The Individual Development Plan (IDP)

The Individual Development Plan (IDP) functions as a personalized strategic plan. IDPs are used to provide students with measurable goals and outcomes that help with career guidance and goal attainment.[1]

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is an essential tool to help you:
- Assess your current knowledge and skills
- Create a purposeful plan for developing and enhancing skills to help you meet your academic and professional goals
- Communicate with your faculty mentor and the Program Director about your academic/professional goals, and to gather input regarding strategies to meet your objectives

The GVSU IDP is designed for undergraduate students engaged in independent research and scholarship. The IDP focuses on five core competencies:
- Disciplinary knowledge and methodological skills
- Academic and professional communication
- Scholarly ethical development
- Professionalism/interpersonal skills
- Career development and graduate school planning

Use the following seven steps to guide development of the IDP. Annual (or more frequent) review of the plan provides opportunities to celebrate achievements, incorporate revisions, and ensure progress toward goals.

STEP 1: Professional and Academic Goals Brainstorm

The first step of the IDP is about dreaming and goal setting. Take a few minutes and reflect on your academic and professional goals. These goals should be both realistic and aspirational. It is recommended (not required) that this brainstorm section be submitted to OURS as an addendum to the IDP. Answer the following:

1. What are your goals?
    a. Ultimate goal
        Example: I will be a professor of neuroscience at a research university.
        Example: I will influence education policy through research.

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[1] Elements adapted from Florida State University's Graduate School IDP and C. Gita Bosch's "Building Your Individual Development Plan (IDP): A Guide for Undergraduate Students" and Pfund, Branchaw, and Handelsman's Entering Mentoring.

b. Long-term (5-10 years)
   Example: I will be a postdoctoral fellow studying the genetic basis of neurological disorders.

c. Intermediate-term (2-5 years)
   Example: I will earn my PhD in neuroscience. I will contribute to the discovery of the genetic basis for Alzheimer's disease.

d. Short-term (1-2 years)
   Example: I will earn my BS in genetics. I will publish my undergraduate research project in a peer-reviewed journal.

e. Immediate (6 months-I year)
   Example: I will earn an A in biochemistry class. I will learn brain slice immunohistochemical techniques. I will participate in an NSF-REU at another university.

2. What competencies and skills will you need to successfully reach your goals? (Use the self-assessment at the end of this document for specific ideas.)
   a. Disciplinary knowledge, research and technical skills
   b. Academic and professional communication skills
   c. Scholar development and ethical awareness
   d. Professionalism and leadership skills
   e. Career development competency and graduate school planning

3. What activities and experiences will you engage in to gain the competencies and skills?
   a. Taking classes
   b. Tutoring, study groups
   c. Technique training
   d. Research experiences
   e. Academic conference and meeting attendance
   f. Professional development workshops

4. How will you assess your progress in mastering these competencies and skills?
   a. Mastery of coursework
   b. Mentor/instructor feedback
   c. Successful experimental outcomes
   d. Peer review

5. Who will help you reach your goals and how?
   a. Faculty
   b. Mentors
   c. OURS
   d. Peers
   e. Family members

STEP 2: Assess where you are now.
Part of the planning process is assessing your skills and competencies through a self-assessment. It is critical that you ask yourself questions related to your current responsibilities/requirements and career goals. Doing so will lead you to actions or goals to incorporate into your plan. Two types of assessment forms are provided as addendums at the end of this document. **At minimum, one assessment should be completed and reviewed with your faculty mentor.**

STEP 3: Write your IDP.
Some important things to remember in writing your IDP:
1. The IDP should be updated and changed as needed. Don't shelve it
2. Identify specific and achievable goals or skills (column 1 below). Write these in a way that makes very clear what you are going to do. The goals should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-limited
    a. A specific goal will usually answer the five "W" questions:
        i. What: What do I want to accomplish?
        ii. Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal
        iii. Who: Who is involved?
        iv. Where: Identify a location
        v. When: Identify requirements and constraints, and a practical timeline for completion
    b. A measurable goal will usually answer questions such as:
        i. How much?
        ii. How many?
        iii. How will I know when it is accomplished?
    c. An attainable goal will usually answer the question:
        i. Can the goal be accomplished with available time and resources?
        ii. A relevant goal can answer yes to these questions: Does this seem worthwhile? Is this the right time? Am I the right person? Does this match my/our other efforts/needs?
    d. A time-limited goal will usually answer the questions:
        i. When?
        ii. What can I do six months from now?
        iii. What can I do six weeks from now?
        iv. What can I do today?
3. Determine what additional competencies/skills or activities/experiences may be needed to accomplish this goal (Column 2-3)
4. Specify how you will know if you are making progress to this goal (Column 4)
5. Determine who can provide you support in your pursuit of this goal (Column 5)
6. Determine the timeline for beginning work on this goal and completing the goal (Columns 6)

STEP 4: Discuss with your mentor(s) and/or advisor(s).
The purpose of discussing the results of your skills assessment, and your career goals and interests, with your mentor is to help you identify areas needing improvement. By helping you compare current skills and strengths with those needed to achieve your career objectives, your mentor can be an important ally. In addition to discussing your plan with your primary mentor, you should also be creative when you approach others for advice. You can receive useful feedback from multiple people with a broad range of experiences and perspectives, including friends, family, staff, and faculty other than your primary

mentor. **After receiving feedback, REVISE and EDIT the IDP**. This document should not be static, rather revised and edited as you move through your academic and professional career.

STEP 5*: Present your IDP to your program director/mentoring team and explain the objectives and strategies for completion.

