

EXPLORING CAREERS IN AGING

Research Lab Activities

The purpose of these activities is to help students at varying levels of knowledge, skill, and development gain an understanding of and have tools to pursue careers in aging.

The activities are separated by student developmental level, and they are further divided by area of interest at the advanced levels (e.g., practice, research).

They are designed to be used in conjunction with the Exploring Careers in Aging Roadmaps, developed by the American Psychological Association's Committee on Aging.

Please refer to the website: www.apa.org/pi/aging/resources/careers

ACTIVITY 5.1**DEVELOPING RESEARCH CAREER GOALS**

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CONCEPT

This activity is designed to encourage research lab members to be proactive in setting concrete and attainable training goals based on their chosen career path. Trainees will use the Exploring Careers in Aging Roadmaps as a starting point to: 1) learn about career options within the field of aging, and 2) set short- and long-term career goals. The activity can be appropriate for undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, and graduate trainees. It can be incorporated into lab meetings as part of a group dialogue, discussed in one-on-one meetings between lab director and trainee, or both. This activity lends itself to an iterative process, since career goals and needs can change over time. For example, lab members can track their progress and update their goals on a semesterly or semiannual basis. The lab director might wish to develop a brief form that trainees can fill out as they complete the activity, which they can then update at the schedule determined by the lab director. This form should be tailored for trainees at different levels. The example provided of subheadings for a career goals form are for a graduate student who is asked to update their goals each semester.

MATERIALS

1. Psychology Research Careers
www.apa.org/pi/aging/resources/careers/profiles
2. Careers in Aging: Resources for Interdisciplinary Career Possibilities
www.apa.org/pi/aging/resources/careers/interdisciplinary
3. Sample subheadings for a career goals form:
 - a. Overall Career Goal/Meta-goal
 - b. Goals for Graduate School
 - c. Goals for the Year
 - d. Goals for the Semester

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Set aside a lab meeting, or at least a portion of a lab meeting, to go over the activity with lab members. Explain the purpose of setting both short- and long-term career goals, and periodically assessing one's progress.
2. Introduce the Roadmaps, if possible showing the website on a projection screen and orienting lab members to the site.
3. Describe how the Roadmaps can be used to complete the activity. For example, undergraduate research assistants can use the website to identify the career on the website that best fits their research interests, and then determine next steps on that path based on the undergraduate roadmap. Graduate students can read more about the field they are already pursuing, assess their progress towards their goal, and develop specific short- and long-term goals based on their needs.
4. In a later lab meeting, you may choose to have lab members discuss the goals they develop. This will allow for a group discussion that could help to stimulate ideas that benefit the entire lab.
5. Alternatively, or in addition, you may choose to meet one-on-one with each lab member to discuss their goals. Either way, you should expect to give them feedback and guidance. For example, some trainees will be overly ambitious in their short-term goals, or might overlook important steps in their career path.
6. If you have students at different levels in your lab, this activity provides an opportunity for tiered mentoring, wherein the more senior student or trainee can provide feedback to junior trainees.