

From Good to Great: Career Development Plan and Mentoring Plan

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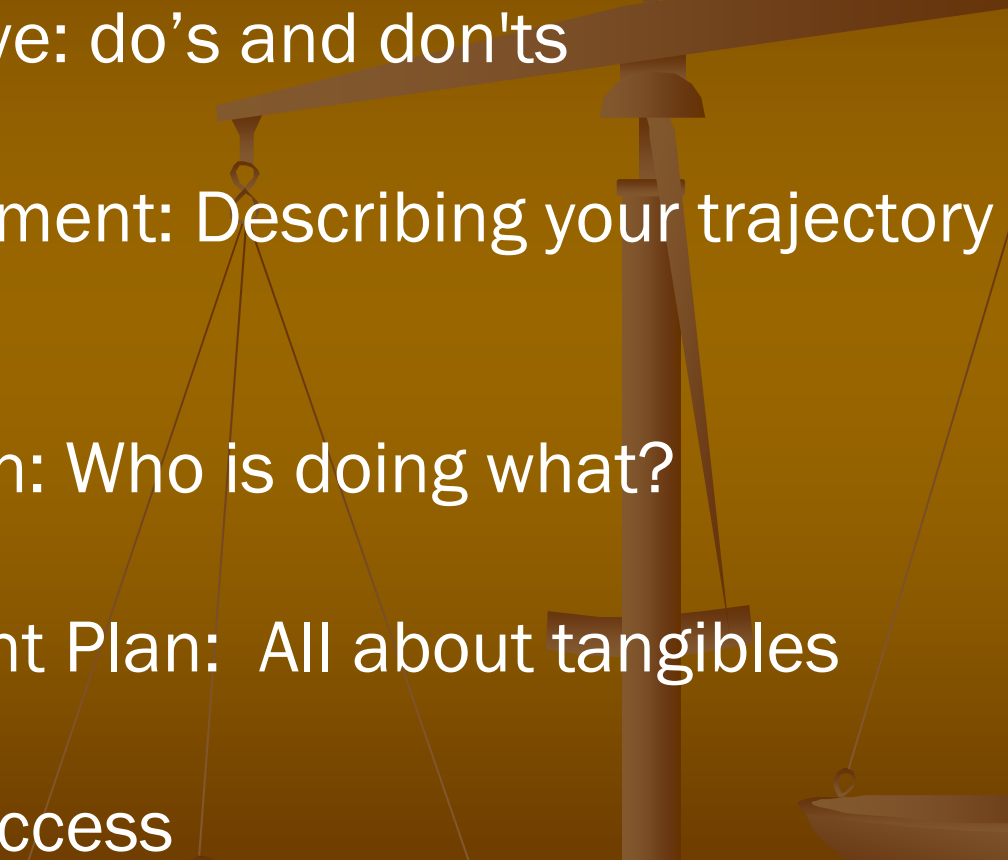
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18 October 2011

Today's Talk: What's Most Important in Career Development Proposals

- The Career Objective: do's and don'ts
 - The Personal Statement: Describing your trajectory in winning style.
 - The Mentoring Plan: Who is doing what?
 - Career Development Plan: All about tangibles
 - General tips for success
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An Important Lesson about Grantsmanship

