. If you need time to gather information in response to an email, please

acknowledge receipt of the message and indicate when you will be able to provide the requested information.

• *Discuss policies on work hours, sick leave and vacation with me directly*. Consult with me and notify fellow lab

members in advance of any planned absences. Graduate students, postdocs and staff can expect to work a

minimum of 40 hours per week in the lab (lunch breaks are your time). Undergrads need to devote at least 10

hours per week, unless a different agreement is made in advance. I expect that most lab members will not

exceed two weeks of personal travel away from the lab in any given year. Most research participants are

available during university holidays, so all travel plans, even at the major holidays, must be approved by me

before any firm plans are made. I believe that work-life balance and vacation time are essential for creative

thinking and good health and encourage you to take regular vacations. Be aware, however, that there will

necessarily be times —especially early in your training—when more effort will need to be devoted to work and it

may not be ideal to schedule time away. This includes synchrotron time.

• *Discuss policies on authorship and attendance at professional meetings with me before beginning any projects to*

*ensure that we are in agreement*. I expect you to submit relevant research results in a timely manner. Barring

unusual circumstances, it is my policy that students and staff are first-author on all work for which they took the

lead on data collection and preparation of the initial draft of the manuscript.

• *Help other students/staff with their projects and mentor/train other students/staff*. This is a valuable experience!

Undergraduates working in the lab should be encouraged to contribute to the writing of manuscripts. If you wish

to add other individuals as authors to your papers, please discuss this with me early on and before discussing the

situation with the potential co-authors.

***What you should expect from me***

• *I will work tirelessly for the good of the lab group*; the success of every member of our group is my top priority, no

matter their personal strengths and weaknesses, or career goals.

• *I will be available for regular meeting and informal conversations*. My busy schedule requires that we plan in

advance for meetings to discuss your research and any professional or personal concerns you have. Although I

will try to be available as much as possible, keep in mind that I am often running to teach a class or to a faculty

meeting and may have limited time.

• *I will help you navigate your graduate program of study*. As stated above, you are responsible for keeping up with

deadlines and being knowledgeable about requirements for your specific program. However, I am available to

help interpret these requirements, select appropriate coursework, and select committee members for your oral

exams.

• *I will discuss data ownership and authorship policies regarding papers with you*. These can create unnecessary

conflict within the lab and among collaborators. It is important that we communicate openly and regularly about

them. Do not hesitate to voice concerns when you have them.

• *I will be your advocate*. If you have a problem, come and see me. I will do my best to help you solve it.

• *I am committed to mentoring you, even after you leave my lab*. I am committed to your education and training

while you are in my lab, and to advising and guiding your career development— to the degree you wish—long

after you leave. I will provide honest letters of evaluation for you when you request them.

• *I will lead by example and facilitate your training in complementary skills needed to be a successful scientist*,

such as oral and written communication skills, grant writing, lab management, mentoring, and scientific

professionalism. I will encourage you to seek opportunities in teaching, even if not required for your degree

program. I will also strongly encourage you to gain practice in mentoring undergraduate students, and to seek

formal training in this activity.

• *I will encourage you to attend scientific/professional meetings and will make an effort to fund such activities*. I will

not be able to cover all requests but you can generally expect to attend at least one major conference per year,

when you have material to present. Please use conferences as an opportunity to further your education, and not

as a vacation. If you register for a conference, I expect you to attend the scientific sessions and participate

in conference activities during the time you are there. I will also expect you to apply for travel fellowships when

they are available. I will help you identify and apply for these opportunities.

• *I will strive to be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful*. I will try my best to understand

your unique situation, and mentor you accordingly. I am mindful that each student and staff person comes from

a different background and has different professional goals. It will help if you keep me informed about your

experiences and remember that scientific research is a job with very high expectations. I view my role as fostering

your professional confidence and encouraging your critical thinking, skepticism, and creativity. If my attempts to

do this are not effective for you, I am open to talking with you about other ways to achieve these goals.

***Yearly evaluation***

Each year we will sit down to discuss progress and goals. At that time, you should remember to tell me if you are unhappy

with any aspect of your experience in the laboratory or at UTSA. Remember that I am your advocate, as well as your

advisor. Similarly, we should discuss any concerns that you have with respect to my role as your advisor. 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. At the same time, 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 rectify them. This will be a good time for us to take care of any issues before they become a major problem.