

Expectations of MS and PhD Students in the Pawlik Lab 11 Jul 2022

Dr. Pawlik's research group usually has no more than four graduate students at one time. Most graduate students finish the program with a Master's degree (MS), but if their research progress is exemplary, and funding is available, they may be admitted to continue on for their Doctorate (PhD). Graduate work in Dr. Pawlik's lab offers advantages that are often not provided to other graduate students:

- 1) Research Assistantships. Because Dr. Pawlik receives funding for his research program from external sources, he provides RA stipends to his students during the summer months. Students generally receive stipends from a teaching assistantship (TA) during Fall and Spring semesters, which provides teaching experience and ample time to work on research projects.
- 2) Travel. Dr. Pawlik's research program involves field work on Caribbean coral reefs. Most students are provided opportunities to conduct field research at the Carrie Bow Cay lab in Belize, and sometimes elsewhere, contingent on funding. These opportunities are funded by Dr. Pawlik's research grants, and cover the costs of travel, lodging and meals.
- 3) Scientific meetings. Dr. Pawlik encourages his students to present the results of their research projects at national meetings, in particular, the annual spring Benthic Ecology Meeting. Travel costs associated with scientific meetings are usually covered by Dr. Pawlik if funds are not available from the Graduate School or Graduate Student Association.
- 4) Contacts. Dr. Pawlik has many contacts among researchers in the marine sciences. Students who complete their degree in an exemplary manner can expect Dr. Pawlik's assistance in furthering their careers (e.g., letters of reference, job contacts, etc.).
- 5) A cohesive research program. The Pawlik lab group usually includes undergraduate research assistants and postdoctoral researchers who are available to MS students for assistance with their research projects. Laboratory supplies, equipment, and facilities for conducting research are available, or are provided if costs are reasonable.
- 6) Publications. Students are listed as first author on publications resulting from their thesis research. At Dr. Pawlik's discretion, students may be listed as co-authors on publications arising from projects funded by Dr. Pawlik's grants that require a group effort. These projects are usually distinct from student thesis projects, and authorship is based on the level of intellectual contribution.

What is expected of Dr. Pawlik's graduate students?

Graduate students are expected to work independently and responsibly toward completing their degree within the normative period of time (2 years for a MS, 4 additional years for a PhD). Because their thesis research is the most important, and most difficult, component of their degree, MS students should begin work on their research project as soon as possible, preferably during the summer before they begin coursework in the graduate program, and no later than their second semester. A student's thesis research project must fall under the broad topic areas of marine chemical ecology or coral reef ecology; students are strongly encouraged to develop their own projects, but considering the time constraints involved, it is common for a project to be chosen from several suggested by Dr. Pawlik, usually during the second semester. Other expectations are as follows:

- 1) Degree requirements. It is the student's responsibility to fulfill all the requirements for their degree, including all the paperwork described in the Graduate Handbook. The Prospectus should be formulated and signed by the end of the second semester. ***Course work should be***

kept to a minimum, with maximum use of Thesis, Research, and DIS credits to reach the credit hour requirement.

- 2) Work ethic. The transition from course work to independent research is a difficult one, and requires independence, inventiveness, and discipline. During the academic year, students are expected to put in 40 or more hours per week fulfilling their obligations as TAs and working on their own research projects. During the summer months, students are not taking courses or TAing, and are being paid on an RA stipend, so the expectation is even greater that they work 40 or more hours per week and make good progress on their research projects. **Students shall not engage in additional part-time employment:** being a graduate student is a full-time job.
- 3) Analysis and presentation of research data. Graduate students are expected to work-up and write-up their data as collected, and to present their results at weekly group meetings for discussion by the group. These meetings are valuable for problem-solving and for generating new ideas. Graduate students are also expected to present their work at the annual spring Benthic Ecology meetings.
- 4) Obtaining institutional or external funding. It is expected that students will apply for funding from UNCW and other sources to support travel to meetings or for field work, or to help pay for research supplies, equipment or summer salary. Competitive grant awards are important additions to a student's resume. Some award opportunities include: Grad Student Achievement Awards, Grad School Travel Funds, Lerner Gray Fund for Marine Research, Sigma Xi grant-in-aid, etc.
- 5) Completing the thesis, and **submission of manuscripts for publication.** Funding for Dr. Pawlik's research program is dependent on high-quality publications in international journals. Generally, 1-2 publications are generated from a MS dissertation, and 2-3 more from a PhD dissertation. Students should begin writing manuscripts for publication as soon as possible, and not wait until the end of their graduate term to write up the whole thesis. This is particularly important to help build the resume of a MS student who intends to apply to PhD programs elsewhere, or a PhD student who wants to apply for postdoctoral fellowships or employment opportunities. If all publications have not been completed by graduation, it is expected that a student will finish this process in collaboration with Dr. Pawlik as quickly as possible, and no more than one year after finishing the program.