Coordinating a Research Team

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Chapter 27

Features of Research Team

- – Competition for resources and attention
- + Stimulation of multiple projects
- + Multiple opportunities for collaboration
- + Multiple perspectives to learn from
- + Multiple methods to gain experience with

Essential for Success

- Set of specific research goals
- Clearly defined expectations for members
- Open and continuous communication
- Grant history
- Publication history – order of authorship
  ◦ Conference presentations

Testing Schedule

- How many participants tested a week
- When?
- By whom?
- How coordinated?
  ◦ Space issues!

Team Communication

- Flow in all directions
- Frequent, regular lab meetings
  - Maintain consistent goals
  - Address practical concerns
  - Address interpersonal problems
  - Knowing who is in the lab and why
- Weekly individual supervisory sessions for new team members
  - When conducted by senior grad students – provide experience in mentoring, training, supervising
- Perception and climate just as important as ability to clearly convey content

Problems

- How to address:
- Lack of participation
- Domination by one or few individuals?
  - Both with interests and projects or conversation during meetings and mentor's time, resources
- Lack of respect for fellow participants?
- Lack of follow-through with designated duties?
- If interests too diverse – finding help for projects

Problems

- Inconsistent work ethic in RAs
- Tidiness/cleanliness
- Taking care of shared equipment
- Comfort in asking questions in group setting
- Intimidation by productive lab members

Lab Manual

- Communicate structure, goals and expectations of team
- Written record
- Lab philosophy, test objectives, testing priorities, experiment and analysis protocols, comments on research ethics and acceptable behavior, lab etiquette
- Can indicate policies for authorship
- Consistent operationalization of variables/terms

Lab Manual

- Can serve two main purposes:
- 1. training tool
- 2. reference source

- Prevents experimental drift
- Can be dynamic and fluid document

- Joint effort gives sense of ownership

Recruitment

- Criteria?
- By whom?
- What activities assigned?
- Who do they report to?

Training

- Who should train new members?
  - Does it depend on the task?

  - How long should training take?

  - Not just how tasks are performed but WHY they are done the way they are

Reliability

- Consistency and uniformity in data collection and coding
- How achieved?

- How should discrepancies in procedures be communicated?

- Tracking errors/ownership of work

Ethics

- ‣ Make it clear that mistakes, while undesirable, are a natural part of process
- ‣ Why?

Prioritize

- ‣ To meet demands of conference talks, paper deadlines – revise testing schedules etc.
- ‣ Keep calendar of important deadlines and dates/absences of key members

Final Points

- ‣ Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today!
- ‣ Be heard!
- ‣ Be independent And a team member!
- ‣ Listen!
- ‣ Learn how to accept criticism
- ‣ Be open to new perspectives!
- ‣ Set up regular meetings with advisor/advisees