

Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine
UTHealth Medical School
The Individual Development Plan for Professional Development
 Dec. 2014

Purpose of the Individual Development Plan

The Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a tool designed to assist with (1) identifying professional goals and objectives; and (2) developing a plan to acquire the skills and competencies needed to achieve them. While the IDP is not new, its recognition as a best practice in pathologist professional development is fairly recent. The IDP is increasingly recognized as an important instrument for pathologists in a broad range of positions. A well-crafted IDP can serve as both a planning and a communications tool, allowing pathologists to identify their clinical, research and career goals and to effectively communicate these goals to mentors, supervisors, and advisors.

Outline of the IDP Process

The development, implementation, and revision of IDPs require a series of steps to be conducted by pathologist scholars and their mentors. These steps are an interactive effort, and so both must participate fully in the process.

<i>Basic Steps</i>	<i>...For Pathologists</i>	<i>...For Mentors</i>
Step 1	Conduct self-assessment	
Step 2	Write an IDP Share IDP with mentor and revise	Review IDP and help revise
Step 3	Implement the plan Revise IDP as needed	Establish regular progress review
Step 4	Survey opportunities to revise and improve the plan.	Discuss opportunities with pathologist

Step 1: Conduct a self-assessment

It is important for young people to conduct a self-assessment and develop the IDP to determine their short-term and long-term goals. For senior pathologists, conducting a self-assessment may also be helpful, so you can reflect on your experiences during the past year and develop an IDP to focus on the upcoming year.

The self-assessment will help you to gauge your skills, strengths and areas that need further development. Some of the skills and strengths that are relevant to career decisions in academic medicine include: technical abilities (breadth and depth of expertise), writing skills, oral communication skills, organizational ability, leadership, self-motivation, decision-making, creativity, work ethic, problem solving abilities, knowledge (depth and breadth), perseverance, ability/desire to take risks. Take a realistic look at your current abilities. This is a critical part of career planning. Involve your mentors, faculty, colleagues, family and friends in the assessment process by asking them to identify your strengths and the areas you need to develop.

Here are some questions to initiate the self-assessment process. These questions are not intended

to be either comprehensive or relevant for everyone, but can serve as a tool for you and your mentor to identify career goals and competencies required to reach them.

Career Goals	What are your short-term career goals? How will you achieve these goals within the next two to five years?
Career Goals	What are your long-term career goals? How will you achieve these goals within the next 10 to 15 years?
	What did you do last year to help develop contacts relevant to your short-term or long-term goals? Did you have opportunities to network with individuals from institutions or companies you feel may be a good fit for your future career aspirations?

What percentage of your time have you spent in the past year on the following components of the pathologist experience? How much time would you need to spend this year?

- Clinical Service
- Research
- Grant writing
- Attending research-related meetings or seminars
- Background reading
- Presenting at conferences or professional meetings
- Writing for publication
- Course development
- Teaching
- Student advising
- Attending career development workshops

Academic Pathology Competencies

Clinical Service	<p>What clinical skills have you acquired? What feedback have you received on your clinical skills? What further skills do you need to acquire to be successful with your clinical and future career? How will you gain exposure to these skills and evaluate your competency?</p> <p>What clinical collaborations (intradisciplinary or interdisciplinary) have you established? Are they successful and beneficial to your scholarly, scientific or clinical work? If so, how can you continue to build on those successes for the coming year? If they have not been successful, how can you improve on your collaborative research skills?</p> <p>How much time do you spend on clinical projects that did not work? Are you continuing to solve problems with the projects, or could there be more important work to consider for this year? If so, how will you identify such</p>
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Research	<p>projects?</p> <p>What clinical-related seminars did you attend? Were they beneficial to your work? What seminars do you need to attend this year?</p> <p>What clinical hypotheses or questions have you developed in the past year? How can you continue to build on those theories or hypotheses? Are there other related hypotheses to develop?</p> <p>What research-related skills have you acquired? What feedback have you received on your research skills? What further skills do you need to acquire to be successful with your research and future career? How will you gain exposure to these skills and evaluate your competency?</p> <p>What research collaborations (intradisciplinary or interdisciplinary) have you established? Are they successful and beneficial to your scholarly or scientific work? If so, how can you continue to build on those successes for the coming year? If they have not been successful, how can you improve on your collaborative research skills?</p> <p>How much time do you spend on experiments or projects that did not work? Are you continuing to solve problems with the experiments or projects, or could there be more productive work to consider for this year? If so, how will you identify such experiments or projects?</p> <p>What research-related seminars did you attend? Were they beneficial to your work? What seminars do you need to attend this year?</p>
Teaching	<p>Did you do any teaching in the past year (courses, seminars, laboratories)? Would you like additional opportunities to teach? How will you find these teaching opportunities?</p> <p>What sorts of feedback, formal or informal, have you received on your course content, syllabi, pedagogy, consideration of diverse learners and overall teaching abilities? In which areas do you need to improve? How will you improve your teaching and what resources are available?</p>
Papers and Publications	<p>What papers did you author or co-author in the past year? Were any of the papers submitted for publication? If not, could any of those be submitted for publication this year, or do you need to write different papers? How will you identify potential publishing venues?</p> <p>What types of feedback, formal or informal, have you received on your writing skills?</p> <p>What specific areas of writing do you need to improve?</p>

