

OVERVIEW OF INDIVIDUALIZED DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP) at UC Santa Barbara

What is an Individual Development Plan? An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a dynamic document completed by graduate students that communicates their academic goals to their advisors as well as identifies career goals and sets a path to help students be successful in graduate school and beyond. IDPs have long been used in the business world and because their effectiveness has been proven, they are increasingly used by universities to promote graduate student and postdoctoral training. **Through a self-assessment of skills, students are able to (1) identify their academic and career needs, and (2) maximize communication with advisors, set goals, and follow through. There are 6 different categories that students are self-evaluating and then creating goals for:**

- Scholarly Development
- Research Skills
- Communication Skills
- Teaching & Mentoring Skills
- Professional & Leadership Skills
- Career Development Skills

Why the Individual Development Plan is implemented at UCSB: According to the recent UC Graduate Student Well-Being Report (2017)¹, which assessed responses from 13,000 graduate students from all 10 UC campuses, one third of students found that they were less than satisfied with the mentorship and advising they received in their programs. Importantly, the study found that satisfaction with mentorship and advising was associated with students who reported academic success and many respondents commented on the importance of the advisor relationship in helping them be successful. As a result, the study recommends that the UC universities “help empower students to maximize mentoring relationships by employing effective strategies in managing advisee/advisor relationships.”¹ **Therefore the IDP document stands as an important way to help ensure communication between advisors and advisees on identifying and meeting academic and career goals during graduate school and for success after.** Last, departments have annual reviews so this document is a tool to ensure graduate students are meeting departmental and program expectations.

General Benefits of an Individual Development Plan: Provides a structure to systematically identify training needs and competencies and to establish goals to accomplish them.

- Students stay on track with their research, paper and grant writing, and skill development.
- Students plan and prepare for their post-PhD future while in graduate school.
- A tool to facilitate communication between students and their advisor(s).

Specific Benefits of an Individual Development Plan: Findings from a 2005 multi-campus survey of US postdoctoral² underscore the importance of the IDP for career planning and professional development. Highlights of the survey include that postdocs with more professional development are:

- More satisfied
- Give their advisors higher ratings
- Report fewer conflicts with their advisors
- More productive
- Better at time management
- More efficient with resource use

¹ University of California Office of the President. (2017). The University of California Graduate Student Well-Being Survey Report. Retrieved from http://www.ucop.edu/institutional-research-academic-planning/_files/graduate_well_being_survey_report.pdf

² Davis, G. (2006). Improving the PostDoctoral Experience: An Empirical Approach. *Sigma Xi:1 The Scientific Research Society*. http://users.nber.org/~sewp/Davis_SurveyAnalysis20060201.pdf

Specifically, the survey found that compared to their peers without a written plan, postdocs who begin their appointment with an IDP developed in collaboration with their advisors:

- Are 23% more likely to submit papers to peer-reviewed journals
- Publish first-authored papers at a 30% higher rate
- Submit grant proposals at a 25% higher rate
- Are 25% less likely to report their advisor did not meet their initial expectations

Goal of IDP : By defining their academic and career goals early on in their training programs, graduate students will utilize the IDP as a tool to help increase productivity, incorporate professional development opportunities, and communicate effectively with advisors throughout their graduate programs. Through articulating a plan, the goal is that students will be able to identify gaps in technical skills/knowledge as well as identify professional development opportunities (e.g., teaching, exposure to non-academic careers, training in proposal writing, project management) targeted toward achieving their career of choice. With this tool, students will be better able to clarify their goals and expectations with their advisor which in turn leads to better communication, better planning, and more successful outcomes during and after graduate school. Students are also expected to consult their departmental expectations for degree requirements and general progress through their academic program. Please consult Graduate Program Advisor, Faculty Advisor, and/or department guide to clarify expectations.

Timeline for How IDPs are Implemented: IDP's at UCSB are a **student-led document**, where elements are shared with advisors as the student sees fit. The purpose for the student-led process is twofold: 1) to ensure privacy for the student in order to maximize student initiative, honesty, and usefulness of developing a plan³, and 2) to help instill a sense of ownership and self-determination during the student's graduate education where they are empowered to manage their own graduate careers³. However, **there is a minimum expectation for what the student does share with advisors** to ensure basic communication about academic goals are being discussed on an annual basis. Students are asked to share scholarly, research, communication, and teaching & mentoring goals. Students are welcome to share additional sections (i.e., Professional Development, Career) if they choose.

Suggested Implementation Plan:

STUDENTS: Annual meeting with advisor during winter or spring quarter

- Students fill out IDP and then meet with advisor/mentor to review goals, receive feedback from advisor(s), and ask advisor/mentor to sign Mentor Feedback page. Students are welcome to review IDP with other advisors/committee members as well.
- Students submit Mentorship Feedback page, and most current CV or professional resume to faculty, GPA, and/or lanasmithhale@ucsb.edu
- Students who have advanced to candidacy: Encouraged to review ImaginePhD (Humanities/Social Science), MyIDP (STEM), or Chem IDP (Chemistry) websites which are web-based career planning tools for non-academic careers. No need to turn anything in to advisors.

ADVISOR/MENTOR: Annual meeting during winter or spring quarter

- Meet with graduate student to review IDP goals, complete Mentor Feedback page and sign.

Questions? Email Lana Smith-Hale, Graduate Career Counselor LanaSmithHale@ucsb.edu

³ Folkman, J. (2016). *The No. 1 Reason Most Personal Development Plans Fail*. Forbes. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joefolkman/2016/03/31/the-1-reason-most-personal-development-plans-fail/>.

