

MENTORING **SPARK**

Quick ideas to light up your doctoral conversations.

► CAREER PLANNING



SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENTS

In today's hiring market, students need an edge to stand out and be considered for a particular job. One proven way to gain this edge is to reduce the hiring entities' perceived "risk" with applicants regarding their ability to work in a particular work environment.

Some students, especially those moving straight from high school to undergrad to graduate school, may have little experience outside of labs and research that they can use to demonstrate their ability to use their knowledge and skills. Their experience may be completely acceptable for some careers (e.g., *academia*), but may have perceived gaps for other careers (e.g., *industry*).

Specifically, this spark is intended to help students think about what knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are important for the type of career or job they want – and also to help them think about how to ensure that they can demonstrate their ability to use those KSAs in practice.



► LEVEL 3

LEVEL 1: JOB EXPLORATION

LEVEL 2: JOB ACQUISITION

LEVEL 3: CAREER SKILLS



FACULTY FYI

Though an advanced degree is designed to ensure students have at least minimum job requirements met and an expertise in their areas of study, that does not mean one's resume highlights (*or puts the best emphasis on*) the skills for every job posting. Thus, this **Spark** is intended to help students think about ways to gain experience *specific to the type of job* a student wants to pursue.

Regardless of career choice, the future work done by a graduate student reflects on the advisor; consequently, advisors may wish to help ensure students have all required job skills when they start the job.

(As a reminder, the Career Planning Level 1 Spark provides definitions for the Spark series.)



ACTIONS FOR FACULTY

- Explain to students that different types of jobs will have different weightings on the KSAs for a job. For example, an academic job may have more autonomy than an industry job, and an industry job may require a different pace for problem solving and communication space. Thus, students will need to be able to give examples of the appropriate abilities.
- Discuss with students the type of job they want after graduation, the likely critical KSAs, and ways to demonstrate proficiency. Talk about any areas identified as gaps, and how to gain the needed experiences. (See competency wheel in Lifelong Learning, Level 1.)

A RESOURCE FROM:



Use this QR code to access this and other Mentoring Spark tip sheets:



CONTINUED ...



DIGGING DEEPER

- Websites advertising jobs can provide a typical list of items to include on a resume/cv.
- Work with career services on campus.
- Online resources and websites, such as MyIDP, help guide students through developing an IDP.
- Sites such as LinkedIn provide online training, articles, and tips related to necessary skills for various jobs.

Please visit the RDI Mentoring Sparks website for examples and links to these tools and resources!



EXERCISES FOR STUDENTS

1. Have students write down the skill they want to use at a job. (Examples could include writing, conducting data collection or analysis, writing computer programs, etc.) Ask the students to think about their level of expertise in those areas. What can they brag about, what could they strengthen?
2. Have students think about and write down their experience using their academic knowledge, lab experience, working on grants, etcetera. Have the students include internships, externships, additional lab work, etc. Once they have the information written down, perhaps as a matrix of experiences / skills / knowledge, have them write down examples they can use during an interview or presentation to demonstrate their ability to use their knowledge and skills.
3. Have your research students work in pairs or small groups to practice saying their examples that demonstrate different KSAs likely for the type of job they want. Have the student(s) listening provide constructive feedback (revisit the Communication **Sparks** as appropriate regarding the importance of listening to understand).



ACTIONS FOR FACULTY

- Point students to academic counselors (or as an advisor work with students yourself) to ensure any necessary electives are discussed for different types of jobs.
- Suggest that your students talk with recent graduates to find out any KSA areas those graduates would strengthen prior to graduation if they had to do it over.
- Encourage students to periodically review their CV for potential KSA gaps, and to start the reviews after they have spent time with job exploration and before they begin applying for jobs.
- **GOAL Setting:** have students develop a goal related to the KSAs needed for their preferred first position after graduation.



REFLECTION & NEXT STEPS

Student: Think about any gaps in experience you have and why it is a gap; what will you do to close the gap and make yourself more marketable for your ideal first position after graduation?

Faculty: Do most of your students have a KSA gap? If so, how can you help them?

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