

Evaluation of the Bridge-to-the-Doctorate Program Interview Questions

To Current and Former BDP Fellows:

The NSF, the sponsoring federal agency of the Puerto Rico LSAMP Program, requires an evaluation of the Bridge to Doctorate program to determine if its structure and strategies are meeting the goal of increasing the number of underrepresented minority students completing a STEM PhD and entering the STEM workforce.

The BD Program provides selected PR-LSAMP graduates a \$30,000 fellowship per year for the first two years of graduate studies in a STEM field, at the selected site for the BD Program. In addition to the fellowship the BD Program offers Fellows a Support Program to enhance their academic preparation, retain them in the selected STEM graduate program, and integrate them into the PR-LSAMP bridging initiatives to sustain the educational STEM pipeline. This Support Program is the key component of the BD Program.

Through this interview, we would like to have your input on the effectiveness of each of the strategies of the BD Program, plus your overall opinion on the management of the program.

We thank you for your cooperation and continue to wish you much success in your current and future professional plans.

FELLOWSHIP (MONTHLY STIPENDS AND BONUSES FOR DEMONSTRATED CADEMIC PROGRESS)

1. From your personal perspective, does the fellowship you receive/received cover all your essential expenses and obligations and permit you to dedicate yourself fulltime to your graduate studies?
2. From your personal perspective, do the three bonuses offered for demonstrated academic progress represent an additional motivation for trying harder to achieve your academic objectives?
3. If you were an NSF administrator would you structure the fellowship differently?
4. Do you consider that the two-year fellowship allows for sufficient time for integration into a doctoral program and to motivate you to identify other sources of funds that will enable you to continue graduate studies and eventually obtain a PhD degree?

TRAVEL FUNDS TO ATTEND NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS/CONFERENCES

1. Did you use the monies provided through the BD Program to attend national scientific meetings and conferences? How many trips and what meetings/conferences did you attend?
2. Did you present your research project at these meetings? Were you able to obtain some feedback from your peers or role models?
3. Did you attend scientific meetings/conferences that were not sponsored by the BD Program? Indicate the source of funds
4. If the BD Program had not provided you with travel funds, would you had been able to attend scientific meetings/conferences?
5. Which event/events contributed most to your professional development and to broadening your views in your field of research or interest?
6. Which event was favorable for networking and for getting to know the peers in your field of research or interest?

FUNDS FOR EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH MATERIALS

1. What type of educational/research materials did you purchase?
2. Were the funds assigned sufficient for your specific needs? If not, did you make use of your monthly stipend or academic bonuses to obtain all the needed educational materials for your studies?
3. Was the purchasing process used by the BD Program an efficient one? Were your requests timely processed?
4. Any recommendations to improve the purchasing and delivery processes established?

SEMINARS TO ENHANCE THE ACADEMIC PREPARATION OF BD FELLOWS AND TO EXPOSE THEM TO ROLE MODELS

1. Did you attend all the 4-hour seminars offered by the BD program? If you missed any of them, what were the reasons? Do you think attendance to these seminars should continue to be mandatory?
2. Did you participate in the selection of topics, identification of speakers and dates for the different seminars?
3. Were the topics selected relevant to your professional development? What other topics would you include that were not selected?
4. Were you able to invite one of the renowned scientists in your field of research to one of these seminars and discuss with him/her and other peers your research?
5. Did the seminars include presentations offered by industry representatives? Were field trips to work-sites offered? Did they help you form a more realistic idea of a possible future work environment in your field of specialization and establish connections with practitioners?
6. Did you benefit from the seminars offered to develop professional skills such as Improving Oral and Written Presentations, Preparing the Thesis Proposal, or Effective Mentoring? How were they helpful? How did you apply the knowledge gained or the skills developed?
7. Do you recommend the development of other skills? Such as?

8. Did the seminars and field trips offer you an opportunity to meet and to relate to BD fellows from other cohorts and did you benefit from these contacts? How?

MENTORING

1. Part of the responsibilities of a BD fellow is to serve as mentor to a high school student participating in the PR-LSAMP Pre-College-to-College Bridging Program and to an undergraduate student. Did you serve as a mentor to both of these students? Who were these students?
2. Were you prepared for your mentoring role? What were the major obstacles you encountered?
3. What were your mentoring strategies? Which were the most popular or successful? Why?
4. Where are your mentored students now? Have you kept in touch with them?
5. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations on how to make the mentoring program more effective?

BDP FELLOWS VISITS TO HIGH SCHOOLS

1. How many high schools have you visited as a BDP fellow? Were they urban, rural schools or both? How were the schools selected?
2. How did you feel being a role model to them? During your presentation, did you place more emphasis on your personal life or on your academic preparation? Did you find out that students were more interested in one than in the other?
3. Do you have the impression that your message was understood and that you were able to motivate the students to consider careers in STEM fields?
4. Do you have any suggestions on how to make these visits more effective?

PRESENTATION OF YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT AT THE ANNUAL PUERTO RICO INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENTIFIC MEETING (PRISM)

1. Did you present your research project at PRISM? Was it an oral presentation or in a poster session?
2. Was your presentation well accepted and did you receive any feedback?

CONNECTING WITH OTHER BDP COHORTS AND WITH DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

1. Did you participate in any BDP activities where you had an opportunity to meet BDP fellows from other cohorts?
2. Did you use the occasion to exchange experiences and information?

SUSTAINING BDP PARTICIPANTS BY IDENTIFYING SOURCES OF FELLOWSHIP FUNDS AND PREPARING APPLICATIONS OR FACILITATING TA FUNDS PROVIDED BY THE UPR

1. Do you need funding from alternative resources after termination of the BDP?
2. Have you identified already new sources of funds which will allow you to continue with your graduate studies or will you need help from your advisor or the Department?
3. Which are the alternatives you have already identified? Will they allow you to finish your degree?
4. If you are a former BDP Fellow, did the program help you identify sources of funds for continued support? Have you received funds from any of these sources? Identify them.
5. Do you have an idea where you may ultimately enter the workforce?

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE BD PROGRAM BY PR-LSAMP

1. From your personal perspective, do you perceive that the BD program is adequately managed and administered on the local level by the staff of PR-LSAMP?
2. Did you receive your checks always on time?

3. Do you perceive that the procedures developed by the administrative coordinator of the BD program are efficient and do you consider her to be an effective administrator?
4. From a personal perspective, do you consider that the supervision of the BD program is adequate or do you perceive it as too rigid and inflexible?
5. Do you perceive the work of the academic coordinator to be effective and beneficial for your academic progress?
6. Did you receive always the support you needed or deserved from the secretary of the BD program?
7. If you were the coordinator of the fellowship program, would you manage it differently? Please point out the aspects or components you may change or administer differently.

Taking into account that the goal of the BD program is to substantially increase PhD production in STEM fields, please offer any recommendations related to this subject not covered above.