Postdocs 101

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www.utep.edu/graduate/calendar
Special Acknowledgement

• NPA has great info/resources
• UTEP is an institutional member
• You have access; [click here](http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/page/GradStudentChoose) for first login
• NPA’s webpage was a key source for this presentation
Today

- **What** is a postdoc, anyway?
- **How** do you find these opportunities?
- What are the **pros** to pursuing a postdoc?
- What are the **cons** to pursuing a postdoc?
- **If** I pursue a postdoc, how can I make the most of it?
What’s a postdoc?

- Recently awarded a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate;
- Involves substantially full-time teaching, research, or scholarship;
- Transitional position, prep for an academic/research career;
- Works under the supervision of a faculty member and/or staff; and
- Freedom and expectation to publish the results of his/her research

“Guidelines for Postdoctoral Appointments” UTEP Office of the Provost, Nov. 2017
In Other Words…

- 2-4 year temporary placement
- Research and/or teaching (sometimes clinical)
- Established scholar mentors
- Publish, publish, publish
- In natural sciences, secure funds to launch research career

See NPA’s “Characteristics of a Postdoctoral Appointment”
Where are they?

- Universities
- Research Hospitals and Centers
- Government Labs and Centers (DoD, DoE)
- Abroad

Note: Even if they’re not located in a government facility, they’re often funded through federal grants, namely NSF or NIH.
Where are they online?

- https://pda.mit.edu/funding/postdoctoral-fellowships/
- https://www.cancer.org/research/we-fund-cancer-research/apply-research-grant/grant-types/postdoctoral-fellowships.html
- http://www.minoritypostdoc.org/view/resources.html#DivPD
- https://jobs.sciencecareers.org/jobs/postdoc-fellowship/
- http://sites.nationalacademies.org/pga/fordfellowships/pga_047960
So...

- Work your mentors’ networks
- Work your network
  - Build relationships early
  - Be open to collaboration
  - Identify and tap program experts
- Find opportunities and apply online
Pros

- Advance your research (and, maybe teaching)
- Learn from an established scholar
- Secure experience and funding to establish your own lab/research line
- Publish, publish, publish
- Build career-long collaborations
Cons

- A minority of postdocs go on to a TT position
- Postdocs “languishing” and “depressed”
- Long hours and hard work for low pay
- Lost time at a critical early-career stage
- Some mentors aren’t mentors

For an anti-postdoc perspective: [https://cheekyscientist.com/5-ways-a-postdoc-will-ruin-your-career/](https://cheekyscientist.com/5-ways-a-postdoc-will-ruin-your-career/)
If you do a postdoc…

“Be aggressive and take charge of [your] career.”

Anonymous sad postdoc

First:

▸ Consider an internship or industry postdoc
▸ Carefully reflect on your career goals
▸ Be intentional

Then:

▸ Read Ten Simple Rules for Selecting a Postdoctoral Position
▸ Seek out a good mentor (and cultivate that relationship)
▸ Take your IDP seriously (and use NPA’s Core Competencies)
Make a plan.

Pick (a) good mentor (s).

Use an IDP.

Reflect: Why did you pursue a PhD in the first place? How will it help your career?

Remember: There is inherent value in mentoring and the pursuit of knowledge.
Thank you!

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