

**Note for outside reviewers:** *Sharing this compact is meant to aid others in preparing similar documents for their lab, but it is expected that you will not directly copy words/text from this document.*

## **Starbird Lab Compact**

This document is meant to serve as a contract between myself, as the investigator, and members of the lab. It defines expectations for what you can expect from me as a mentor, what I will expect from you as a member of the lab, and what members of the lab can expect from one another. Everyone who joins the lab will go through this document with me and sign to indicate that they have read and understood the contents. As this document is meant to make life in the lab one where everyone can thrive, this document is meant to be a living document and edits are encouraged but must be approved by all group members before being included in the official lab compact.

### **Welcome to the Lab!**

First, welcome to the Starbird Lab. We are excited to have you here and hope you will have a wonderful experience while here. This document provides a lot of guidelines, but it is not meant to be prohibitive. Rather, it is intended to enhance your experience. It is my hope that you will not only learn a great deal in the lab that will aid you in obtaining your personal goals, but that you enjoy your time spent here.

### **Lab Expectations:**

*What You Can Expect From Me (In no particular order):*

1. Regular and consistent meetings to ensure that I am up to date on your progress, that any mentoring/training plan we may have is working it's best for you, and that I am doing my part to support your progress.
2. Unequivocal support in helping you to obtain your research or project goals. This includes, but it not limited to, ensuring that you have the supplies and training needed to carry out your work as designed, maintaining a safe laboratory environment, and meeting regularly individually and as a group with other scientists to provide feedback.
3. That I work to create an environment that is inclusive and where everyone can thrive, and that I am responsive to feedback on how to improve when this is not accomplished.
4. Advocacy when needed. Be it to your committee (if a student), to leadership in the department or the school of medicine, or in the wider community, it is my responsibility to hear and understand your needs to the best of my ability and to ensure that I use my voice and status where possible to help those needs to be met. This might mean requesting accommodations or

ensuring conferences can meet your needs before sending you to report on your research. Advocacy does not ensure results, but you can expect that I take the responsibility to intervene where possible seriously.

5. If you receive a fellowship, I will do everything that I can to ensure that you are not penalized by policy and that, where possible, you will receive an increased stipend. Some granting agencies make it very difficult (through effort and conduct requirements) or do not allow an additional stipend. If we encounter this, I promise we will find a way to reward you though a stipend increase may not be possible (and I will continue to advocate for less restrictive policies).

6. Because of my personal schedule, I may email after hours. I do NOT expect that you check that email or respond after hours. If I send a semi-urgent email, it's because I want you to respond as soon as possible during normal business hours, such as when you come in the next day. I am aware that you can set timers for emails to be sent the next day, but I promise that I get more emails than makes this practice manageable, so I prefer to just be very clear that I have ZERO expectation that you will answer if I send an email at 10 pm or 5 am (when I'm often awake). If it's really urgent (-80 failing and I'm out of town), I will likely call or text but this practice will be reserved for true emergencies to maintain boundaries between work and life as much as possible.

#### *What I Expect From You:*

1. I expect you to come to lab ready and prepared to work or to communicate with me when you are unable to, so we can make a plan. This is not to say that every day you come to lab that it will be busy or perfect, but rather that you come able to safely do your job (this is a lab and we do have some hazards) or indicate when you are not able to.

2. I do not expect that you follow the same schedule as me, but I do think you should make a fairly consistent schedule that works for you and that allows you to get the work done. This does not apply to lab manager/research technicians, whom I expect to make a regular schedule (9-5 or 10-6) so that people know when to expect them in lab and can go to them for issues (note times off on calendar). I do not expect a set number of hours every week or that you work every weekend, but sometimes the experiments require that and you should be flexible in that case. For example, protein purification can take 14-16 hours and growing cells sometimes need to be split on the weekends. As such, I expect that you modify your schedule to allow reasonable work hours as needed. For example, if you spend two very long days completing a protein prep, then perhaps you might only come in for a half-day or take the third day off.

