

Philosophy

Adapted from The Chory Lab and Avasthi Lab handbooks

Our goal is to perform research with the **highest scientific rigor** and to share it with others openly. This goal can be achieved when lab members are dedicated, well-trained, and supported in their scientific endeavors. The philosophy in the Varadarajan Lab is that **everybody brings something important to the team**. There is something to learn for everyone, from everyone and therefore every voice needs to be heard and respected. Feedback and disagreements can be made respectfully, and everyone needs to be accountable for their thoughts, words, and actions. We all have an active role in building the environment we want.


Supraja's Mentoring Philosophy

One of my motivations to build a career in academia comes from wanting to help others thrive and to demolish academic barriers that restrict access to training and success. I want everyone to achieve their full potential, regardless of the career path you choose for your future. I strive to destigmatize perceived failure and reinforce the basic building blocks of science – a failed experiment often teaches us the most useful, and perhaps the most interesting lessons. I want to encourage everyone to be bold and follow their scientific intuitions while also protecting their growth as a scientist. For this reason, we will adopt the motto: Fail fast and move forward.

Supraja's Mentoring Style

Each lab member will have a one-hour meeting every two weeks with me. This meeting is your dedicated time to discuss data, science, career development, and anything else of concern. These will be scheduled as standing meetings, but the duration and frequency of the meeting can vary depending on your needs. Apart from these one-on-one meetings, I have an open-door policy, which means you are more than welcome to stop by my office to discuss things even if you don't have a scheduled meeting.

I like to use an hour-glass approach: the top half of the hour-glass focuses on understanding the scientific question, while the bottom half focuses on providing experimental and methodological training in an incremental manner. I start by painting the 'big picture' biological significance of the work done in our laboratory, narrowing it down to my work, and their specific project, and then increase their lab duties, responsibilities, and independence one step at a time. I



find that an incremental approach often works best for students to gain confidence and bolster the love of learning.

Authorship

We believe in being generous and fair with authorship credit. In general, a lab member who starts a new project and spearheads the project will be the first-author of the subsequent manuscript. As manuscripts take shape, it is important for all relevant members contributing to the project to be open about expectations and contributions.

Professional Development

We are committed to helping everyone achieve their professional goals. All graduate students and postdocs will be provided with ample opportunities to develop into a strong, well-connected scientist. These opportunities will include writing grants with Supraja, writing and applying for fellowships, reviewing articles, developing presentation skills, speaking at conferences and departmental events, and mentoring trainees. The purpose of these opportunities is to fuel your career growth and can be tailored as necessary.

Diversity and Inclusion


Diversity fuels excellence. We embrace diversity in race, gender, ethnicity, sexual preferences, socioeconomic backgrounds, religion, neurodivergence, and disabilities.

Time-Off

We do not actively track vacation. Every lab member has different workstyles, efficiencies, and coping mechanisms. Everyone will have different phases of intensities and deadlines depending on their projects. Our goal is to foster an environment where everyone is excited to come into lab and pursue their scientific interests without feeling pressured to do so. Therefore, each lab member is encouraged to take time-off as needed and prioritize work-life balance. Planned vacations should be openly and clearly communicated ahead of time to Supraja and other lab members who may be affected.

Outreach and Accessibility

We absolutely enjoy participating in outreach activities and engaging local school students to participate, learn, and be curious about science. We believe that awareness, access, and equity must begin as early as elementary school education.



We encourage all lab members to join and/or create opportunities to participate in outreach activities that benefit the community.