UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
POST-BACCALAUREATE RESEARCH EDUCATION PROGRAM

Introduction to USC PREP

The University of South Carolina (USC) Post-Baccalaureate Education Program (PREP) has been funded by NIH since 2006. USC PREP is a one-year program that offers under-represented scholars a chance to build the requirements necessary to gain acceptance into a biomedical PhD program. PREP Scholars are hired as research technicians who make a reasonable income while gaining valuable research experience. In addition, they have the opportunity to take graduate courses to demonstrate their ability to handle courses at this level. PREP scholars who complete the program demonstrating both an aptitude for research and the ability to succeed in graduate level courses are likely to be accepted into one of USC's biomedical Ph.D. programs as well as doctoral programs at other well-respected universities.

The program elements for PREP are meant to foster skills and experiences which will boost the scholar's ability to develop a competitive graduate school application and demonstrate his or her ability to succeed in the academic and research endeavors at the graduate level study for biomedical sciences. Program elements for PREP include:

- Research experience in a vibrant biomedical research laboratory
- Mentoring by an experienced, caring faculty member and other members of his/her research team
- Association with a senior graduate student. The faculty mentor should choose a graduate student or postdoc in his lab who can help with research techniques and also be a good secondary mentor
- Biweekly PREP group meetings
- Seminar presentations by the PREP Scholar to enhance scientific communication skills
- A summer course plus one additional graduate course per semester
- A responsible conduct of research/ethics course
- Journal clubs to stimulate critical thinking about the published literature
- Attendance at research seminars by visiting notable scientists
- Opportunities for Scholars to attend and present research at national scientific meetings

Strategies for the Practice of Mentoring

INTRODUCTION

One of the key components of USC PREP is to provide a mentoring relationship between a PREP scholar and faculty mentor. Mentoring is defined as a personal relationship and nurturing process in which a more skilled and experienced faculty member serves as a guide, sponsor, role model, and teacher who encourages, counsels, and befriends a less experienced person to promote the latter's professional and/or personal development. A mentor provides advice, knowledge, counsel, challenge, and support to the protégé in the context of an ongoing and caring relationship to support the protégé's pursuit of becoming a full member of a specific profession. Mentoring is considered one of the most complex and developmentally important relationships one can have in early adulthood.

The following strategies are recognized in the mentoring literature as being important components of successful mentoring.

INDIVIDUALS STRATEGIES

- *Clarify expectations*
  Mentors who are effective are explicit in terms of defining and clarifying their expectations regarding what the mentorship will incorporate and what the relationship will look like. Wise mentors will revisit discussions of expected mentor functions (e.g. support, creation of opportunities, encouragement), range of appropriate interaction contexts, and degree of mutuality and will continue to evaluate the health and value of the mentorship as the relationship unfolds.

- *Know and affirm your protégés*
  Good mentors carefully watch their protégés to discern unique inclinations, interests, and talents. An effective mentor nourishes the protégé's career and tempers idealism with the wisdom of their experience. A strong mentor is quick to affirm the efforts and achievements of the protégé and is tolerant of imperfection.

- *Engage in intentional modeling*
  Intentional mentors are overtly invitational and recognize that modeling offers several advantages to protégés such as allowing direct demonstration of behaviors specific to the profession. This method often encourages faster learning than direct experience.

- *Attend to issues of race and culture*
  Because minority and disabled faculty members remain largely underrepresented in most academic fields, it is critical that faculty actively recruit and intentionally mentor ethnic minority and disabled students. Faculty who mentor across culture should have appropriate competencies and attitudes including: (a) a diligent pursuit of cultural sensitivity; (b) genuine concern for the welfare and experiences of minority group students; and (c) appreciate the uniqueness of each protégé within his or her culture.

- *Model personal health and self-awareness*
  Mentors should demonstrate self-care, self-awareness, tolerance of fallibility, and transparency, and can rely on self-disclosure as a method to demonstrate an appreciation for their own strengths and weaknesses and as a way of offering a model for coping with imperfection.

- *Remain vigilant to conflict or dysfunction*
  Excellent mentors recognize that not all mentorships will be successful and accept that in spite of their best attention and efforts, they will be poorly suited to mentor certain students. Strong mentors give special attention to mentorships that become dysfunctional or conflictual and attempt to resolve concerns while remaining sensitive to the protégé's best interests.

It is important that faculty develop and strengthen their mentoring skills. The UofSC Center for Teaching Excellence holds mentor training programs to enhance mentoring skills based on the University of Wisconsin Cimer Project. Our newer faculty members attend this *Entering Mentoring* training.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In the fifteen years of UofSC PREP, there has never been an occurrence that required intervention by the co-directors. Nevertheless, Dr. James Augustine, University Ombudsman and Dale Moore, Graduate School Ombudsman have volunteered their services if needs arise. More information about the Office of the University Graduate School Ombudsman can be found [here](#).

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PREP Scholar
Individual Development Plan
University of South Carolina

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The Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a mechanism for creating and accomplishing both long and short term goals in pursuit of a desired career goal. To receive maximum benefit from the IDP process, it is essential that both PREP Scholar and their faculty mentor participate in the process. The PREP Scholar should complete the initial draft of the IDP and then review it with their research mentor.

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_____

Name of PREP Scholar   _____

Signature   _____

Date   _____

_____
_____

Name of Primary Mentor   _____

Signature   _____

Date   _____

_____
_____

Part I. Goals for This Year (to be completed by the PREP Scholar)

A. Research Goals

Provide a timeline of research activities planned for this year.

B. Training and Professional Goals and Progress

List all planned activities for the rest of the year in the following categories. Provide as much detail as possible.

Planned coursework

Graduate training research focus area

PhD program application process

Professional meeting attendance

Part II. Career Goals and Planning (to be completed by the PREP Scholar)

What is your current career goal? (Need ideas? Look here: http://www.sc.edu/career/exploremajors.html)

Why does this career appeal to you?

What other career path(s) interest(s) you?

Why does this / do these other career path(s) appeal to you?

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In order to be competitive for your desired career path(s), what additional training or experience is needed prior to applying for positions?

PROGRAM COMPLETION TIMELINE CHECKLIST DIRECTIONS

The major goal of the PREP program is to prepare the PREP scholars for graduate study in the field of biomedical sciences. The following timeline checklists are designed to help the PREP scholars on track of all the steps in the application process.

The timeline will also help you as a faculty mentor to see where your PREP scholar is in the process and help direct discussion you may have about the transition to graduate school or any questions they may have about the application process. Having your PREP scholar share their timeline with you during meetings can help keep you both on the same page and allow you time to help them in the process.

Task	Deadline	Completed	Notes
1. Start Studying for GRE if you plan to take or retake the test**	August 1		Reviewing algebra and geometry is most important. If you decide to take a GRE class, PREP cannot cover the cost. Many schools no longer require the GRE.

7. Begin writing personal statement	November 1		
9. Have someone look over personal statement	November 15		The PREP directors will help you with your statement
10. Finalize personal statement	November 22		
11. Submit all application materials	Various		Some schools have a deadline as early as December
12. In your application you will probably be asked to list referees and give their email addresses. Check with all referees that they have received a request and give deadline to your referees.	2 weeks after deadline 2 weeks after deadline		Many referees are busy and simply forget to respond to a recommendation request. Most people will not have a problem with a reminder.
13. Check with school to make sure application is complete including recommendation letters	3 weeks after deadline		

** Many, if not most, biomedical doctoral programs no longer require the GRE