

The IDP As a Framework for Disability-Related Communications Between Graduate Student and Supervisor

Dr. Mahadeo A. Sukhai

Chair, National Taskforce on the Experience of Graduate Students with Disabilities (Canada)

Head, Variant Interpretation Group

Genome Diagnostics, University Health Network, Toronto

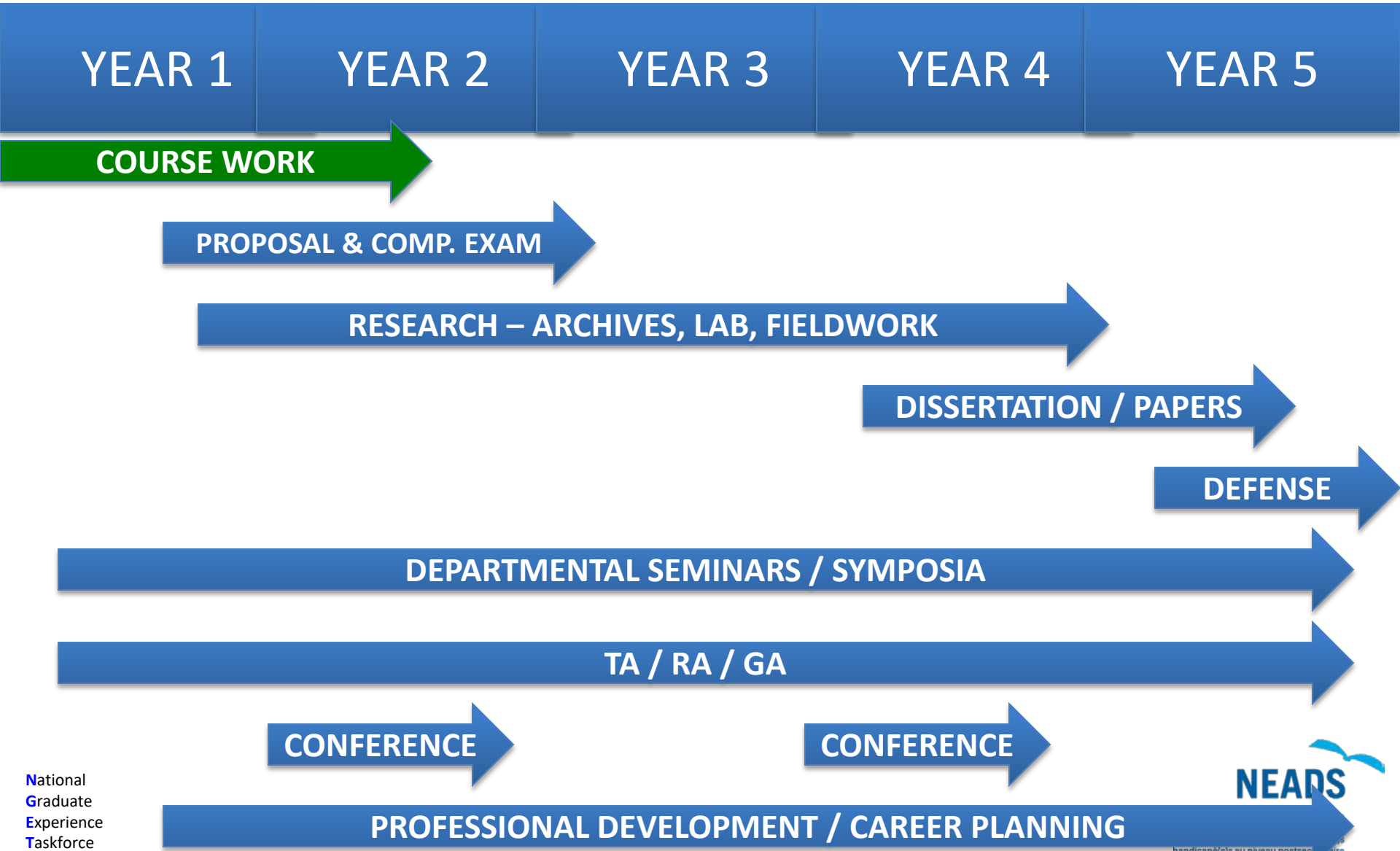
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Contact Information

