

Kinsman-Costello Lab
Graduate Student Expectations
(this is not an exhaustive list...)

- **You are a member of a team.** While it is important to keep your own goals in mind and work towards them, I expect you to participate as a member of our lab community. Ultimately, everyone (including you), benefits when we support and learn from one another. Take opportunities, when possible, to help others with their research and talk to one another about your experiences. You should expect to spend a fraction of your time (maybe 10-20%) helping out with activities that may seem completely unrelated to your own research and program for other members of the lab. Some examples of lab community support activities include:
 - **Share your knowledge with others.** After you've been trained on a lab technique, I will expect you to be available to train others on that technique and answer questions and troubleshoot as we refine the method. If you develop a new technique, I will expect you to draft a protocol so that others in the lab can use that technique as well.
 - Throughout your time with the lab, there will be opportunities to participate in **outreach events and engagement activities.** These activities are not only in service to the communities involved, but provide valuable professional development and often networking opportunities which will not only enrich your experience at Kent State but serve your career in the long run. Although no individual activity will be required, I will expect you to participate in these activities as is reasonable and as your schedule allows.
 - **Communication is critical.** I expect you to check your email and slack messages most working days and respond to emails and slack messages within 24-48 hours, and you can expect roughly the same from me. If travel, vacations, field work, or other activities prevent you from responding to emails within this time frame, I will expect you to put an "out-of-office" type automatic response in your email. During the work day and field trips, I sometimes will use text to quickly communicate. Please only use text messages for quick, necessary communications, and avoid contacting me via text during non-business hours unless absolutely necessary.
 - **Treat others with courtesy and respect.** Remember all the rules you learned in kindergarten? Those still apply today. No put-downs.
 - **Weekly(ish) lab meetings.** I expect you to attend most weeks. If you can't make it, I appreciate an email giving me a heads up. Lab meetings are important for establishing and maintaining a supportive, collaborative lab group culture, for your professional and intellectual development, and for the logistical nuts and bolts of keeping the lab running.
 - **Spring Semester (usually February) Graduate Recruitment Weekend.** Every year the department hosts a recruitment/interview weekend for prospective graduate students. Mark this weekend on your calendar and avoid scheduling anything that conflicts with it when the date is announced. Even in years in which our lab is not recruiting new students, I expect you to participate in events associated with this weekend in the ways that feel most appropriate for you. In years in which our lab is recruiting/interviewing a prospective student, I expect current students to be available for a 30 min-1 hr meeting in which prospective graduate student can discuss the program, lab culture, and my advising style *without me present.*

- **Individual expectations** (this is in addition to all the formal requirements that are on other pieces of paper, specifically the Graduate Handbook...)
 - **Be curious.** Read literature, and tell me about what you're reading. If you were interested in or excited about something you learned in a class or in a seminar, let me know. This is how I can keep tabs on your intellectual development & interests.
 - **Strive to learn *and use* R.** Trust me, it's not that scary, and it will save you time and be an extraordinarily valuable skill in the long run. Note the emphasis on use. Don't just learn R, use it.
 - Be mindful about improving your **presentation skills**. When you are in seminar, think not only about the content of the seminar, but what was and wasn't effective about the structure of the presentation.
 - **Keep in touch with me and the lab group.** We may or may not meet every week, but we will develop a structure that meets yours and my needs to make sure that you are establishing goals and working towards accomplishing them.
 - Develop your **time management** skills. You will be BUSY in graduate school. Everyone has different strategies for managing their time, and methods are constantly evolving. I can't tell you what strategy will work best for you, but I can tell you that you need to be thoughtful about developing these skills. If something isn't working, try a new technique. I expect you to show up on time and meet deadlines. I understand that life happens. If events and challenges arise that prevent you from achieving your goals (short- and long-term) please communicate this with me, including a revised plan for how and when you will work towards that goal. If deadlines are routinely being missed and tasks are routinely not completed, this is a signal that we need to sit down and re-evaluate your schedule, priorities, and the scope of the work that you are attempting to complete.
 - Respect **intermediate deadlines**. Many of the tasks you work through in your graduate research will be large and perhaps daunting, like writing a thesis proposal or prospectus. The best, and only way, to complete these tasks is to divide them into smaller steps and work on them over longer time periods, producing iterative drafts that we will work through together. We will often agree on intermediate deadlines for drafts and components of projects to ensure continued progress and provide opportunities for me to provide advice and direction when needed. These deadlines will usually be arbitrary, but deserve the same degree of respect as deadlines for classes and other obligations. There will inevitably be times when Life Happens and you're unable to meeting intermediate deadlines. In that situation, my expectation is communication from you on or prior to the agreed upon deadline. I don't necessarily need to know why you can't meet a deadline, but I do need to know **what new deadline you propose** and what your plan is for completing the work and continuing progress. If a pattern emerges of intermediate deadlines not being met, in particular if there is also a lack of communication with regards to missing deadlines, then we will have a conversation about what barriers are preventing you from meeting these goals and strategies for getting back on track and continuing progress.
 - **Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good.** There is no role for perfectionism in science. If your goal is perfection, then you have the wrong goal. Perfectionism is very different from striving for excellence.
 - **Network.** This is just as important in science as in any other field. Taking every opportunity to introduce yourself to fellow scientists and non-scientists of all