3. While I don't expect a set number of hours each week, all lab members should be averaging around 40 hours per week when hired to complete full-time work (undergraduate students, for example, are not included here). Importantly, all work related activities are work. As a graduate student, class and major classwork (grant draft due for a class), are work. Responding to emails or going to requested lab events/conferences is work. Sometimes in science you may need to work extra hours one week and you make up for it by working less hours the next week, but I don't want to be concerned that you are not committing the number of hours that is expected

overall. I am adopting a flexible policy because I think policing people's hours can be a source of inequitable treatment and I do not want to propagate that, but I also do not want this flexibility to be abused. If I feel that you are consistently falling short of this expectation, I will ask you to have a discussion and if the behavior continues, one potential solution is that you may have to begin recording hours. I want to strongly emphasize that it is not my desire to do this, but I recognize that for some people flexible policies do not provide enough structure.

4. I expect that you will begin drafting components of a paper as you go. There is often a dash to finish figures and writing when a paper is about to be submitted, but in my experience this doesn't allow for the careful consideration of possible conclusions, shortcomings, etc., that should coincide with publishing work. Depending on the length between publications, it also allows skills like figure making and drafting ideas to be less consistently developed. As such, while it is hard to determine where a future publication will go, once an experiment of potential use has been completed, work should be done to make a publication quality figure and to minimally write the methods, and potentially interpretation. I think this will help us to streamline the publication process (so we can have more freedom in other areas), will improve the quality of figures available for science talks, and perhaps most importantly, will allow us to think carefully about how each piece of data might be interpreted and the story that's unfolding.

*What You Should Be Able To Expect From One Another:*

1. Everyone deserves to come to work in a safe and supportive team environment. Not everyone will be friends at work, but everyone should be able to work effectively together to accomplish and support one another's research. This includes things like cleaning up after yourself as expected in common spaces and respecting one another's scheduled time on equipment. Although we hope to avoid conflict that is difficult to resolve, my door is always open if you have a concern about interacting with a coworker, or myself, and we can try and find a resolution that will work for everyone. In line with school of medicine and departmental policies, harassment of any kind will not be tolerated, and will be reported where required. This is common language in any academic or work setting, but we all know these things happen. I can assure you that I mean what I say here, and will not tolerate one person interfering with the work of another and/or threatening the goal of maintaining a safe and respectful workspace.

**Special Note About Time Off/Vacation:** The work that we do is important and sometimes demanding, and because of that taking time off to recharge is critical. Thankfully though, one nice aspect of our job is that it can be flexible. As long as you are within the granted time off for your job description, you do not need to request time off. We have a lab calendar, so I simply request that you put it on the calendar and ensure that the time off is communicated to team members that need to know to cover shared responsibilities and planned experiments. It is important though that we respect the time off that is granted. So, for example, if you have a fellowship and the conditions of that fellowship indicate that you have 15 days off per year and you've taken 5 days thus far, you do not need to ask permission to take off 5 more days as long as you put it on the calendar and follow notification guidelines above.

If you are taking more than a couple days off, please update the calendar at least two weeks prior to your time off. If you want to take time off over the allotted number of days per year, please schedule a discussion with me. This policy is intended to reflect the flexibility of our work environment, to ensure there is no unfairness with regards to vacation/leave, and to encourage regular breaks, which I think is an important part of being your best at work. This is also a reflection of my trust that you will take your work seriously and be responsible with time management. As such, all time off should be recorded so there is a record on the lab calendar. You do not need to list reasons, but since the university and often fellowships, etc., distinguish between sick and vacation/personal leave, please note these designations on the calendar. I do not aim to micromanage your time but if I have strong concerns that you may be abusing this policy, I will ask you to have a discussion. We will also need to have a discussion if I determine that you are regularly taking time off (whole days) that is not listed on the calendar.

In addition to your personal time off, the lab will shut down for one week during the year following an annual lab clean up day. Part of this time may include a lab retreat or planned activities, but the remaining time will be for a break without the regular disruptions (no emails about ongoing lab business, etc.). This may be a good time for reflection on your project or to catch up on outstanding lab organizational tasks (longer term record keeping, etc.), or I may provide the group with a lab thought activity to be completed independently. The idea is not to work the entire time, but to allow some space for free and uninterrupted thought. You do not need to use personal days for this as it is a group activity.