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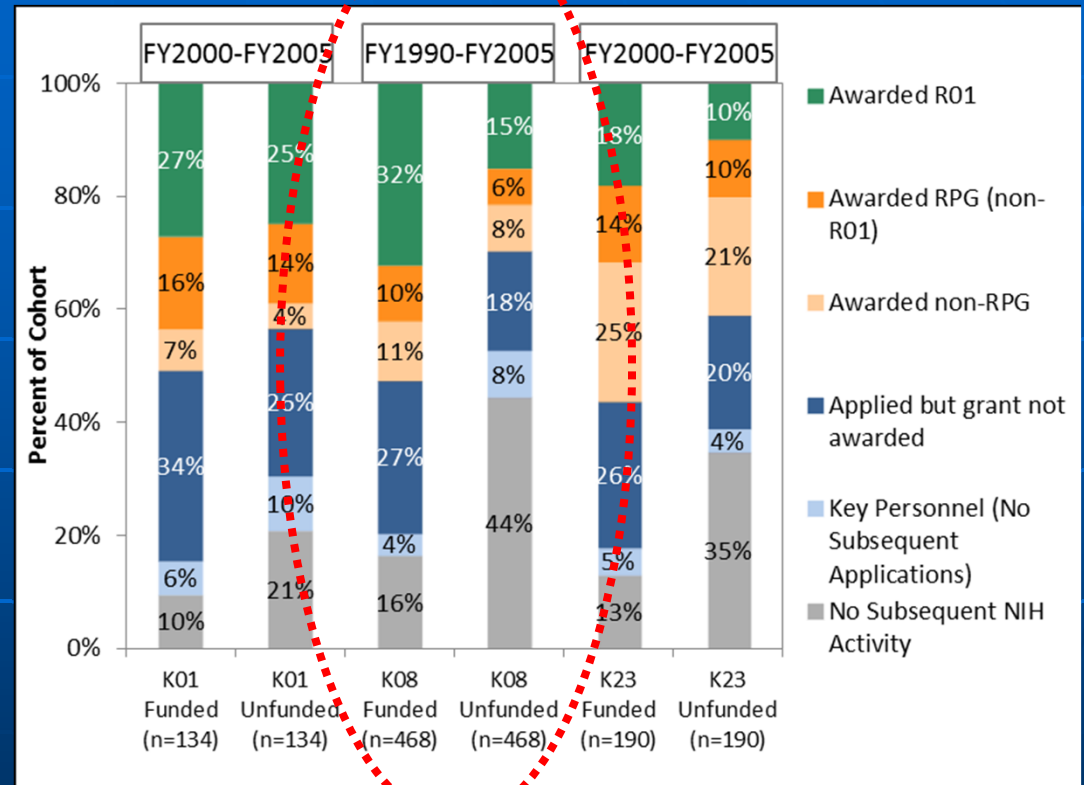
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Like hitting a baseball, the best grant writers are only successful 30% of the time. Like swinging a bat, practice improves your odds.

Why Good to Great?

- With shrinking budgets, good just isn't good enough anymore!
- Take career development awards seriously.
- CDA success is a great predictor of success with subsequent grants.
- Tends to keep you in the game!
- Lessons learned on "self selling" will apply to:
 - Promotion material
 - New jobs, new bosses
 - Leadership roles



How do we sell ourselves?

What excites you?

- Step one is self-reflection, take a step back and think ... why did you begin this career path?
- Find your Big Picture, let it guide your grant.
- Don't settle on a question that seems "safe". Doing so is ...
 - Boring
 - Bad idea – reviewers want to get excited too!
 - Settling will show in your uninspired writing.
- Identify in your trajectory the thing that compels your own interest and engagement.

Define Your career
objective ...

The Career Objective

“My long-term objective is to ...

Bad

“Determine the role of GABA_A receptors in mediating inward rectifying currents in pediatric epilepsy.”

“Secure a faculty position at a top-ten medical school to pursue an independent career in diabetes research.”

“Record multi-sensory activity in cortical neurons and correlate responses with the optokinetic reflex in guinea pigs.”

Good

“Understand the underlying causes of epileptic seizure activity in children and identify new treatments.”

“Develop a translational program linking mechanisms of diabetic neuropathy to clinical therapies....”

“Understand the neuronal basis of sensory interactions in perception.”

Does it fit your trajectory?

Personal Statement Part 1: Your Trajectory

Objective must be consistent with your trajectory
(how you got where you are now).



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The Random Walk



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The Sprint

Different types
of trajectory:

neither is wrong;
neither is better.

Most of us are somewhere in between – but how you describe your trajectory is critical. Find the thread in your path, and describe it linearly!

Is there a general rule?

Personal Statement Part 1: Your Trajectory

Your trajectory, described in your personal statement, must tell a cohesive (and coherent) story that logically concludes with and supports your objective.