stripes will enrich your graduate school experience and provide opportunities post-graduation. Individuals further along in their careers can provide valuable advice and opportunities, your peers are and will continue to be your professional network, and those who are less experienced can benefit from your mentoring. If you are an introvert, that is fine, but networking in a way that fits your social style is still important. If you are more comfortable in one-on-one situations that at large networking-events (the dreaded “social banquet”), schedule time to meet people who you’d like to connect with over coffee or lunch.

- **Keep track of your accomplishments.** Every year in January we will complete an Annual Graduate Student Evaluation and Progress Report together which is submitted to the BSCI Graduate Chair and is a formal record of your progress and goals towards your graduate degree. This time is an ideal opportunity to assess your accomplishments, and I will request an up-to-date CV prior to our meeting. I recommend keeping a rough running list of your accomplishments as you achieve them, so that when the time comes to update your CV, all the information that you need is organized and together.
- **Take care of yourself.** This is not just altruistic on my part. When you are healthy you are a more effective member of the lab community. Eat when you need to. Rest when you need to. You probably need more rest than you think you do. Pulling all-nighters is not a badge of courage, it’s a sign that you need to invest some effort into improving your time management skills. Mental health is just as important, if not more important, than physical health. I have, and still do, struggle with depression and anxiety, so I have firsthand experience with mental health challenges. While I am not your mother or your therapist, I can connect you with resources to support your mental health. The Kent State Step Up & Speak Out program maintains a list of mental health resources that I encourage you to refer to and share with others: <https://www.kent.edu/stepupspeakout>
- **My role as your advisor.**
 - As your advisor, I wear many hats, and they often change from day to day and minute to minute. Depending on the situation, I will strive to support, advocate for, advise, and challenge you. At times I will wear a supervisory role and wear a “boss” hat, in particular if you are funded as a Research Assistant on a funded grant project, for which there are specific deliverables that I, and therefore you, are responsible for.
 - While I will not and cannot do your work for you, I will and can connect you to resources that can help you work efficiently and effectively and ultimately achieve success. I can connect you to my professional network by introducing you to colleagues at conferences and during seminars.
 - **How to get what you need from me.** It is challenging, if not impossible, for me to remember all of the details of every student’s research program, so I will rely on you to refresh my memory before and during meetings to get me up to speed. The best way to make the most of our limited meeting time is to email me ahead of time with an agenda (a list of items to discuss) and any materials that you need my feedback on. For example, if you need help interpreting or analyzing data, send me the data file(s) and/or graphs with clear, concise explanations and questions at least 24 hours before we meet. When you need my comments on drafts of writing or presentations, please give me at least a week, send it to me in an email, and give me a reasonable deadline.
 - **Within-lab peer review.** You must share any piece of writing or presentation with someone else to receive a first round of comments, edit it, and then send the

document to me before I will comment on it. When you send me the draft, tell me who has already read it, otherwise I will send it back and request that you get peer feedback first.

- Although I have a vested interest because your success ultimately does reflect on me, at the end of the day **this is YOUR graduate school experience**. Your successes and failures (there will be failures, you will learn from them) are your own. I expect you to take ownership of your educational program and research project.