Lastly, the university designates holidays that apply to all employees (though students may have classes on some of these dates). I realize that some people may have religious holidays that are not reflected in the university calendar. If this is the case and you need to take time off to observe a holiday in your region or culture, please just note it on the lab calendar.

## **Lab Organization**

Lab Meetings: We will have bi-weekly lab meetings on a consistent schedule, but I ask that the date and time of week for lab meetings be kept open every week for emergency meetings and or additional meetings as discussed in the next paragraph. This doesn't mean you cannot plan experiments during this time, but please try not to schedule any regular meetings at the same time. This should be a standing appointment and I expect that the majority of lab members will make it to every lab meeting, barring any personal emergencies, of course, or an occasional missed meeting for a planned event (out of town, etc). Sometimes lab meeting will be cancelled for the entire group for occurrences such as special seminar the whole lab wants to attend. In rare occasions and only after discussion, lab meeting may be moved if several events have come up that interfere with more than one scheduled lab meeting. During lab meeting, we will discuss lab business and then either do round table (everyone gives a short presentation) or short talks. Occasionally we will have a speaker/visitor join us for lab meeting. When it is round table, everyone is expected to have a slide even if it's just text to report what's happened. Approximately every other year we will use a series of lab meetings to discuss methods relevant to the lab, with the purpose of giving everyone a general overview. Topics might include using Chimera, X-ray crystallography, SAXS, kinetic analysis, etc. Preparing lesson plans for these

sessions will be done by all members of the lab at some point, working with me and others for guidance.

Every other month (6 times per year), we will also have a third lab meeting during the normal lab meeting time and day of the week. This extra meeting time will be used for non-traditional but important science topics, such as on responsible conduct of research, mentoring, and/or diversity, equity, and inclusion discussions. The format of this meeting will vary, but instructions will be given clearly ahead of time. Some examples include: discussion with examples on career development topics such as developing a budget and negotiating (inclusive of multiple career types), group discussion with a feature on mentoring using discussion prompts, and a journal club to discuss a recent DEI paper (or perhaps even writing one on a topic important to the group).

Individual Meetings: In addition to biweekly lab meetings, we will meet at least monthly one on one to discuss your individual science progress. We will also meet once per semester, or minimally once per year over lunch or coffee to have a dedicated conversation about your professional and personal goals, and whether we need to adjust your training, duties in the lab, or plan to ensure you are meeting all of your desired future goals. For example, this is a good time to discuss your desired career and any potential enrichment outside of the lab, such as internships, as well as whether I can support your personal needs, such as structured time off from the lab for childcare, better. This is not meant to probe into your personal life or encourage you to share things you do not wish to, but rather to ensure that where you feel comfortable and where I can help as your mentor and/or employer, we have a discussion about supporting you as a whole person.

Lab Notebooks: During your time in lab, keeping an organized and up to date notebook is one of the most important things you will do. This is because without proper record keeping any findings could be potentially meaningless, since it's very important in the practice of science that results can be inspected by peers as needed for communicating, publicizing, and funding future work. As a result, I expect that all members who enter the lab have a discussion with me about lab notebooks, and follow the practices below to ensure that you will keep your lab notebooks up to date

1. All notebook records should be updated as soon as possible at all times. Sometimes things pull you away from the lab at the end of an experiment and this is understandable, but once you return, the biggest priority should be updating your records while your memory is best rather than, for example, starting a new experiment.
2. Notebooks should be written such that if you read it 10 years from now, you could still figure out what was done and be able to repeat. It is not necessary to repeat information if you referenced it previously, but details unique to this experiment such as concentration, equipment settings, cell count, and anything that varied from previous work should be recorded. So, for example, if you are doing a bacterial transformation and followed the same protocol you've used several times (and referenced in a protocol), you do not need to write out each step. However, if you usually incubate cells at 42 degree C and today the water bath was at 45 degrees, then you should write something like "transformed cells with Awesome Protein using my standard transformation protocol with the heat shock temperature adjusted to 45 degrees". This is

important because if something was ultimately different about your results, you can only diagnose it accurately if you know what was different about the protocol.

