Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are recognized for fostering professional development. A well-crafted IDP serves both as a planning and communications tool, allowing graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to identify their research and career goals and to communicate these goals to their mentors, PIs, and advisors. By defining their career goals early on, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows are better able to identify and participate in professional development opportunities and target their training toward achieving their specific career objectives.

Purpose of the Individual Development Plan (IDP)

The Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a tool designed to assist with:

1) identifying professional goals and objectives;
2) assessing one’s skill set relative to their career goals;
3) developing a plan to acquire the skills and competencies needed to achieve short- and long-term career objectives.

The IDP will set a course for your future profession that will match your skills to your career ambitions. Given your skills and goals will likely change over time, your IDP will be an evolving document that you should return to with your mentor and advisor over the course of your time in our department. The purpose of the IDP is to build upon your current strengths by identifying areas for development and crafting a plan to address those areas. You should work with your mentor and advisors to develop an IDP that will allow you to be productive while positioning you to be successful in your chosen career.

Given the mission and goals of the Biomedical Sciences graduate program, we have put in place a program whereby graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, along with their mentors and CU faculty, develop and implement an IDP as a way to ensure these conversations take place at least annually. Graduate students and postdoctoral fellows prepare an IDP highlighting research goals, presentations, and skills training needed to reach their goals and discussed them with their mentor(s) on a regular basis.

We have adopted the approach recommended by the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) that utilizes a website tool designed to help graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to create an IDP. This free website tool is called myIDP (http://myidp.sciencecareers.org). It provides:

- Exercises to help you examine your skills, interests, and values.
- A list of 20 scientific career paths with a prediction of which best fit your skills and interests.
- A tool for setting strategic goals for the coming year, with optional reminders to keep you on track.
- Articles and resources to guide you through the process. It also contains links to career resources and tools to help you develop concrete plans, attend workshops, networking etc.

For more information about the tool, see the editorial published in Science written by Bruce Alberts, Editor-in-Chief of Science, and Jim Austin, Editor of ScienceCareers.org. http://www.sciencemag.org/content/337/6099/1149.full
Outline of the IDP Process
The development, implementation, and revision of IDPs require a series of steps to be conducted by graduate students/postdocs and their mentors. These steps are an interactive effort, and so both the student and the mentor must fully participate in the process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Steps</th>
<th>For Student/Postdoc</th>
<th>For Mentor/Sponsor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Conduct a self-assessment (using myIDP).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Explore career options and compare them with your skills, interests, and values.</td>
<td>Become familiar with available opportunities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Write an IDP (using myIDP).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Share IDP with mentor. Make concrete plans to improve your skills, build your network, and get the experience you need to meet your goals.</td>
<td>Review IDP and help revise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Implement the plan. Revise your IDP as needed.</td>
<td>Establish a regular review of progress. Provide opportunities to address needed skills/tools for career goal target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 6</td>
<td>Survey opportunities with mentor.</td>
<td>Discuss opportunities with student/postdoc.</td>
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</table>

After completing the myIDP exercises and developing a plan, it will be necessary to establish a mentoring team (as described in myIDP) to help you reach your career goals. This team will likely include your major advisor and advisory committee members, or for postdoctoral fellows, their sponsor and/or supervisor. Likewise, it could include individuals outside your department or school. And as a student, your mentoring team serves a different purpose than your degree program's advisory committee. As you use myIDP to create your own plan, you should share selected portions of the plan with your mentoring team to discuss your accomplishments and goals in light of the Biomedical Sciences program objectives and your career aspirations. We strongly suggest you complete this process within three-six months of your initial appointment and re-visit the IDP at least annually.

To help assure that an IDP has been developed, we ask you to share parts of your IDP with your mentor, particularly your goals and general timeframe in which you want to reach those goals. We will also ask that certain elements be included in your annual SAP (Student Activity Profile) report due March of every year. Finally we ask that you re-visit your IDP plan annually to review your progress with your mentor(s) possibly reassessing your goals, recognizing it is an evolving process. For postdoctoral fellows, this should be part of your annual performance evaluation conducted with your supervisor/sponsor.

Soliciting Guidance†
As you use myIDP to create your own plan, you need to be prepared to share selected portions of the plan with your mentor/supervisor. You may introduce the topic by having your mentor provide feedback on your skills by completing the skills assessment portion of my IDP. The following are tips to facilitate the discussion:
• Make an appointment separate from other lab meetings. This should not be a ten-minute add-on to a discussion about your data. It needs to be a discussion focused on your career.
• An environment away from the lab will eliminate distractions.
• Start out on a positive note – "I've really enjoyed my last year in the lab. I feel I've made great progress on my research project and now I'm beginning to think ahead to the next step in my career".

†From a pre-print article from ScienceCareers.org 2012 by P. Clifford, C. Fuhrmann, B. Lindstaedt, J. Hobin.
• Do not attempt to share your entire IDP. Prepare a concise outline of what you want to discuss. myIDP facilitates this by allowing you to print out a selected portions of your IDP.

• Be prepared to negotiate! If your plan A is to teach science in a liberal arts college, you will need to get comprehensive teaching experience (developing syllabus, delivering lectures, engaging students in active learning, writing exams, giving grades, etc.). As this will inevitably take time away from the laboratory, you need to agree on how the research will get done.

It is not reasonable to expect a single person to be an expert in everything you need to learn. You should expect to develop a "mentoring team" consisting of experts in different dimensions of science. As you identify skill areas that need work, you would be best served by seeking out different mentors for different skills. Extend your mentoring network beyond the bounds of your current department or institution.

For Mentors/Advisors

Step 1. Become Familiar with Available Opportunities
By virtue of experience you should have knowledge of some career opportunities, but you may want to familiarize yourself with other career opportunities and trends in job opportunities (refer to sources such as National Research Council reports and Science career reviews).

Step 2. Discuss Opportunities with the Graduate Student or Postdoctoral Fellow
This needs to be a private, scheduled meeting distinct from regular research-specific meetings.

Step 3. Review IDP and Help Revise
Provide honest feedback, both positive and negative, to help graduate students and postdoctoral fellows set realistic goals. Agree on a development plan that will allow them to be productive in the laboratory and adequately prepare them for their chosen career.

Step 4. Establish Regular Review of Progress
The mentor should meet at regular intervals with the graduate student and postdoctoral fellow to assess progress, expectations, and changing goals. On at least an annual basis, the mentor should conduct a performance review designed to analyze what has been accomplished and what needs to be done. A written review is most helpful in documenting accomplishments and skill training activities needed to reach their career goal.

Resources
Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology (FASEB) site: http://opa.faseb.org

American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) site is a great resource.

http://sciencecareers.org

Materials were adapted from:
Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology (FASEB) website:


http://postdoc.sigmaxi.org/results/