

ASSIGNMENT: “REFLECTIONS ON YOUR IDENTITIES”

Assigned to first-year Scholars in Fall (Phase 2) and second-year Scholars and Fellows in Spring (Phase 3)

Assignment Background/Objective: The goal of BUILD is to put students on a path to becoming researchers/scientists in the health domain. However, we also know that students have various identities and roles, in addition to being a future researcher/scientist. These other identities and roles can include being from a racial/ethnic minoritized background, a cisgender woman, being queer, religious, person with disabilities, a daughter and/or working class (just to name a few).

Whereas it is possible for these other identities and roles to blend well with one’s future researcher/scientist identity, it is also possible for these other identities and roles to conflict with one’s future researcher/scientist identity, given the science/research environment. Similarly, whereas it is possible for people to feel like they can be all these identities and roles at once in the science/research environment, it is also possible for people to feel that they must change who they are depending on their social context, such as being a researcher/scientist when working in their lab, but then deemphasizing this identity when at home or with family.

Prompt 1: In the space below, we would like you to write about what comes to mind when you begin to think of yourself as a researcher/scientist. Further, to what extent do you feel as though your researcher/scientist identity does or does not blend well with your other identities? Do you feel like you can be all your identities at once (regardless of the social context), or that you must change who you are depending on your social context (e.g., working in your lab vs. being at home with family)? When answering these questions, please be specific about the other identities you are considering as well as the science/research environment in which you are a part of now. There are no right or wrong answers – we are simply interested in your experiences.

Prompt 2: We would now like for you to think about how you see these other identities and roles informing or impacting your research or future career more broadly. On the one hand, it is sometimes the case that one’s research area is directly informed by their life experiences, or that their research can directly impact the people from one’s home community. On the other hand, it is also possible that one’s specific research topic does not relate to their life experiences or home community, but that becoming a researcher/scientist would put one in a position to be a role model and mentor for those from similar backgrounds.

In the space below, we would like you to write about how you see your other identities and roles fitting with your research – either with your specific research area, or with what becoming a researcher/scientist would mean for people who come from similar backgrounds or have similar identities or roles. Again, there are no right or wrong answers – we are simply interested in your experiences.