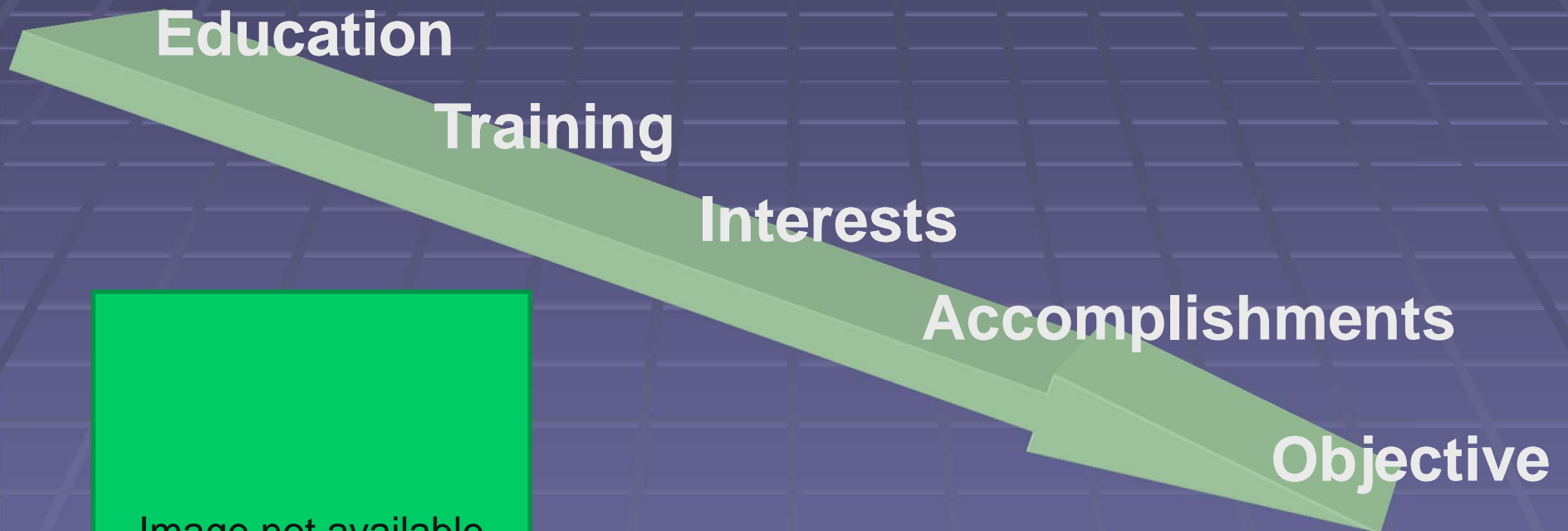


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Is there a right way
to write it?

Personal Statement Part 2: A Winning Strategy

- **Follow chronological order...start with education & training experiences (fellowships etc). Do not jump around or organize by subject or topic of study! Make it easy to follow.**
- **Avoid creating a litany of skills you learned – no one cares. Reviewers assume you got where you are by learning and doing stuff!**
- **Rather, focus on what you achieved at each chronological step with an emphasis on tangibles: “This work ...”. ALWAYS take it back to science!**
 - “...led to publication in **** ...”
 - “...was presented at the International Meeting of **** ...”
 - “... was recognized by the Award for **** ...”
- **Subsequent stages REQUIRE a transition sentence compelled by the experience already described. The idea is to support your trajectory!**
 - “ To pursue my growing interest in **** ... I next completed a **** with **** ...”
 - “ I turned my focus to **** so that I might better understand ***** ...”

Like this

Personal Statement Part 2: A Winning Strategy

(1) My fellowship training at Johns Hopkins focused on probing the genetic mechanisms of age-related neuropathy in under-represented minorities. Early results suggested a relationship between such-and-such... These data I presented at the 2005 Neurology meeting, followed by a subsequent first-author publication in the *Journal of Aging* (Smith et al., 2006).

This paper concluded that

(2) Next I sought to understand how genetic predisposition to disease influences response-to-treatment for common neurological disorders. My move to Vanderbilt in 2007 as clinical instructor provided an opportunity to participate in our institutional initiative in personalized medicine. Together with my mentor Dr. Who, I successfully competed for pilot funding from the American Geriatric Society. This grant tested the hypothesis that

(3) I was able to leverage early success with extramural funding into a tenure-track faculty position in 2010. Using development funds, I established a small program focused on ***** and ***. Recent publications in *Neurology* (Smith, 2010) and *Experimental Neurology* (Smith et al., 2011) show that ***. I am poised now to test whether ***** and *** with the support of this Career Development Award.

