



Center for
Academic and
Future
Faculty
Excellence

PARALLEL MENTORING Individual Development Plans for Postdocs

Background: Why Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

In 2009, in order to address the mentoring requirements of the America COMPETES Act, NSF began to require a description of mentoring and professional development plans for postdocs from all principal investigators with proposals that requested funding for postdoctoral scholars. Initially the plan was incorporated into the Broader Impact section of the proposal, but currently it goes as a one-page supplementary document, and proposals lacking this document are returned without review. In 2012, a subcommittee of the NIH Advisory Committee to the Director proposed a similar requirement for NIH supported postdocs and now all NIH grants that support trainees at the pre- and post-doctoral levels should have an individual mentoring plan or individual development plan (IDP). For more details see <http://1.usa.gov/18VhiFT>.

ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE MENTORING PLANS:

- The level of institutional support and resources for the training plan.
- How well the training components are integrated with the research activities of the trainees.
- How well is the training tailored to the career path chosen by the trainees.

MSU's Center for Academic and Future Faculty Excellence (CAFFE)

CAFFE provides tools to maximize the effectiveness of these three elements. The approach endorsed by CAFFE involves constructing mentoring plans with **parallel discipline-specific and professional development components**, which are eventually **integrated as a comprehensive plan** to optimize the mentored training of individual postdoctoral scholars.

caffe.grd.msu.edu

BASIC STEPS

- STEP 1: Discipline Mentoring Plan
- STEP 2: Professional Development Component*
- STEP 3: Integration as a comprehensive IDP

*using CAFFE

BASIC STEPS for POSTDOCS with MENTORS

1. Discipline Mentoring Plan

Jointly, postdocs and mentors assess the experience, disciplinary knowledge and skills derived from the pre-doctoral training and identify opportunities to develop new technical skills and research activities to complement and enhance the pre-doctoral disciplinary training.



For broader career planning, an excellent assessment tool (myIDP) for developing scientists is found on the *Science Careers*

website. CAFFE highly recommends its use in the generation of IDPs (<http://myidp.sciencecareers.org>). Although developed primarily for those in the biomedical fields, it is adaptable to other fields and career paths.

Postdocs and mentors jointly set expectations about:

- **Research Plans**
- **Publication Strategy**
- **Travel to Professional Meetings**
- **Work Load and Work Schedule**
- **Responsible Conduct of Research (Including Safety and Ethical Issues Specific to the Discipline)**
- **Role of the Postdocs as Part of a Team**

Resources:

MSU Postdoc Office:

<http://grad.msu.edu/pdo>

MSU Postdoctoral Association:

msu.pda@gmail.com

<http://msupda.wordpress.com>

2. Professional Development Component

Again, postdocs and mentors identify the postdoc's career goals and assess her/his level of skill and knowledge in key professional areas, namely:

- **Expectations of Academic Institutions**
- **Faculty Knowledge Essentials**
- **Academic Work Skills and Responsibilities**
- **Professional Attitudes and Ethics.**

Take Action on the CAFFE website.

Together graduate students and mentors set priorities about the development of key professional skills, knowledge and attitudes, taking into consideration the disciplinary area and the career path chosen by the postdoctoral scholar. Although explicitly focused on preparation for an academic career, CAFFE fosters the development of non-academic professional trajectories.

TAKE ACTION

1. **Create a profile**
2. **Take a self-assessment**
3. **Create My CAFFE Plan**
4. **Review plan**



Use the Events calendar to identify seminars, workshops and other activities that fit your professional goals. Most events are repeated every academic year, thus allowing for multi-year planning. When you are logged in to CAFFE, you can save selected events that will be added automatically to My CAFFE Plan.

3. Integration as an IDP

- ✓ Combine 1 and 2 to create a multi-year IDP
- ✓ Develop a year-one version of the IDP from the multi-year plan
- ✓ Implement the plan and use it as a template for regular, at least annual, reviews of the progress.



Michigan State University
Center for Academic and Future Faculty Excellence
Website: caffe.grd.msu.edu
Email: caffe@msu.edu

08/04/14