- Dr. Mahadeo A. Sukhai, Taskforce Chair
 - Email: m.sukhai@utoronto.ca
- Taskforce and Graduate Project website:
<http://neads.ca/en/about/projects/graduate-taskforce/index.php>

The Trainee Lifecycle – 5 Yr. PhD (Research Stream)



The Research Training Pipeline

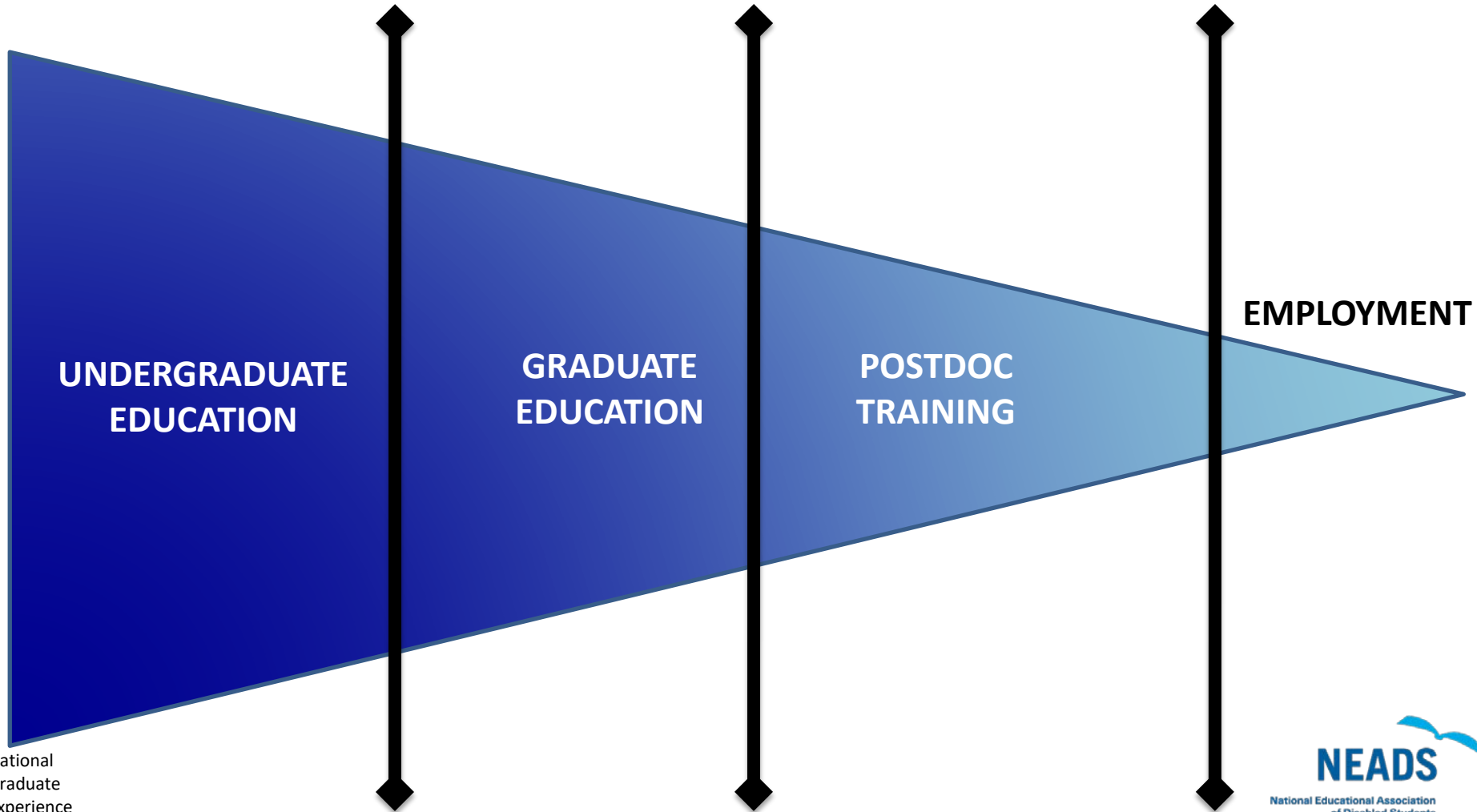
UNDERGRADUATE
EDUCATION

GRADUATE
EDUCATION

POSTDOC
TRAINING

EMPLOYMENT

Glass Ceilings in The Research Training Pipeline for Persons with Disabilities



Solutions to Underrepresentation

UNDERGRADUATE
EDUCATION

GRADUATE
EDUCATION

POSTDOC
TRAINING

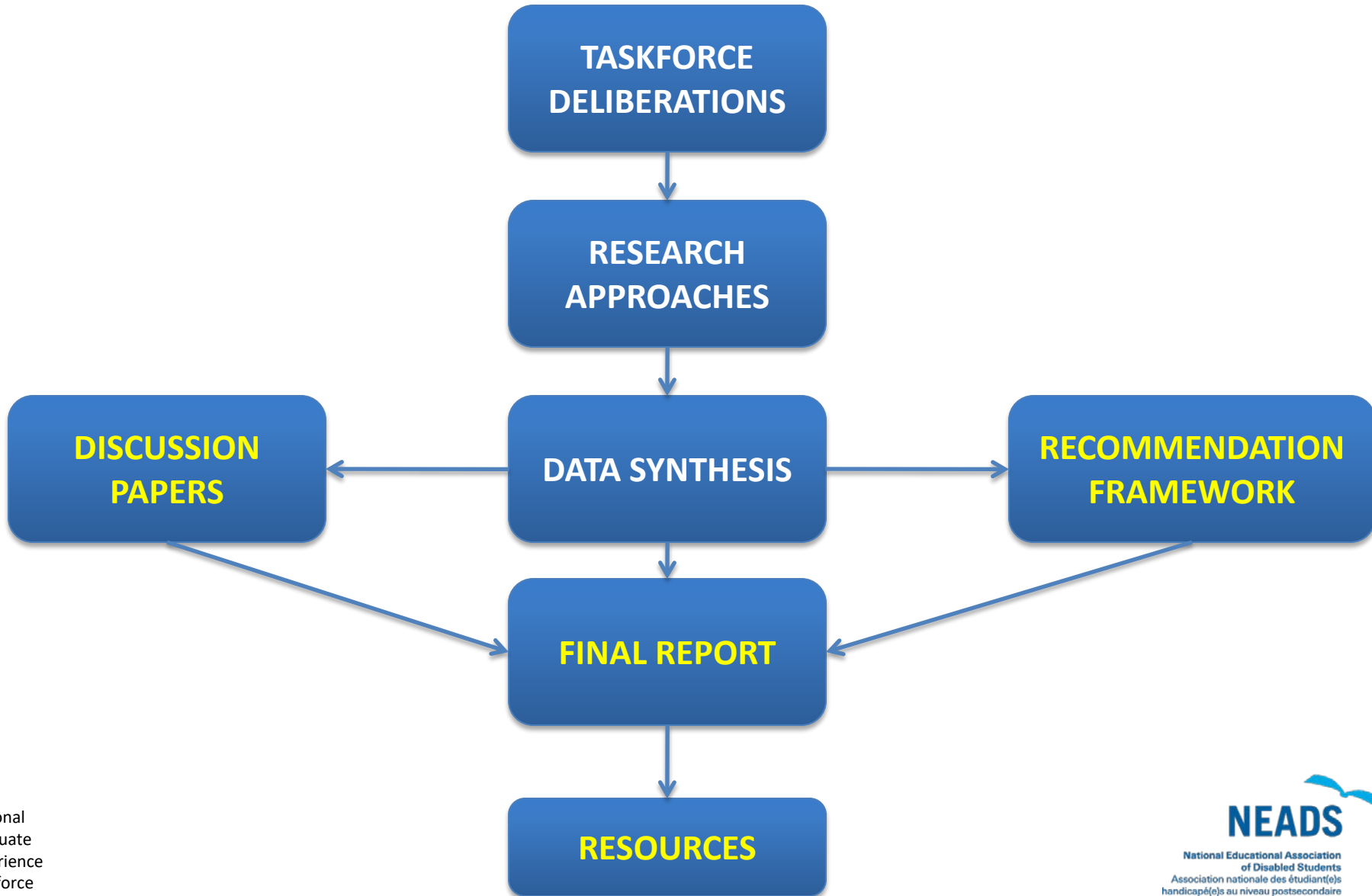
EMPLOYMENT

1. Filling the Pipeline – increasing the number of trainees with disabilities entering the pipeline
2. Breaking the Glass – increasing the number of trainees with disabilities moving from one stage to the next in the pipeline
3. Fostering Inclusion – enabling full participation of trainees with disabilities at every stage of the pipeline

Project Goals

- To examine the experiences of, and barriers faced by, trainees with disabilities
- To develop discussion papers outlining the current system issues for trainees with disabilities
- To produce information and develop strategies to facilitate the success of trainees with disabilities
- To develop recommendations for the continued improvement of training experience for trainees with disabilities, which can be translated into policy at an institutional, provincial, or national level
