

Advising Statement: Lucy Vulchanova, Ph.D.

My goal as an advisor is to guide and support the scientific and professional development of my trainees. While this document provides a framework for working towards this goal, I believe that the training experience should be tailored to the background, strengths, needs, and aspirations of individual trainees, which may change over time. I strive to establish a strong working relationship with each trainee that is built upon mutual respect, trust, and open communication. I am also committed to providing a nurturing, collaborative, inclusive, and equitable working environment that supports the success and well-being of each lab member.

Research Training

- The research in my lab encompasses diverse scientific topics. I expect that my advisees contribute to ongoing research projects. However, I also encourage them to identify and pursue questions of specific interest to them and guide them through this process.
- In the early stages of training, I provide regular guidance in all aspects of the research process. I expect that, as training progresses, advisees are able to independently design and evaluate experiments, identify alternative strategies, and formulate a progression of hypothesis-driven studies.
- I expect that advisees build extensive knowledge of existing literature and regularly follow new scientific developments in the field.
- Teamwork is essential for many aspects of the work in the lab. Trainees and other lab members are encouraged to help each other as needed, while maintaining clear boundaries of project ownership and ensuring appropriate recognition of contributions.

Funding Support

Trainees are guaranteed a stipend for the duration of training. However, as part of their professional development, I expect them to actively pursue intra- and extramural funding opportunities, and I provide extensive guidance and support in this process.

Meetings, Communication, and Feedback

- I have an “open door” policy and communicate promptly as needed. My goal is to also have standing weekly individual meetings with trainees; however, the frequency may vary. The primary purpose of individual meetings is to ensure research progress (experiment planning, discussions of experimental design, data analysis, interpretation of results, discussions of relevant literature). However, I also see these meetings as an opportunity for a wide range of conversations that support the professional development and personal wellbeing of trainees.
- In addition to individual meetings, trainees participate in a weekly group lab meeting.
- Trainees are also expected to participate in the weekly Pain Journal Club (and/or an alternative journal club as appropriate) and attend the weekly Neuroscience Colloquium and the Neuroscience Seminar Series.
- Our work environment depends more and more on electronic/virtual communication. I expect prompt responses to my messages and promise to also respond promptly. My work schedule often requires me to communicate during evenings and weekends. In those instances, I expect responses at the beginning of the next work day.
- Advisees receive regular feedback on their progress during one-on-one meetings and are expected to meet with their thesis committee every 6 months.

Publications

- The scope and authorship of publications are defined as each project evolves. Trainees are encouraged to proactively outline and draft manuscripts as their work progresses.
- Advisees are required to submit manuscripts on research included in their dissertation prior to their dissertation defense.

Research Conferences and meetings

Participation in conferences and meetings is critical for building a record of productivity, staying abreast of scientific advances, and professional networking. I expect that advisees present their research annually at local events as well as at the Society for Neuroscience meeting or a similar national or international venue. I do my best to ensure financial support for conference attendance but also encourage trainees to independently explore funding opportunities.

Teaching and mentoring

- Advisees have many opportunities to mentor undergraduate students interested in obtaining research experience. We often have students join us throughout the school year, in addition to undergraduate students from other institutions during the summer.
- I support teaching activities beyond the requirements of the graduate program for advisees interested in gaining additional teaching experience.

Professionalism and Ethics

- We strive to conduct research of highest quality and scientific integrity, while adhering strictly to institutional and federal regulations for research.
- Trainees are required to keep detailed records of their daily research activities in a lab notebook and follow established lab procedures. They are also required to regularly upload their lab protocols and data to the shared lab drive. Maintaining detailed records with sufficient information for trouble-shooting and independent replication of experiments by others is critical for scientific rigor, integrity, and the continued success of the lab. The lab records are property of the University.
- Research productivity requires exceptional commitment and effective time management. While I am happy to accommodate a flexible work schedule, I expect trainees to clearly communicate the timelines for specific short-term and long-term goals and adhere to these timelines.
- I expect each lab member to contribute to maintaining a collaborative, respectful, and inclusive working environment. Harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated. Incidents of discrimination, bias or racism should be reported to the [Bias Response and Referral Network](#).
- Issues and concerns about the working environment or interactions with others should be discussed with me as soon as possible to prevent escalations. If trainees don't feel comfortable talking to me, they should reach out to the DGS/ADGS, the Associate Dean for Graduate Education in the Medical School, the department head, or the [Student Conflict Resolution Center](#).

Engagement and Career Development

- I believe that community engagement is part of our societal responsibility as scientists and support involvement of my trainees in community outreach. I also support engagement of my trainees in program and institutional governance.

- I encourage trainees to explore diverse career paths and guide them in identifying the path best suited for them. I support involvement in activities that enhance the trainees' preparation for their chosen career path (e.g. additional teaching experience, industry internships, networking events, etc.).

Personal Life and Wellness

- I encourage my trainees to maintain a work-life balance that supports their wellbeing and productivity.
- I expect my trainees to discuss vacation plans with me at least a month in advance.
- I encourage my trainees to let me know if circumstances within their personal life are negatively impacting their progress so that we can work together to make necessary adjustments.
- Trainees with disabilities are encouraged to work with the [Disabilities Resource Center](#) so that we can establish accommodations that ensure their success.
- Trainees should be aware of the [mental health and wellness resources](#) at UMN.

Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion

As a female scientist “transplanted” from Eastern Europe, I have been on a decades-long journey of learning about American culture, society, and the historical experiences that have shaped them. The intensified quest for social justice over the past few years has brought new urgency to understanding systemic racism and the different ways in which it permeates our society, and academia specifically. I am committed to fostering a culture of diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility in my lab and at all levels of academia. However, I acknowledge that there is much I still need to learn about understanding and overcoming biases, identifying and eliminating academic barriers for students of underrepresented groups, and promoting systemic changes to eliminate inequality in academia. I hope for partnership with my trainees in these endeavors.