Making your Postdoctoral Training Work for You

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• B.S. - Penn State (2000-2004)
  – Animal Biosciences/Microbiology
  – McNair scholar – Allergic Asthma

• Ph.D. - Rutgers University (2005-2011)
  – Endocrinology and Animal Biosciences
  – Founder & President of the Animal Sciences Graduate Student Organization
  – SREB scholar

• Postdoc - University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute
  The Women’s Cancer Research Center (2011-Present)
  – Breast cancer research with a focus in epigenetics
  – The University of Pittsburgh Postdoctoral Association
    • Chair of Outreach
Outline

• What is a Postdoctoral Scholar?

• How to ensure success
  – Passion & Plan
  – Publication
  – Funding
  – Networking

• Conclusions
What Does the U.S. Postdoctorate Look Like?

“Postdocs have become indispensable to the science and engineering enterprise, performing a substantial portion of the nation’s research in every setting.”

– National Academies Report

The NSF estimates that according to science and engineering indicators, there are somewhere between **43,000 and 89,000 postdocs** in the United States.
Changes and Challenges

• Originally - short training position and more rare.
• The postdoctoral position became more abundant and open-ended
  – “permanent postdoc”
• Capped the amount of time an individual can be a postdoc

• 60% International postdocs, here on temporary visas
• The “average” postdoc is in their 30’s and married. Many have children.
• In spite of holding a Ph.D., the median salary of postdoctoral scholars is $38,000 a year—far below the median wage of individuals who hold bachelor’s degrees.

• Where do scholars go after the postdoc?
  – 40% find careers in business/industry;
  – 9% in government;
  – 49% in education (includes all positions in education, administrative, tenure-track, and other).
Ensuring Success

• Passion
  – Love you work & have fun!
• Have a Plan
• Publish
• Obtain Funding
• Network
Getting the Most Out of Your Training
Develop a Plan

Your **Goals** During the Postdoc:

- Learn specific skills/techniques/equipment?
- Teaching and/or Mentoring students?
- Apply for individual funding?
- Preparing for a non-academic career?

**Research Area:**

- Do I want to continue research in my current subject area?
- In what areas of research do I **WANT** to be?
- In what areas of research am I **WILLING** to be?
- What areas of research do I want to **AVOID**?
Publish

• Numbers count!

• Ask to write a review

• Co-author papers and help each other out!
Why do Postdocs *Need* Funding?

- **Attitude not to have:**
  - The Pi has the money to pay me so why do the extra work?

- **Your time as a postdoc is your time to prove yourself!**
  - Need to make yourself marketable – better your CV
  - Competing for your own money and earning it!

- **Practice Writing**

- **Makes you think about your work**
How Do I Find Funding?

• Institutional organizations can help
  – PDA seminars
  – University funding counselors

• Web searching on your own
  – Grants.gov
  – www.cos.com
  – Foundationcenter.org
  – Sign up for alerts when funding opportunities are announced

• Government Agencies

• Private Foundations
  – American Heart Association, Susan G. Komen etc
Networking

• Every conference
  – business card & elevator talk
  – Poster > Talk
  – Ask Questions! Make yourself visible!
    • Start at Lab meeting and Journal club – Then Departmental Retreat – Then National Meetings!

• Invited speakers:
  – Suggest a speaker you’re interested in for your department
  – Have lunch with any invited speaker whose field you may be interested in.

• Cold e-mails!
  – Feel like you’re always reading a certain investigator’s papers? Are you interested in particular techniques? E-mail them!

Continually Market Yourself!
Even if you are not yet on the job market.
Join the NPA

Mission:

• Enhance the quality of the postdoctoral experience in the U.S.
• A leadership role in addressing the many issues confronting the postdoctoral community that are national in scope and requiring action beyond the local level.
• [http://nationalpostdoc.org/membership-6/join-us](http://nationalpostdoc.org/membership-6/join-us)

Benefits of Membership:

• **Subscriptions** to the NPA E-Alerts, our periodic e-mail announcement, and the POSTDOCket, our quarterly newsletter;
• **Reduced registration fees** to meetings;
• **Discounts** on selected products and services;
• **Leadership and professional development opportunities**
• **Our commitment to be your national voice on postdoctoral issues**;
Conclusions

• A postdoctoral position is prestigious and EARNED!

• Have  Passion and a Plan!

• Publish – First & co-authors

• Get Funding

• Network