- Long term: To develop “tool-based” approaches for trainees, faculty and institutions to use in addressing issues faced by trainees with disabilities

Project Outputs



Key Challenges

- Disability and the student-supervisor relationship
- Essential requirements and accommodation provision
- Communication between student and supervisor around accessibility and accommodation

Factors Influencing the Student-Supervisor Relationship: Supervisor Perspective

- Mentor's Knowledge of and/or Willingness to Participate in Disability Related Processes
- Mentor's Knowledge of the Interface between Essential Requirements and Academic Accommodations
- Research Integrity and Accommodations: Authorship Issues
- Academic and Social Integration into the Academy
- Boundary Issues
- Funding Issues
- Trainees in Crisis

Factors Influencing the Student-Supervisor Relationship: Student Perspective

- Disclosure and Stigma
- Preparedness for and Expectations of Training Environment
- Awareness of the Role of the Trainee/Mentor Relationship in research training
- Trainee Identity: Timing and Comfort Level with Disability(ies)
- Self-Accommodation

Accommodations in Graduate Education

- Many diverse learning environments in graduate education
 - Formal and informal environments
 - Classroom, seminar, symposium, conference
 - Lab, fieldwork, practicum
 - Research group, collaboration, group settings
 - Professional development settings
 - Thesis defense, comprehensive exam, qualifying exam
- Accommodation solutions are harder to infer from a “toolkit” of standard solutions – better done from first-principles conversations

Accommodations and the Essential Requirements Test

- **"Essential requirements** of a course or program refer to the knowledge and skills that must be acquired or demonstrated in order for a student to successfully meet the learning objectives of that course or program" (Rose, 2009).

Accessibility and Essential Requirements for Graduate Education

- “General” Essential Requirements (applicable across all disciplines)
- Discipline-Specific Essential Requirements
- Technical Essential Requirements
- “Philosophy of research training” issue – what are the universal definitions of essential requirements?
 - Core competencies discussion

Framework for Essential Requirements

- NPA Core Competencies
(www.nationalpostdoc.org)
 - Discipline-specific competency
 - Research skill development
 - Communication skills
 - Professionalism
 - Leadership and management skills
 - Responsible Conduct of Research

Accommodations and the Essential Requirements Test

- Defined by two factors:
 - Skills that must be necessarily demonstrated in order to meet the objectives of a course
 - Skills that must be demonstrated in a prescribed manner
- It is extremely important to not confound the evaluation method with the actual competency.
- For example, if a student must understand how to design, interpret, analyze and troubleshoot a scientific experiment (“competency”), does this mean that the student must perform the experiment unaided (“measurement”)?