EXAMPLE
Could you
draw a flow
chart of your
trajectory?

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A Winning Mentoring Plan

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- Mentor must be active in field – not just a big name. Relationship must be real with demonstrable outcomes (grants, papers, providing personnel etc)
- All mentors/collaborators must have specific roles and tasks that are meaningful and relevant to the objective. Should be part of a Mentoring Committee that meets regularly – reviewers love committees!
- Contribution of each mentor/collaborator must be tangible – don't list “available” people just for the sake of name-dropping. Reviewers abhor name-dropping.

A Winning Mentoring Plan

- Needs both scientific and career mentors. Support your choice by describing their MENTORING experience.
- Science mentors must compel path to success by providing enabling skills/technologies/approaches.
- Career mentors must provide skills to support financial and academic independence and success. These usually are senior faculty with leadership positions.
- Describes actual training events with details:
 - Speaking, writing, grantsmanship, how-to-mentor/train others, budget preparation, leadership training/courses, IRB/IACUC training etc

EXAMPLE Mentoring Plan

Can you list what mentors will do?

(1) Dr. Who is professor of **. He/she will serve as primary mentor for this proposal. He/she has trained over 20 postdoctoral fellow and has served as mentor on several K awards. He/She is an acknowledged expert on pathways associated with****. Dr. Who is currently funded by both NIH and privately-sponsored grants. For this proposal, he/she will provide (1)...(2)...and (3). **TANGIBLES**

(2) Same for co-mentors

(3) Same for collaborators

(4) The Mentoring Committee will consist of Dr. Who (the primary mentor), *** (the co-mentor), and Drs. ****, This committee will meet quarterly to review progress on the following points:

- science
- manuscript preparation
- meetings/conferences/seminars
- training experience (mentoring others).

TANGIBLES

(5) Potential problems include.... The following course of action outlines my plan to deal with potential problems.... If all else fails, Vanderbilt's Office of Faculty Affairs and Career Development, directed by Senior Associate Dean Raiford, provides mediation for **** (See <https://medschool.vanderbilt.edu/faculty/>). **TANGIBLE**

The Career Plan

- A winning career plan is literal:
 - States in no uncertain terms how this Award will help you get where you want to be – specifically.
 - “This award will enable me develop the skills necessary to create a program in *** by providing ****.”
 - Avoid titles: “Will allow me to get tenured... become Associate Professor ...”.
 - Remember: climbing the ranks is assumed for successful people. Focus on what you will learn, not become.
 - The Existential Rule: you are defined by what you do, so spell out career tangibles the award will enable.

The Career Plan

- A winning career plan:
 - Uses the science (basic or clinical) as a scaffold to demonstrate forward momentum and movement
 - Each step in plan based on an expected outcome
 - Each expected outcome compels the next step
 - “ *The Leadership Course will enable me to recruit postdoctoral fellows (expected outcome)... This will allow me to train personnel for animal studies (next step from successful outcome).* ”
- Contains all the info described for the individual mentors and collaborators
 - courses, grants workshops, scheduled seminars, specific skills and how they will be obtained.

Some Final Rules of Thumb

- Be as literal as possible – give precise details, even if it seems obvious to you.
- Label sub-headings according to information requested
 - “How Proposal Challenges Current Practices”
 - “Innovative Approaches or Theoretical Constructs”
- Don't make the reviewers work to find something!
- Use diagrams, schematics and flowcharts liberally
- Be bold – a CDA is the perfect place to demonstrate your big ideas. If you're bored, so will be the reviewers!
- Don't procrastinate or take CDAs lightly – give your mentors time to comment; give yourself time to incorporate comments!

How to start?

Introducing.... Studio Time

- Involves an office, a whiteboard and a mentor
- Bring your pictures, measurements, ideas etc
- Start “jamming”: arrange, rearrange, make diagrams
- Sometimes go back to the lab or clinic ... or library to gather a bit more raw material.
- Works for papers, grants, talks etc.: any communication
- You are ready when you have a logical “composition” with key ingredients we’ve discussed.



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Thank you!