The Importance of IDPs

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presented as part of the MCB GSA’s Career Development Week
Individual Development Plan (IDP)

• Exercise for defining and pursuing career goals

• A record of
  • Current skills and interests
  • Career plans
  • Concrete goals to connect skills/interests with plans

• Encompasses short- and long-term objectives
  • Define ultimate career goals
  • Set goals for the next ~year to improve skills
  • Regularly evaluate progress

• Setting goals improves performance and satisfaction in the workplace\(^1\) and defining career plans makes us more likely to reach our goals\(^2\)

\(^1\)Am Psychol. 2002 Sep;57(9):705-17.
The Importance of IDPs

- Problem:
  - Most life science PhDs will not end up in traditional tenure-track faculty positions
  - “Career exploration” and “professional development” are abstract ideas that are not built in to the graduate curriculum
  - Career goals change over time in graduate school
The Importance of IDPs

- IDPs as part of the solution:
  - Encourage a proactive approach to career development
  - Provide an opportunity to define actionable goals
  - Act as a record of goals and progress
  - Allow for reflection as career plans and objectives change over time
Using IDPs in graduate school

- Gaining traction as an important professional development tool for trainees in the biomedical sciences
  - Trainees and their mentors find IDPs helpful overall
- Serve as a useful tool for communication amongst you, your advisor, and your thesis committee

“By turning introspection into a structured exercise, the use of IDPs allows trainees to translate a vague source of anxiety into a working plan, applying their well-developed analytical skills to the critical problem of building their own lives and careers.”

2http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2012/09/editorial-planning-career-paths-phds
IDP examples

- AAAS’s myIDP (myidp.sciencecareers.org)
  - Web-based tool developed by administrators of graduate programs in the sciences
  - Four steps:
    1. Evaluate your skills, values, and interests
    2. Explore career options, defining a preferred and alternative career goal
    3. Establish specific goals for your identified career path
    4. Execute your plans, regularly assessing your progress
IDP examples

- AAAS’s myIDP (myidp.sciencecareers.org)
  - In Step 3, set SMART goals...
    - **Specific** – Is it focused and unambiguous?
    - **Measureable** – Could someone determine whether or not you achieved this goal?
    - **Action-oriented** – Did you specify the action you will take?
    - **Realistic** – Considering difficulty and timeframe, is this goal attainable?
    - **Time-bound** – Did you specify a deadline?
  - ...in three categories:
    - **Project Completion**
    - **Skill Development**
    - **Career Advancement**
  - Significant career exploration resources
  - Option for email reminders about goal deadlines
IDP examples

- Graduate College Career Development Office (CDO) [GradMAP](https://grad.illinois.edu/careers/gradmap) Professional Development Process
  - Workshop-based IDP with an emphasis on professional development
  - Set 6-12 month goals and identify skills needed for specific career plans
  - Highlights six categories of “skills needed for success” after graduate school
    - Communication
    - Leadership & Innovation
    - Research & Specialization
    - Teaching & Mentoring
    - Professionalism
    - Job Search
  - Participate in specific activities to develop these skills – website contains extensive resources
  - Next GradMAP workshop is June 26
IDP examples

- **Microbiology Department IDP** (implemented Spring 2018)
  - Written checkpoint for progress during graduate school
  - Discussed with committee during annual research progress review meetings
  - Define short-term goals and reflect on failure to meeting previous goals
  - Self-assessment of core competencies needed for research careers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Competencies</th>
<th>No basis to evaluate</th>
<th>Needs development</th>
<th>Appropriate to career stage</th>
<th>Strength</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scientific Knowledge</strong></td>
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<td>Broad based knowledge of science</td>
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<td>Deep knowledge of specific research area</td>
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<td>Critical evaluation of scientific literature</td>
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<td><strong>Research Skills</strong></td>
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<td>Technical skills related to research area</td>
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<td>Experimental design</td>
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<td>Statistical analysis</td>
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<td>Interpretation of data</td>
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<td>Creativity/innovative thinking</td>
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<td>Navigating the peer review process</td>
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How to use IDPs effectively

- **Do your research.**
  - Explore a variety of resources
  - Talk to your peers and mentors, and don’t be afraid to reach out to new people
- **Set realistic goals.**
  - Utilize SMART method of goal-setting
  - Overly ambitious goals derail progress
- **Be honest with yourself.**
  - Your career is what you make of it
  - Exaggerating (or downplaying) your skills hinders progress
- **Discuss your goals with a mentor.**
  - Share your goals with your advisor
  - Make an appointment with the Grad College CDO for career coaching
- **Make your goals visible.**
  - Add your goal deadlines to your calendar
  - Post a copy of your goals in your work space
- **Revisit your IDP often.**
  - Check in with your progress about once a month
  - Update your IDP every year
How to use IDPs effectively

• Recommendations\textsuperscript{1} for trainees by the authors that developed myIDP:
  • “Recognize that the responsibility for exploring career options and developing a career plan lies with you.
  • Begin career exploration and develop an IDP early in your appointment.
  • Meet with career advisors to discuss what resources are available to you.
  • Do not be afraid to discuss your career plans with your mentors.
  • Remember that the IDP process is valuable, even if you have already decided on a career and even if you are pursuing a career in academic research.
  • Do not expect to complete this process in a day, a week, or even a month. Career planning takes time; it should be an iterative process during which you periodically reassess your goals.”

IDP Resources

- AAAS’s myIDP: myidp.sciencecareers.org
- Article series accompanying the release of myIDP: http://www.sciencemag.org/tags/myidp

- GradCollege CDO’s GradMAP: https://grad.illinois.edu/careers/gradmap
- GradMAP activities and resources: https://grad.illinois.edu/careers/gradmap-activities

- “Improving graduate education to support a branching career pipeline: recommendations based on a survey of doctoral students in the basic biomedical sciences.” doi: 10.1187/cbe.11-02-0013

- Career exploration resources
  - http://www.ascb.org/career-development-resources/