

# Managing Up/Down

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# General Comments

- Training students is not ‘managing down’
- Appropriate style varies with type of research AND your personality
- Speaking personally
  - Strongly Interdisciplinary
  - Need to be able to think conceptually to survive
  - Large research groups
    - Provides flexibility and buffers
- Lab culture: Community of learning
  - Everyone owns everyone else’s research problems
  - Intellectually safe spaces
  - Seminar, physical space



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# Basic Principles for Training Students

- Interdisciplinary sciences requires STRONG disciplinary skills
- Research is a contact sport
- Communication skills are essential
- Graduate students are colleagues not lab assistants or gophers
  - “I am a Professor, not a manager”
- Start with excellent raw material
  - Emphasize creativity and initiative when recruiting
  - Believe that your students are smarter than you---they usually are



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# The Advising Process

- Grad students are like bottles of wine
  - Incubate in proper environment
  - OK to try ideas and make mistakes
- Intellectual safety and rigor
- Students required to find their own dissertation topics
  - Generally start on a directed project then move on
  - Few formal 1-1 meetings except for finishing school
  - Mean time to proposal has high variance
- The Zen: Students tell me when they are finished
  - Seriously



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# Growing a Research Group

- Numbers count: 5-10+ hungry mouths to tend is qualitatively different from 3-4
  - Face time is not all it's cracked up to be
  - 1-1 meetings vs. group sessions
  - Culture matters
- No time to program
- Leadership through intellectual vision
- Write grants continuously



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# Managing Up

- Your Chair is also your colleague
- Try to make their job easier
  - They look good if you look good
  - Ask less often: When you do, be clear about what you need and WHY
  - Bad news: Forewarned is forearmed
  - Show initiative
- Informal meetings at university events are a great way to get business done
  - Without worrying about jumping levels in a hierarchy



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# Pitfalls

- Everyone is busy
  - Respect their time
  - No one likes to be pestered
- You are not the only fish in the sea
- Relentless self promotion
- Constant nagging
- Complaining 'outside of school'
- Be deft about circumventing the academic hierarchy



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# Managing in academia

When you are teaching a class, or advising students, you are the leader / manager.

You set rules, expectations, consequences.

You also have the opportunity to set the vision, the tone, and the culture.



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# Managing Up Meaning in Academia

- When you “manage up” you are helping others help you
- Framing how others see you
- Letting people know what you can / will / want to do
- Being clear about your roles, responsibilities, and what you need to do these
- Saying no by saying “Here is what I am already doing. What would you like me to give up to do this new task?”



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# Why manage up and down?

- Managing up and down is a technique useful to make any job align more to your own desires and expectations
- Most people leave jobs because of bad bosses
- You don't want to be or have a bad boss



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# How have I done it?

- Originally by accident / personality
- It's in my nature to communicate (often) what I'm doing, how I am doing it, what I need, and what is getting in my way (agile processes anyone?)
- This translates to making sure leaders know what value I'm contributing, and what the benefit is for giving me more resources



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# Unique opportunities

- When you are at a less well-known place, and/or in a new/unique position, there is more flexibility to define what success means
- If you proactively define what success means for you, you might be able to convince everyone else, rather than following someone else's formula
- This works in departments, and for new funding opportunities



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# Bottom line

- Don't wait for someone else to define what success should look like in your career
- Define success for yourself, that aligns with your values, aspirations, and capabilities
- Go to a place (job or funding opportunity) whose values are aligned with yours, or whose values are being defined (and help define them)
- Then, lead those around you to help realize your vision



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# One more thing...

- The most important things to manage are:
- **You, Your family, Your health and happiness**
- What contributes most to these? Allocating your time (your most precious resource) to things that matter to you.
- So the main thing to do, is manage yourself well enough to understand what is important, and worth the investment of your time.
- Then, communicate your goals, (plus needs, priorities, and boundaries) to others, and make it super easy for others to understand and contribute to your goals. This is what managing up and down is about.



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