USC Postdoctoral Scholars *in the SCIENCES*

Individual Development Plan *Fall 2012*

The concept of an Individual Development Plan (IDP) for postdoctoral scholars was introduced by the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB)'s Science Policy Committee and is fairly well established for postdoctoral scholars in the sciences. According to FASEB, the purpose of the IDP is to "provide a planning process that identifies both professional development needs and career objectives. Furthermore, IDPs serve as a communication tool between individuals and their mentors." This process is equally valid for postdoctoral scholars in the sciences.

At USC, we expect that postdoctoral scholars in the sciences will be provided the opportunity to develop the following core competencies:

National Postdoctoral Association Core Competencies for the Sciences
Discipline-specific Conceptual Knowledge
Professional/Research Skill Development
Communication Skills
Professionalism
Leadership & Management Skills
Responsible Conduct of Research

This process will be initiated by the postdoc with full participation by the mentor(s). The IDP focuses on these six core competencies and their development in line with the postdoc's career aspirations. The IDP process consists of four steps for both postdoctoral scholar and mentor(s), and according to FASEB, these steps "are an interactive effort, and so both the postdoctoral fellow and the mentor must participate fully in the process."

Basic Steps	*For Postdocs*	*For Mentor(s)*
Step 1	Conduct Self-Assessment	Become Familiar with available career opportunities
Step 2	Write an IDP, share the IDP with mentor and revise	Review the IDP and help revise it
Step 3	Survey career opportunities with mentor	Discuss career opportunities with postdoc
Step 4	Implement the plan and revise IDP as needed, at least annually	Establish regular review of progress and help revise the IDP as needed, at least annually

The Self-Assessment Form

The self-assessment form is most likely to be a private document that the mentor(s) should not expect to see. The self-assessment form asks a number of questions based on the six core competencies, and the outcomes of the self-assessment will serve as the basis for the IDP form, which is to be shared with the mentor(s). A postdoc is expected to conduct a self-assessment and generate a draft IDP to share with their mentor(s) within the first month of arrival at USC, and on an annual cycle thereafter.

The IDP Form

The IDP form should be shared in a draft form with the mentor(s) at the meeting where the postdoc's accomplishments and goals will be discussed in light of the core competencies and the postdoc's career aspirations. After the meeting, the postdoc will revise the form and present it to the mentor(s) for signature(s), which will serve to formalize the process and document the meeting outcomes.

Meetings

Meetings between postdocs and their mentor(s) will probably occur frequently, both formally and informally. However, a formal meeting where the IDP is discussed and signed should occur at least once per year.

Mentor – Postdoc Interaction Guide

Some questions that may be addressed at the beginning of a mentoring relationship:

- What type of assistance does the mentee want from the mentor?
- What expectations do the mentor(s) have for the mentee?
- What expectations does the mentee have for the mentor(s)?
- How often will you meet?
- When, where, and how long will you meet?
- Who will be responsible for scheduling the meetings?
- Who will create meeting agendas and topics to discuss?
- What will be the ground rules for discussion? (e.g. confidentiality, candor, openness)
- Are there concerns and reservations for either the mentor or the mentee?

Resources

1. Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology (FASEB) website: *http://opa.faseb.org/pdf/idp.pdf*
2. National Postdoctoral Association (NPA): *http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/*
2. University of Minnesota Office of Postdoctoral Affairs IDP document: *http://www.grad.umn.edu/prod/groups/grad/@pub/@grad/documents/asset/idpgradpdf.pdf*
3. USC Clinical and Translational Science Institute's KL2 Mentored Research Career Development Program Informational Booklet 2012-2014

IDP *for USC Postdoctoral Scholars* *in the SCIENCES*

Self-Assessment (Step 1)

At the beginning of your postdoctoral appointment you should work with your faculty mentor(s) to determine your short- and long-term goals. Conducting a self-assessment is the first step in developing an IDP (Individual Development Plan) and it will help you craft a vision for your growth over the course of your postdoctoral appointment that will build upon your existing skills and areas of strength while addressing areas that need further development. You might find it helpful to conduct a self-assessment toward the end of each year, so that you and your mentor(s) can reflect on the past year and develop an IDP that focuses on the upcoming year of appointment.

