

Dear Prospective Graduate Student,

Thank you for your interest in joining my laboratory as a graduate student. I am excited that you find my program inviting. I want to take this opportunity to share with you my vision for graduate student education at the University of Florida Honey Bee Research and Extension Laboratory.

My goal as a supervisor is to use my experiences and resources to help my graduate students reach their personal and professional goals. I work to mentor/train my students in honey bee and wild bee research, extension, and instruction, this in an attempt to ensure a legacy of academic interest in enhancing the sustainability of managed and wild bee populations and the agricultural/natural communities both support. Furthermore, I try to help my students achieve *their* personal and professional goals by giving them the opportunity to function as a professional in my laboratory. My students write grants, mentor others, attend professional meetings, review manuscripts, travel domestically and internationally, participate in informal and formal research/extension/instruction discussions, etc. I, essentially, want my students to leave my mentorship equipped with the tools necessary to reach their life goals.

I would like to share with you how I work to accomplish my overall goal by noting below specific objectives I have for graduate student education and the methods I use to accomplish those objectives.

Objectives and Methods

Objective 1 - Enhance critical thinking skills in students - To foster critical thinking skills in my graduate and undergraduate students, I spend significant time with each student individually and in group settings, helping them address important issues relating to their research and the research of others. When a student encounters a roadblock in thought or process, I help the student determine how to address that roadblock best. This provides me the opportunity to engage the student in the discovery process. As a practical example, my students, post docs, visiting scholars, and I have weekly early morning Starbucks meetings where we simply discuss science, extension, and instruction scholarship. My students find this time engaging and I have seen a positive influence of this group discussion on their critical thinking abilities.

Objective 2 - To help students link their research interests to real-world problems - Students do not exist in a vacuum. What they learn today may interface with economics, politics, history, and culture later. I want my students to realize their projects can address real-world problems and have lasting impacts globally. I want them to leave my mentorship knowing that they truly *can* make a difference.

Objective 3 - Encourage "diversity" in student learning experiences - Most often "diversity" means racial and gender diversity and I do teach/train men and women as well as people of all races. However, I welcome diversity in a broader sense, including socio-economic, religious, and academic diversity. For example, my team and I regularly host visiting scholars from around the world, including Grenada, Germany, Brazil, Pakistan, the Netherlands, Iran, China, etc. My students have seen firsthand how such diversity adds perspective and depth to the learning experience. This has fostered considerable growth in my students, who are learning to think globally and culturally.

Objective 4 - Cultivate strong communication skills, both written and verbal, in students - Recognizing that the best scientists, extension educators, and instructors are those who can communicate their findings to others effectively, I emphasize the need for my students to refine their writing and speaking skills. To address their speaking skills, I provide speaking opportunities for my students at scientific and extension meetings. To foster better writing skills, I edit my students' written works profusely, later meeting with them individually to discuss my comments. My students and post docs also review one another's written work prior to submitting it to me for review. This helps my student learn writing skills by editing the work of others in a peer review setting.

Objective 5 - Help students see how extension, instruction, and research interact and enhance the learning experience - I cater my instructional activities to the needs of students, Florida citizens, and the global community in general. To that end, I require my graduate students to participate (1) in my extension programs so they can experience working with clientele directly and (2) in the courses I teach as TAs or instructors so that they can be involved at the student learning interface. Working with clientele and students helps my graduate students develop better projects and understand how their findings may be used practically. Not only does this broaden a student's perspective, but it sharpens a student's problem solving skills.

Objective 6 - To spark enthusiasm for learning and provide a strong foundation for lifelong learning - It is important to me that students love what they do. I try to foster enthusiasm two primary ways: (1) be enthusiastic myself (enthusiasm is contagious) and (2) permit students to investigate what they want rather than being forced by me into one of my existing projects. I think enthusiasm provides a student with the desire to learn perpetually. I want my students to leave my tutelage hungry to find answers to life's most pressing questions, with the skills necessary to find those answers, and appreciate that education is a lifelong process.

Objective 7 - To engage students through varied learning experiences - Students in my laboratory get to engage in learning experiences a variety of ways. They TA or lecture in my courses. They are required to author grants and secure project funding. They travel nationally and internationally. They supervise undergraduate research assistants. They attend a variety of training events such as grant writing seminars, seminars on effective lecturing, etc. They submit manuscripts for review and serve as reviewers for various journals. They volunteer at entomology field days and various beekeeping events. They lecture at scientific conferences. They network with international scholars, etc. Essentially, I want my student to leave my lab with all the skills necessary to succeed in a diverse and globalized world.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding my program. I think you will find the HBREL a great place to grow.

Sincerely,



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