Accommodations and the Essential Requirements Test

- What is being tested?
- What is the nature of the task?
- Does it have to be done in only one way?
 - If so, why?
- Will performing this task in an alternative manner ultimately interfere with the student's successful performance in the discipline, program or course?

Collaboration

- No one person / group has all the information
- Supervisor
 - Expertise in technical requirements of tasks
- Accommodation Specialist(s)
 - Expertise in potential solutions
- Student
 - Lived experience

Preparation

- Accommodations / design of alternative processes or tasks may take time to implement or may require additional resources to develop
- Other, specific, expertise required for discussion and implementation
- Funding
- Lag time for acquisition and development
- ***Most accommodations cost < \$500 but require creativity and navigation of policy and practice landscapes

Recursive Discussions

- Graduate program circumstances change over time
 - Disability evolves (chronic, episodic, degenerative)
 - Research evolves
 - Technology changes
- Initial accommodation plan may not apply later in the program

The IDP As A Potential Solution

Framework for Application: The IDP

- From FASEB:
 - “Individual Development Plans (IDPs) provide a planning process that identifies both professional development needs and career objectives. Furthermore, IDPs serve as a communication tool between individuals and their mentors.”
- As applied to graduate students with disabilities:
 - [Graduate students with disabilities] will have a process that assists in developing long-term goals. Identifying short-term goals will give them a clearer sense of expectations [of their program requirements and performance] and help identify milestones along the way to achieving specific objectives. The IDP also provides a tool for communication between the [student] and a faculty mentor.

Implementing an IDP

For trainees with disabilities

- Conduct a self-assessment
 - What are my skills?
 - What do I know of the program requirements?
 - Are there areas of potential concern I need to discuss with my mentor?
- Longer-term and short-term goals – research, performance, coursework, professional development and career
- Develop an IDP framework, share with mentor and revise based on their feedback
- Implement IDP
- Check-ins with mentor as needed

For mentors

- Understand the essential requirements of the specific discipline your trainee is in
- Understand available resources and opportunities to assist trainees with disabilities on campus
- Become familiar with available career and professional development opportunities
- Discuss opportunities with the trainee
- Review IDP and help revise
- Establish regular review of progress and help revise IDP as needed

*Adapted from the Federation of American Societies for
Experimental Biology*

Thought Frame for Interacting with Issues faced by Trainees with Disabilities

- What is/are the issue(s) the trainee faces?
- Are they disability-related?
Systemic/structural? Both? Neither?
- Is there any information that you don't have that you feel like you need? Who might have this information? Where can you go to get it?
- Can the trainee's issues be solved without accommodation or the application of universal design principles?

Thought Frame for Interacting with Issues faced by Trainees with Disabilities

- Do they impact on the trainee's opportunity to participate fully in the field, research group, work setting?
- What are the likely solutions to these issues? What precedents do you have within the institution?
- Which solutions will meet the duty to accommodate without...
 - Contravening essential requirements?
 - Demonstrating undue hardship?
- Who do you need to work with to implement these solutions?

Universality of Issues

- Analogy between graduate education environments and employment settings
 - Translation of findings and recommendations
- Accessibility is not a niche dialogue
 - Findings raise questions that are central to the nature of higher education for all students
- Argument for holistic vs. compartmentalized approach to accessibility

Universal Design in Higher Education

- Universal Design was first conceptualized around architecture principles
 - Principles of accessibility, usability and diversity of users
- Applications to the built environment, technology and the classroom
- A growing dialogue around the application of UD principles to education and employment environments

Synthesis and Wrap-Up

Email: m.sukhai@utoronto.ca