The self-assessment is intended to be a private document and you may use the information to help prepare the IDP which is intended to be shared with your mentor(s).

Use the self-assessment to take a realistic survey of your current abilities, identifying your strengths and defining the areas you will need to develop. Consider your proficiency in the following key areas: Discipline-specific Conceptual Knowledge, Professional/Research Skill Development, Communication Skills, Professionalism, Leadership & Management Skills, Responsible Conduct of Research.

Following are questions to initiate the self-assessment process. These questions are not meant to be comprehensive; rather, they will serve as a tool that you and your mentor will use to articulate your career goals and define the competencies required to reach those goals.

Self-Assessment Form

This form is intended to be private and you may use the information to help prepare the IDP which is intended to be shared with your mentor(s).

Information

Postdoc Name	
Years of Postdoc Training	
Department	
Mentor Name	

General Questions

- What were your major goal(s) and priorities for last year?
- Did you succeed - which goals did you meet? For goal(s) that were not met, why not?
- What are your major goal(s) and top priorities this year?
- What type of work would you like to be doing? Where would you like to be in an organization?
- What is important for you in a career?
- What are your long-term career goals? What is your plan to achieve these goals?
- What can go wrong? What other preparations or alternative plans have you made?

Discipline-specific Conceptual Knowledge

- What are your strengths and areas for improvement in the following:
  - *Analytical approach to defining scientific questions*
  - *Design if scientifically testable hypotheses*
  - *Broad-based knowledge acquisition*
  - *Interpretation and analysis of data*

Professional/Research Skill Development

- What are your primary (re)sources for research and where are they located (e.g. lab, field studies, etc.)?
- When do you plan to access these resources?
- What feedback have you received, formal or informal, on your research project?
- What research-related skills have you acquired in the past year?
- In what areas do you need to improve, or what other research training/skills do you need (e.g. literature search strategies and effective interpretation, experimental design, statistical analysis, data analysis and interpretation, laboratory techniques and safety, principles of the peer review process)? How will you acquire these?

Communication Skills

- What did you submit for publication in the past year? Were they published?
- What papers do you plan to write this year?
- What areas of your written communication skills do you feel need improvement?
- What fellowships or grants did you write? Were they funded?
- If you were not successful, what can you do to improve your next grant application?
- What grants are you planning to write this year?
- What presentations did you make in the past year? What sorts of feedback did you receive on the content of your presentation and your presentation skills?
- Are there specific presentation skills you would like to improve? How will you do so and what are your resources?
- What presentations do you intend to make this year?
- Did you teach last year? What feedback did you receive on your teaching, syllabi, pedagogy, etc.?
- What course(s) do you want to teach this year?
- How well do you relate to others in your professional settings?
- How well do you handle conflicts or disagreements, direct others, and receive direction from others?

Professionalism

- What are your strengths and areas for improvement in the following:
  - ***Professional interactions in the workplace***
  - ***Understanding the hierarchy and politics of your institution***
  - ***General interaction, collaboration and networking with other colleagues in the field from other institutions***
- What unique traits (personal and professional) do you possess? How can you apply these to your career goal(s)?
- Are you prepared for a job interview? If not, what do you need in order to be prepared?
- Is your CV ready to send out to prospective employers? If not, what do you need to do to get it ready?
- Are you prepared to give a job talk? If not, what do you need in order to be prepared?
- What career development programs do you need access to?

Leadership & Management Skills

- What are your strengths and areas for improvement in the following:
  - *Leadership: strategic vision*
  - *Leadership: motivating and inspiring others*
  - *Management: project management*
  - *Management: data and resource management*
  - *Management: research staff management*
  - *Management: budget management*

Responsible Conduct of Research

- How knowledgeable are you and where are your knowledge gaps in the following:
  - *Conflicts of interest*
  - *Data ownership and sharing*
  - *Publication practices and responsible authorship*
  - *Identifying and mitigating research misconduct*
  - *Research with human subjects (when applicable)*
  - *Research involving animals (when applicable)*