Webster Lab Vision and Mission Statement (March 2008)

The mission of the Webster lab is to pursue a better understanding of our natural world, educate others about the wonders and importance of nature, and produce professionals who excel at doing both.

Within this broader mission, members of the Webster lab work to achieve three inter-related goals, and to create a lab environment that makes this possible.

Goals: striving for excellence

1. **Conduct excellent research on the role of reproductive behavior in the evolution of biodiversity.** Research in the Webster lab combines intensive field studies and experimentation with molecular analyses of genetic variation. Within the broader research framework lie a number of more focused areas of inquiry, including: (a) the function and mechanisms of sexual signals; (b) the ecological and evolutionary processes generating geographic variation in behavior; and (c) the forces shaping life history variation. Most, but not all, of this work focuses on birds.

2. **Communicate the excitement and importance of our work, and of behavioral and evolutionary ecology in general, to diverse audiences.** We recognize that effective communication and education are important aspects of science. We strive to be excellent teachers who can engage and excite our students in the classroom and also our friends over a glass of beer or a cup of coffee. We seize opportunities to explain our work and educate the broader public.

3. **Maintain a focus on professional development.** Although lab members are on a variety of career paths, we all plan to continue with scientific research and education in one way or another. As a consequence, there is a strong emphasis on training in all aspects of doing science, from data collection through analysis to presentation of results. An equally strong emphasis is placed on development of teaching and communication skills, as well as training in professional ethics. Lab members seek out opportunities for professional growth and encourage others to do the same.

The Lab Environment: achieving the goals

4. **High standards and expectations.** All lab members have set high standards and goals for themselves, and for each other, with respect to research, education and professional development. Each lab members recognizes that (s)he has the abilities needed to do excellent work, and does not settle for less. There may be obstacles to achieving some goals, but these are surmountable.

5. **Effective lab leadership.** Although specific roles vary, each person in the lab plays a leadership role. Lab leaders maintain focus on the shared vision, and
facilitate the ability of all lab members to achieve that vision. Lab leaders are proactive, seek help from both within and outside the lab when needed, and nurture a lab culture conducive to productive research and learning.

6. **High levels of collaboration and communication.** There is a strong sense of teamwork within the lab – each lab member has his or her own personal goals, but these contribute to achievement of the shared vision. Everybody shares, discusses and critiques each other’s ideas and work – lab members can give constructive criticism and also take it from others. Individual achievements are viewed as a positive thing for the entire lab.

7. **A dynamic and exciting lab environment.** Positive professional development, productive research, and effective teaching can only happen when lab members enjoy what they are doing. Lab members treat each other respectfully, always remember that the lab is a team, offer a helping hand when needed, and laugh together. Working toward the shared lab vision is always top priority, but lab members also have other (important) things in their lives and know how to have fun. Although not required, all lab members are encouraged to participate in a sport (preferably Ultimate Frisbee), play a musical instrument (preferably stringed), and own a dog (preferably black).