3. All raw data must be safely stored and backed up according to our current data storage protocol (this document will be updated separately) immediately or as soon as possible. In some cases, routine backing up makes more sense, but should be done on a schedule. For example, if you are purifying protein on size exclusion to use for an important experiment, you should save the csv file on the instrument but also on an external harddrive as soon as possible. This way, if the computer fails you do not lose the data. However, files of standard runs will be backed up every 3 months to capture all of the data.

4. Keeping clear records is as important as backing up digital raw data. In order for the data to be useful, you and others need to be able to determine which data comes from where. As such, please develop a convention for naming and storing files and stick to it. I am happy to discuss some possibilities with you. I like to store things by data type in folder, then by project folder, and individual files by date and other key factors, such as sample used. For example, all SAXS experiments might be in a "SAXS" folder. Within that folder is another group of files specifying the project, such as "TAM\_Receptors". And within the TAM\_Receptors folder, there might be filenames like "Tyro3\_4.4mg\_23Aug2024" (protein, concentration, date).

5.. Your lab notebook can be paper, electronic, or a combination of the two. However, you should inform me of the format and ensure I have access to the files (for example, if it's electronic, you will need to set it up for me to have access).

6. I will check lab notebooks with you 2-3 times per year with you. This is not intended to be intense oversight, but rather me doing my due diligence and ensuring we are keeping records. If we find that you are not up to date or need to adjust some of your recordkeeping methods, we will have a conversation about how to better help you reach the important goal of having an updated and legible notebook.

### **Other Important Notices:**

Other Resources: My Office: Please feel free to use my office space (and couch) if you are in after I have left for the day. Our lab manager/tech should have an extra copy of the key. This is meant to give you a space to relax/get quiet time if you have to be in late writing or doing a protein prep, etc. Please be respectful of the space and clean up any messes made by you before you leave.

Food and Beverages: There is a coffee maker/tea kettle which are open to all (even outside of the lab, but please do not announce it). I will make an effort to provide free pods/tea bags, so please notify me or our lab manager/tech when supplies are low. There is often extra sugar packets and creamer in the fridge or in the main departmental kitchen, but when possible, I will bring in these items to share. I will also do my best to maintain several snack and meal options in the lab at all times (chips, crackers, ramen, canned soup). Please feel free to take these items as needed and if I do not notice, please let me or the lab manager/tech know when these items need replacing.

Gift Cards: I will keep a box in my office with \*emergency use\* gift cards to use as needed. Use the office key to access this box after hours. You do not need to tell me when you use a card, but if you notice the box is empty, please send me an email (I will not assume you used a card). Please

be respectful and considerate of others, and only use these cards when needed. This is to help with emergency groceries or to provide other needs to offset an unexpected bill (car repair, medical expense, etc.). Please do not use this when it is not absolutely needed, as you will be taking funds from someone who may need it more. However, if you do need it, please do not feel bad about taking a card as that is what they are for and we all have hard times. This won't fix that issue, but it will hopefully help relieve some of the stress around unexpected expenses. Please also feel free to come talk to me if a major unexpected expense is affecting your ability to function in lab (i.e. car broke down and now it takes 3 times as long to get to lab, making it hard to work as normal). We can work to find a solution and if not, to at least give you some extra time and support to resolve the issue.

Communication and Social Media: I am quite active on social media and we have a lab account on Twitter (@StarbirdLab). As such, we will routinely post about the lab, to celebrate wins big and small and to announce science advances. Although I will not generally post pictures of people as I think it's better to post images of science, etc., this will likely occasionally happen. I will usually ask if I can post any pictures each time (examples of photos where I may not explicitly ask is a pictures taken at a general lab party/dinner where I capture multiple people or our annual lab photo), but please let me know ahead of time if you do not want any pictures on social media and I will respect that wish. I will aim to keep all posts very positive and respectful as I believe that social media can be a powerful tool for communicating science to the public and helping them get to know the people about science. If you are posting about the lab and/or using the lab Twitter, I ask that you do the same when representing the lab on Twitter. Sometimes Twitter is a space to speak on difficult things (for example, making a statement in support of a marginalized group), but I do not think Twitter is ever a space for personal attacks when representing an organization/lab. As always, please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns about this policy.

You signature here indicates only that you have received this document and reviewed the contents with Dr. Starbird.

Print: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Chrystal Starbird, PhD

