

An institutional framework for student-led career development

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The Need

- Recent national reports on STEM graduate education (e.g., [1]) highlight the changing scientific career landscape and call for greater attention to career development in graduate education.
- NIH-led BEST institutional transformation efforts have been effective in re-inventing graduate career development, but only at a limited number of institutions and focused in the biomedical sciences (e.g., [2,3]).
- To effect broader change across research institutions, we need a sustainable, cost-effective approach to support student career development.

[1] NASEM (2018). Graduate STEM Education for the 21st Century
 [2] NIH (2012). Biomedical Research Workforce Working Group Report. Working Group of the Advisory Committee to the Director.
 [3] Meyers, F. J., et al. (2016). The origin and implementation of the Broadening Experiences in Scientific Training programs: an NIH common fund initiative. FASEB J. 30, 507–514

“It helped to know that I wasn’t alone as I struggled to figure out my future.”
 –PCLP student participant



What is the PhD Career Ladder Program?

- Stony Brook University’s **PhD Career Ladder Program**, or PCLP, developed by **PhD students, for PhD students**, shows promise as a nimble, affordable option easily adapted at any institution.
- PCLP is a network of small, graduate-student-led career mentoring groups that follow an IDP-like curriculum.
- Because the program is peer-to-peer:
 - Creates a supportive, **learner-centered** space career exploration **inside and outside of academia**; and
 - Fosters **confidence, self-efficacy and preparation** in the pursuit of **diverse careers**.

Acknowledgments

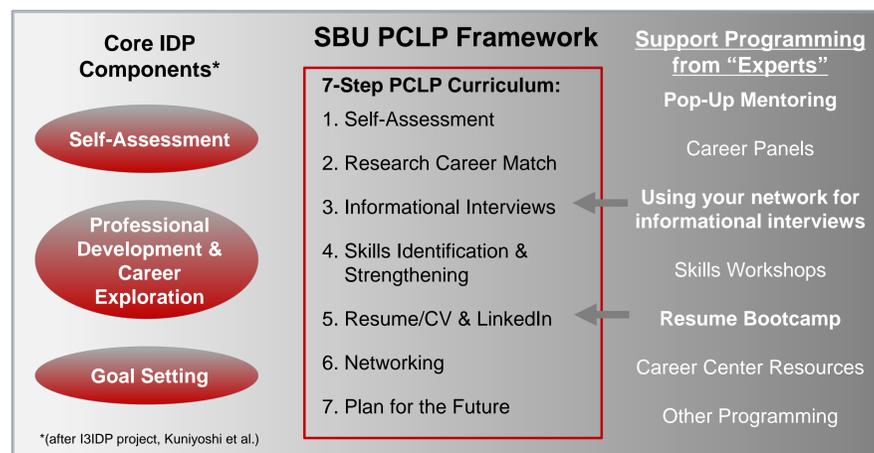
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Structure

- Small group size (5-8 students is best)
- Meets bi-weekly, no longer than 1 semester
- Multi-discipline, multi-career interest
- Led by student peer leaders (ideally two co-leaders)
- Held at lunch- or dinner-time, and participants are always fed
- Participants share their progress each meeting
- Adaptable for postdocs and non-STEM
- Leaders recruited from among participants

Curriculum



Institutionalization

PCLP Leadership Program: Meet monthly with student leaders to debrief, address challenges, and foster professional development.



GRD 510: Career Planning for Graduate Students: We piloted a course version that will now be offered by the Graduate School every semester.

- 0 or 1 credit, S/U grading
- Individual sections led by PCLP group leaders
- Reduces participant attrition
- Provides evidence on transcript of student’s commitment to career development



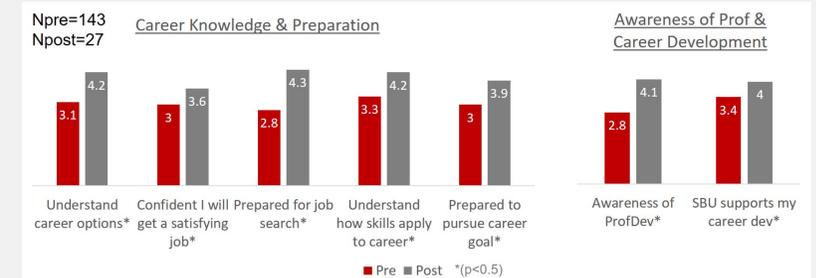
Two Year Findings

Participation

- Greatest continuing participation from Biomedical Sciences (39%), followed by Social Sciences (21%), Physical Sciences (18%).
- Participants attend much more regularly with course version

Student Outcomes

- After two years of pre/post testing, participant knowledge and preparation for careers show increases, all significant.
- Participants indicate a greater engagement with and awareness of professional development opportunities at Stony Brook



- Self-efficacy and confidence in career domain increased, most significant



“[PCLP] gave me confidence and motivation to pursue [diverse careers].”
 –PCLP student participant

- Participants indicate an increase in “acceptability” for someone with their training for all academic and non-academic careers surveyed.

Programmatic Outcomes

- Participants find PCLP leaders to be effective and knowledgeable.
- Participants prefer small group sizes so everyone has time to contribute.
- Participants find peer-to-peer interaction makes them comfortable discussing career concerns.

Develop Your Own PCLP

PCLP can easily be adapted by student groups or institutions. All it takes is: the curriculum, a student moderator, a room, and some pizza.

To try it at your institution, contact us for a copy of our forthcoming Moderation Guide through our website: stonybrook.edu/phd-career-ladder OR SCAN CODE HERE:

