

*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
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- 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](http://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>

## 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