The purpose of discussing your plan with the Program Director is to ensure your objectives and timelines meet program requirements, and to provide you with additional feedback and support. IDPs should include both program specific goals, and discipline specific objectives. Review of the IDP, by the scholar and faculty mentor, will also ensure consistency of expectations, academic rigor, and provide multiple anchors for progress and accountability for scholars.

*This step is required for Beckman and McNair Scholars. This step is optional for S3, MS3, and Library Scholars.

STEP 6: Implement your plan (IDP).

Put your plan into action and seek support you may need to remain on track. Remember that you should be flexible and modify your IDP if your goals or circumstances change. Refer to your IDP often and add your IDP deadlines to your calendar to integrate them with deadlines for other work and personal events.

STEP 7: Review and revise your IDP.

Review your IDP with your mentor on a regular basis (on a consistent schedule decided upon together) and revise/update. At a MINIMUM, you should revisit and discuss your IDP with your mentor every six months. Significant revisions to your objectives or strategy must be written into an updated IDP and emailed to the Program Director for review/consultation. When sending the updated document, include a short memo listing major revisions to the IDP.

Individualized Development Plan Working Draft, 2024-2025

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5	Column 6	
GOALS	Competencies & Skills	Activities & Experiences	Assessment of Progress	Support People and Their Roles	Timeline	
					Begin	Complete
LONG-TERM 1.						
INTERMEDIATE-TERM 1. 2.						
SHORT-TERM 1. 2. 3.						
IMMEDIATE 1. 2. 3. 4.						

Note the IDP review process below before forwarding the completed IDP to OURS.

Submitted to Faculty Advisor (date and initials): _____   Discussion with Faculty Advisor (date and initials): _____

Revisions completed (date and initials): _____   Submitted to OURS (Date and method): _____

Addendum 1: Assessment Questions to Consider
Reflect on the following questions, as noted in Step 2:

- What are your current responsibilities/requirements and career goals?

- What are the responsibilities/requirements you must meet during the next year?

- What skills or discipline-specific knowledge do you need to develop?

- What scholarly activities would you like to accomplish or work toward during the next year?

- What type of work would you like to do?

- What is important to you in your future career?

- What competencies are required for your chosen career?

- How well do your current skills match the competencies required for your chosen career?

- What are your short-term goals related to career exploration?

Addendum 2: Scholar and Research Inventory
Please note how proficient you think you are in the following areas, as noted in Step 2:

Disciplinary Knowledge and Methodological Skills

5 – Highly proficient 1 – Little competency	5	4	3	2	1	na	Strategies to improve
Understanding of the literature and/or current research related to my project							
• Specific knowledge:							
• Specific knowledge:							
• Specific knowledge:							
• Specific knowledge:							
Understanding of the methodology/ techniques being used in my project							
• Specific methodological/ technical skill							
• Specific methodological/ technical skill							
• Specific methodological/ technical skill							
• Specific methodological/ technical skill							

Academic and Professional Communication

5 – Highly proficient 1 – Little competency	5	4	3	2	1	na	Strategies to improve
Writing for a general audience							
Writing for a disciplinary audience							
Oral presentation for a general audience							
Oral presentation for a disciplinary audience							
Email communication and etiquette							
Social media communication and etiquette							
Communicating with mentor/supervisor							
Ability to receive constructive feedback							
Ability to give constructive feedback							
Networking within academic area or field							
Networking outside of academic area or field							
Comfort with setting professional boundaries/expectations							
Ability to engage in self-advocacy							
Have an awareness of one's communication style, verbal and non-verbal							

Scholarly Ethical Development (Individual understanding and personal growth)

5 – Highly proficient 1 – Little competency	5	4	3	2	1	na	Strategies to improve
Understanding of authorship and recognizing others' academic work							
Ability to situate ideas and research within larger bodies of scholarship							
Understanding of conflict of interest							
Understanding of ethical behavior in research							
Understanding how your research ideas may be consistent/inconsistent							
Attending to accuracy and consistency in the research and dissemination process							
Demonstrating skills useful in diverse academic & professional settings							
Take responsibility for mistakes							
Successfully manage multiple assignments							
Willingness to take risks, when appropriate							

Professionalism/Interpersonal Skills (Interacting with others in a scholarly context)

5 – Highly proficient 1 – Little competency	5	4	3	2	1	na	Strategies to improve
Demonstrating cultural competence							
Working with diverse groups/teams							
Manage conflict in a team environment promptly and appropriately							
Manage conflict in professional relationships promptly and appropriately							
Problem solving and making informed decisions							
Motivating others							
Self-motivation and direction							
Assuming leadership positions							
Participating in service opportunities							
Seek to understand the ideas of others and look for mutual solutions							
Anticipate and proactively address problems or behaviors							
Recognize, respect, and value differing viewpoints related to ability, age, class, education-level, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, sexuality, national origin, rank, religion, or veteran status							

Develop an awareness of one's identities (ability, age, class, education-level, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, sexuality, national origin, rank, religion, or veteran status) and how they affect one's experiences. Explore if additional information about the discipline, support structures, or mentoring are needed.							

Career Development and Graduate School Planning

5 – Highly proficient 1 – Little competency	5	4	3	2	1	na	Strategies to improve
Writing a CV and/or résumé							
Establishing career goals							
Identifying steps/path to career goals							
Awareness of career opportunities in your field							
Writing a cover letter or letter of introduction							
Attending professional development workshops and incorporate learning in career and academic development plans							
Awareness of nationally competitive fellowships in your field							
Awareness of funding available for graduate and professional school							
Writing a personal statement							
Knowledge of the graduate school application process							
Knowledge and preparation for standardized tests needed for admittance to graduate/professional school							
Ability to search for and prioritize graduate/professional school academic programs							
Comfort in seeking out faculty and professional mentors							
Comfort in asking for recommendation letters from faculty and other professionals							