
SOP-001: Welcome to the Lab

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Welcome to the Schwekendiek Lab!

1. Introductory Remarks

First of all, thank you for your interest in working in my lab. You have a lot of freedom for doing real academic research in my lab and I hope you will enjoy it. Apart from the selection of the research topic, the work you are doing in the Schwekendiek Lab and the experiences you make will be mainly directed by yourself. You do the work and you generate the results. Although I will discuss with you the project goals and your performance, it is your responsibility to make progress towards those goals. I will give every assistance you need but I expect that you start thinking about the project on your own (this will affect your grade). Therefore, please feel free to come with any question you might have. These may include

- understanding the project and its goals! If you have questions - ask!
- understanding what is expected of you! If you feel lost – ask!
- making progress in the lab! If you don't know how to proceed – ask!
- understanding procedures or experiments! If you have trouble – ask!

It is your right to ask - but never come with a question like: “what are we going to do today?”. If you have nothing to do in the lab, don't show up. You got a project – work on it! And spend your time wisely! You will get good grades only if you develop good laboratory habits and bring the project forward. Although I do not expect you being able to work completely on your own, I expect you to run your project yourself after 2-3 weeks. We will have regular lab meetings every last Friday of the month. During these meetings, each lab member reports on her/his project and progress.

You are welcome and encouraged to discuss your project with me any time I am in my office. But please be aware that I have other obligations as well. Please make an appointment if you need a longer discussion.

Below you find a few instructions about how to work successfully in my lab. Read them all and let me know if you have any questions.

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2. Read and obey the ,Lab Rules’!

- Read the “Schwekendiek Lab Rules” (SOP-001). All Standard Operating Procedures (SOP’s) are stored in folder named “shared lab data” on your computer desktop. You can use your ITS login.
- It is your responsibility to obey the rules at all times – ask if you have questions!
- Let Dr. Schwekendiek know about any questions or concerns you might have about the rules.
- Grades for credit research are calculated as follows: 25% lab notebook, 10% research blog, 50% preparation (including discussion) and experimental conduct, 15% final report (use your notebook and blog!).
- If you are interested in staying in science or pursuing an academic career, consider a honors degree! Please feel free to discuss career options EARLY with me.

3. Keep a Laboratory Notebook!

Keeping an up to date notebook is essential for your own work and for the laboratory as a whole. A laboratory notebook is the most important document you produce while you are working in the lab. If you work for credits, your lab notebook will play an important role (25%) in your grading. I am putting a huge emphasis on notebook writing since I and the entire lab rely on it. Keep it up to date at all times! Further instructions on good notebook keeping can be obtained from SOP-003.

4. Maintain a Weekly Research Blog!

In addition to your lab notebook, you are required to write a weekly blog about your progress. Every lab member receives a blogging account on the lab website (<http://sunny.molecularpharming.org>) but you are free to use a public blog if you want (just let me know the URL if you use one). Your blog needs to maintain a weekly summary of your research activities. That means you have to blog at least once a week, reporting on what you did. This report should be a short summary of your activities and not a copy of your lab notebook. Write about your successes - and about your problems (a good example can be found here: <http://3ggi3.blogspot.com>). You may also want to post pictures of gels, photos of tissue culture plants, or data tables to your blog. The blog is essential for all discussions with Dr. Schwekendiek and no substitute for your notebook (a detailed notebook will be needed as well). If you work for credit, the blog will make up 10% of your grade. Keep in mind that a good blog will help you write your summary report.

5. Write a Summary Report!

By the end of the semester, you have to compile a summary report of your project work. The report is worth 25% of your grade (use the notebook and the blog) and includes a project description,

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experimental approach, experiments performed, results, discussion, and references. The report should be 8-10 in length and have the format of a scientific research article.

6. Apply for a SOAR research grant!

Each student once a year gets the opportunity to apply for research funds in the amount of \$500. All students who successfully apply for such a grant will receive a 20% grade increase (no kidding).

Writing grant applications is one of the most important tasks of a scientist. This is your chance. Take it – but be aware of the deadline!

7. Join us at OpenWetWare and Facebook!

Part of our laboratory website is still hosted at Openwetware.org:

http://openwetware.org/wiki/Schwekendiek_Lab. However, I think we will move it to sunny and therefore there is no need to apply for an OWW account. Anyway, OWW has a good collection of protocols and other useful data. Take a look around.

Please join the Schwekendiek Lab group in Facebook (if you don't have an account, apply for one). Since the lab is growing we will probably make increasing use of Facebook.

8. Important Phone Numbers

Dr. Schwekendiek's office: 319-273-2454

Dr. Schwekendiek's home phone: 319-553-1219

Dr. Schwekendiek's email: axel.schwekendiek@uni.edu

Lab Website: <http://sunny.molecularpharming.org>

Biology office: 319-273-2456

Biology fax: 319-273-7125