Professional Development Competencies

Presentations	<p>What presentations (lab meetings, journal clubs, seminars, scientific meetings or professional conferences) 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 would you need to make this year?</p>
Fellowships and Grants	<p>What fellowship or grant proposals did you write? Were they funded? If yes, how will you assure that you make progress on these projects this year? If the proposal was not funded, what can you do to improve the application for future submission?</p> <p>What feedback have you received on your grant writing skills? Are there specific areas you need to develop to attract potential funders? How will you improve your skills and what resources are available?</p> <p>What grants do you need to write this year?</p>
Budget Management	<p>How much experience do you have with budget management? Do you need to gain more experience managing a research or project budget? How will you accomplish this?</p>
Leadership	<p>What leadership experiences have you had that allowed you to identify objectives, implement plans and acquire decision making skills?</p> <p>What positions (within and outside the University) can you pursue this year to enhance your leadership skills?</p>
Conflict Management	<p>What opportunities have you had to develop skills related to conflict management? Such skills might include the ability to understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • psychological, physiological and behavioral aspects of conflict • cross-cultural considerations in dealing with conflict • prevalent conflict management styles and strategies • positive opportunities that can be presented by conflict • differences between the roles, responsibilities, process and expected outcomes of mediation, arbitration and negotiation • differences between compromise, cooperation, collaboration and consensus building

Emerging Areas of Competencies: Collaborative Leadership

Regardless of your chosen career path, at some point you will likely find yourself engaged in a collaborative endeavor, such as practicing pathology, co-teaching, collaborative research, or working on a team project. Working in teams often requires the ability to translate discipline-based concepts, methods and practices in ways that experts from other fields will find

understandable. Effective collaborative leadership also requires considerable attention to group dynamics, the professional development of team members, negotiating the division of labor and credit, as well as managing conflict. Although there are specific skills and competencies required to effectively engage in collaborative and interdisciplinary activity, such as building trust and creating clarity, these are not routinely taught within the academic and professional curriculum.

Rather than simply identifying the gaps in your skills and competencies, we encourage you to assess your collaborative leadership skills by reflecting on the unique traits you possess. These may be strengths that are not yet valued by your field(s) of study, but which have the potential to transform thinking and learning in your disciplinary area. It is also useful to keep in mind that the skills and competencies that are most useful for professional and career development are not a fixed set, but rather continuously change based on your experiences and your goals.

Step 2. Write an IDP

The IDP maps out the general path you want to take and helps match skills and strengths to your career choices. It is a changing document, since needs, skill levels and goals will almost certainly evolve over time. The aim is to build upon current strengths and skills by identifying areas for development and providing a plan to address them. You should discuss your draft IDP with your mentor. Agree on a development plan that will allow you to be productive and adequately prepare you for your chosen career. The specific objectives of a typical IDP are to:

- Identify specific skills and strengths that you need to develop. Mentors should provide honest feedback - both positive and negative - to help you set realistic goals.
- Identify a clinical and research project and necessary level of commitment to match your abilities and career goals.
- Define the approaches to attain the goals you have chosen and obtain the specific skills and strengths (e.g., courses, technical skills, teaching, supervision) you need to acquire and/or build upon.
- Define milestones and anticipated time frames for goal acquisition.

Step 3. Implement the Plan.

The plan is just the beginning of the career development process and serves as the road map. To attain your goals, you must implement and assess the plan.

- Put your plan into action.
 - Revise and modify the plan as necessary. The plan is not cast in concrete; it will need to be modified as circumstances and goals change. The challenge of implementation is to both focus on the current goals and processes and to remain flexible and open to change.
- Review the plan with your mentor regularly to assess progress, expectations and changing goals. Revise the plan on the basis of these discussions.

Step 4. Survey Potential Career Paths.

- Identify career opportunities and target those that interest you for further exploration.
- With your mentor, assess how your current skills and abilities match the competencies required of your chosen career(s).

- As necessary, revise your IDP to prioritize your developmental areas and discuss with your mentor any skills or strengths you need to further develop before successfully transitioning.

Materials were adapted from:

United States Department of Education Individual Development Plan forms

Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology (FASEB) website:
<http://opa.faseb.org/pdf/idp.pdf>

Davis, G. 2005. Doctors without orders. American Scientist 93(3, supplement).
<http://pathologist.sigmaxi.org/results/>.

Conflict Management in Higher Education Report, Wayne State University. College of Urban, Labor, & Metropolitan Affairs:
<http://www.campus-adr.org/CMHER/Newsletter.html>

Annual Self Assessment for Pathologist Fellows, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Office of Pathologist Services http://pathologists.unc.edu/pathologist_self_assessment_form.doc.

Work on institutional fit, developed by Bill Rozaitis and Ilene Alexander, University of Minnesota Center for Teaching and Learning