

Dear Students,

An important change between undergraduate and graduate education is that the student takes on an increasing responsibility for their own education. This is part of the natural progression to becoming an independent scientist and also necessary as your training becomes more specialized to your particular needs and interests. The Department of Microbiology & Immunology will guide you to a first rate scientific education. A Ph.D. will provide you with the intellectual skills to pursue many different possible careers. However, our faculty are generally expert in only one of those potential career paths, i.e. becoming a faculty member. There are many easily available resources to help you pursue different potential careers, but you will need to take the responsibility for pursuing your own path. Here are some suggestions:

1. A wide variety of resources are compiled at <https://www.med.unc.edu/microimm/resources/career-exploration-professional-development-resources/>. I encourage to invest in your future now by familiarizing yourself with these opportunities.
2. We encourage all students to create and maintain an Individual Development Plan, using a resource such as <https://myidp.sciencecareers.org>. As you start your graduate career, you should create an IDP and discuss it annually with your advisor.
3. LinkedIn is widely regarded as an appropriate social media platform for professional purposes. If you do not have a LinkedIn account, now would be a good time to create one and at least minimally populate your profile. We strongly encourage you to join the UNC Microbiology & Immunology LinkedIn group (<http://www.linkedin.com/groups/4447244/>) as a way to keep up with department news and items of interest, now and long after you graduate.
4. Once you establish your thesis committee in a year or so, you can engage them to help you with career exploration and advice. It is expected that you will discuss your career plans and interests at every committee meeting.
5. Regardless of your career path, you will benefit as a scientist by attending scientific conferences while a graduate student. This is a routine activity for MCRO students. You can help extend your lab's resources by applying for one-time travel funds from our department or from the UNC Graduate School. Both will require proof that you are giving a talk or poster presentation. You can find the details (and lots of other useful information) in the Guide to Graduate Studies on our department website.

Once again, welcome to MCRO!

Bob
Professor & Director of Graduate Studies