Growing as a Research Professional

Laboratory Leadership in Science

Faculty Orientation

University of Tennessee

Adapted from Making the Right Moves: A Practical Guide to Scientific Management for Postdocs and New Faculty (2nd Edition)
Topics to be discussed:

- Role of Laboratory Leader
- Creating Your Vision as a Leader
- Developing a Leadership Style
- Building and Sustaining an Effective Team
Laboratory Leadership
Leadership

• Leadership: getting people to enact a vision of what needs to be accomplished
• Leadership = Vision + Relationships + Tasks
  – Vision – A leader creates a vision and sets the direction for the lab
  – Relationships – A leader enables others in the lab to do work in a unified manner:
    • Building and managing teams
    • Creating an environment conducive to teamwork and feedback
    • Motivating and supporting all lab personnel
    • Delegating responsibility when possible and necessary
    • Making fair decisions and manage conflicts
    • Communicating and listening
    • Being sensitive to diverse populations
    • Being a mentor
Leadership (cont.)

– Tasks: A leader manages activities of lab members:
  • Designing projects and determining time frames
  • Creating budgets
  • Writing grants and papers
  • Teaching courses
  • Being an effective time manager
Leadership (cont.)

- Leaders vs. Managers
  - Managers are administrators
  - Leaders influence the opinions and attitudes of others to accomplish a goal
Leadership Skills

• Developing Leadership Skills: Establish one or several goals for becoming a better leader and make a plan for achieving them
  – Choose a behavior you want to modify
  – Choose a specific goal for changing the behavior
  – Determine a timeline for completion
  – Assess your progress
  – Create open channels of feedback to gain feedback about the effectiveness of your plan

• Improving your leadership skills
  – Find a mentor
  – Read books and attend courses
  – Get to know your strengths and weaknesses
Creating Your Vision

• Vision as Foundation:

Developing a vision for everyone to share does not limit innovation; it provides a foundation for creativity from which new directions may be taken
Creating Your Vision (cont.)

• Creating a Mission Statement: The cornerstone for implementing your vision; describes the kind of research, the motivation for the research, and the kind of work atmosphere you seek to establish
  – Include short-term and long-term goals
  – Seek informal input from colleagues and department head
  – Decide what values you want for your lab
  – Consider social, financial, and scientific goals
  – Craft a statement that you feel comfortable communicating to peers, superiors, and lab members
  – Limit the statement to one or two paragraphs
Sample Mission Statements

"The Coca-Cola Promise: The Coca-Cola Company exists to benefit and refresh everyone it touches. The basic proposition of our business is simple, solid, and timeless. When we bring refreshment, value, joy, and fun to our stakeholders, then we successfully nurture and protect our brands, particularly Coca-Cola. That is the key to fulfilling our ultimate obligation to provide consistently attractive returns to the owners of our business."

FedEx will produce superior financial returns for shareowners by providing high value-added supply chain, transportation, business, and related information services through focused operating companies. Customer requirements will be met in the highest quality manner appropriate to each market segment served. FedEx will strive to develop mutually rewarding relationships with its employees, partners, and suppliers. Safety will be the first consideration in all operations. Corporate activities will be conducted to the highest ethical and professional standards.
Developing a Leadership Style

• Leadership Style: the way you carry out your role as leader; depends on your personality and the types of mentors you have had
  – Different styles of leadership are required for different situations and different individuals
  – Practice using a variety of styles

• Four Styles of Situational Leadership – from directive (task) to supportive (relationship)
  – Directing – High focus on task/lower focus on relationship
  – Coaching – High focus on both task and relationship
  – Supporting – Low focus on task/higher focus on relationship
  – Delegating – Low focus on both task and relationship
Team Building-Communication

• Communicating Within the Lab - Communicate daily and informally with other lab members

• Formal Meetings – An organized way to keep everyone informed of the group activities and results; opportunities for you to reiterate your expectations and values
  – Research group meetings
  – One-on-one Meetings
  – Performance reviews
  – Small-group meetings
  – Strategy sessions
  – Journal club meetings
  – Informal group activities
Communication (cont.)

• Giving and Receiving Feedback - Critical leadership skill; helps you improve as a leader; helps others develop as scientists; ensures your expectations are met

• Giving Feedback – Should be given informally, on a daily basis, and during formal meetings
  – Timing
  – Specific and objective
  – Reinforce expectations
    – Avoid giving too much
  – Avoid subjective statements
  – Present constructively
  – Make sure it registers

• Receiving Feedback - Invite feedback; to get honest comments you must be receptive
Making Decisions

• **First step: understand the situation:**
  – How important is the decision?
  – When do I need to make the decision?
  – Do I have enough information to make the decision?
  – How critical are the consequences of this decision?
  – Who is affected by this decision?
  – Will I need assistance or approval?
  – If similar decisions have been made in the past, can the same approach be used?

• **Decision style – the degree to which others are included in the decision**
  – Isolation
  – Consultation
  – Group
  – Delegation
Motivating Lab Members

• Most people are motivated when their contributions are recognized and appreciated

• Factors that will help motivate lab members:
  – Choice
  – Competence
  – Purpose
  – Recognition
  – Feeling comfortable
  – Progress
  – Enthusiasm
Managing Conflict in the Lab
Managing Conflict in the Lab

• **Conflict:** one person’s concerns or desires differing from those of another person
  – Conflict is not necessarily negative
  – Conflict can be managed to yield positive effects

• **Behavior in conflict falls into two dimensions:** **assertiveness** and **cooperativeness**

• **Five specific modes of dealing with conflict**
  – Competing: assertive and uncooperative
  – Accommodating: unassertive and cooperative
  – Avoiding: unassertive and uncooperative
  – Collaborating: assertive and cooperative
  – Compromising: between assertiveness and cooperativeness
Resolving Conflict in the Lab

• First determine if you need to step in and facilitate a resolution

• How to help resolve conflict
  – Foster an environment that accepts conflict, as long as the difficulties are faced openly and honestly
  – Help the individuals involved in a conflict synchronize the timing, focus and extent of their overtures and responses
  – Make sure each person understands the others point of view
Resolving Conflict in the Lab

• Conflicts between you and others – can be important and influential, especially during the early stages
  – Demonstrate an interest in receiving and understanding feedback
  – Do not drop leadership responsibilities in response to the conflict