

To postdoc or not to postdoc

April 10, 2024





Director of Postdoctoral Affairs

Postdoc in Behavioral neuroscience

B.Sc. in Biochemistry

Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Sciences

Learning objectives

1. Learn what a postdoc is
2. Explore whether pursuing a postdoc is right for you
3. Discuss how to look for a postdoc position intentionally
4. Bonus for international students:
 - Discuss how pursuing a postdoc is intertwined with your immigration plans
 - With *Franny Henkel*, Student Immigration Specialist at UK ISSS

What is a postdoc?

What is a postdoc?

“A postdoctoral scholar (“postdoc”) is an individual holding a doctoral degree who is engaged in a temporary period of mentored research and/or scholarly training for the purpose of acquiring the professional skills needed to pursue a career path of their choosing”

From the National Postdoc Association

“A postdoc is not a career goal”

Melanie Sinche, Next Gen PhD

Is a postdoc right for you?



Not the first one to talk about this...

- myPostdoc Monthly: To Be a Postdoc, or Not To Be – Choosing the Next Step After Your Ph.D.
 - Keith Micoli, PhD, Assistant Dean for Postdoctoral Affairs, NYU Langone
 - <https://youtu.be/-m5u3-sFtDw>
- What every STEM Trainee needs to know about applying for postdocs
 - Caleb McKinney, PhD, MPS, Assistant Dean for Graduate and Postdoctoral Training & Development, Biomedical Graduate Education at Georgetown University Medical Center
 - Beyond the Professoriate → No longer accessible ☹️

...or write about it

News & Views

Job Search

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Reports & Data

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#Career Advice

To Postdoc or Not?

Besides understanding whether a postdoc is required for your intended career field, you need to think about the financial implications as well as how you'd like to spend the next few years of your life, advises Melanie V. Sinche.

By **Melanie V. Sinche** // August 23, 2016

Is a postdoc right for you?



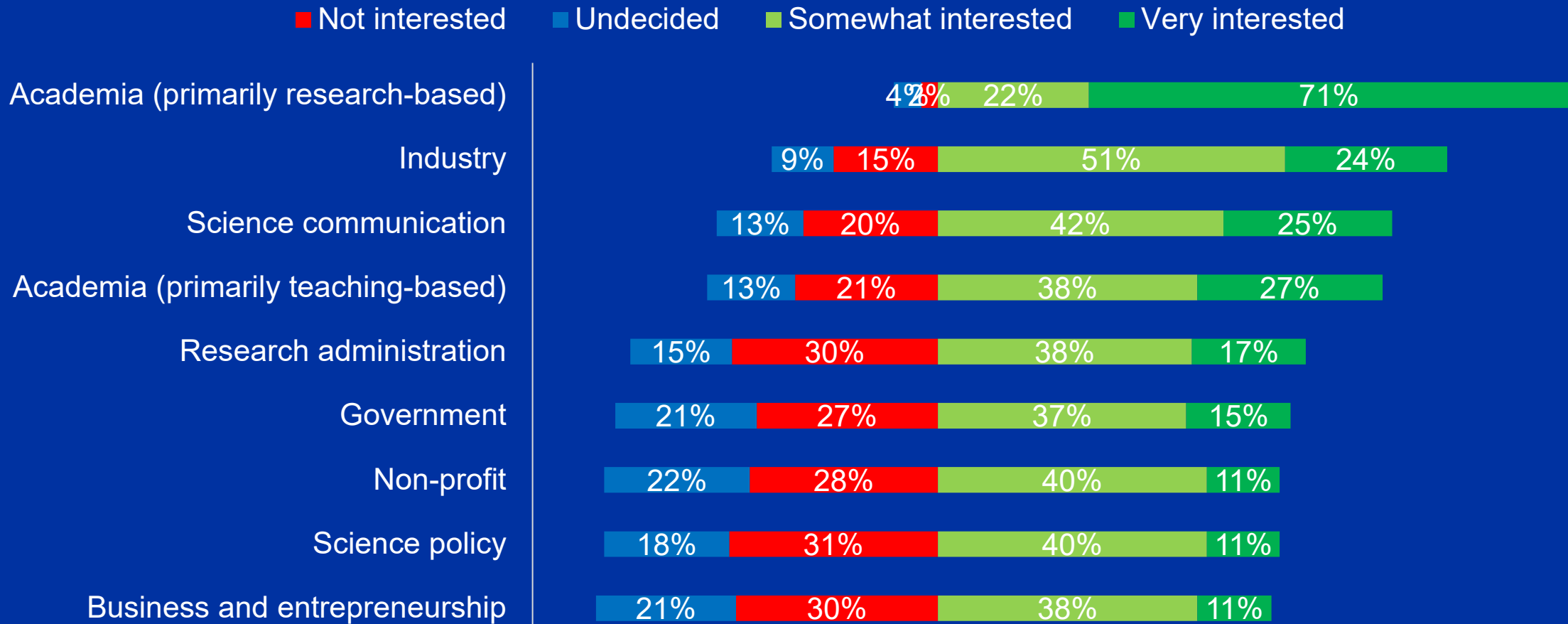
Tenure track faculty
Yes! It's required (in most disciplines)!

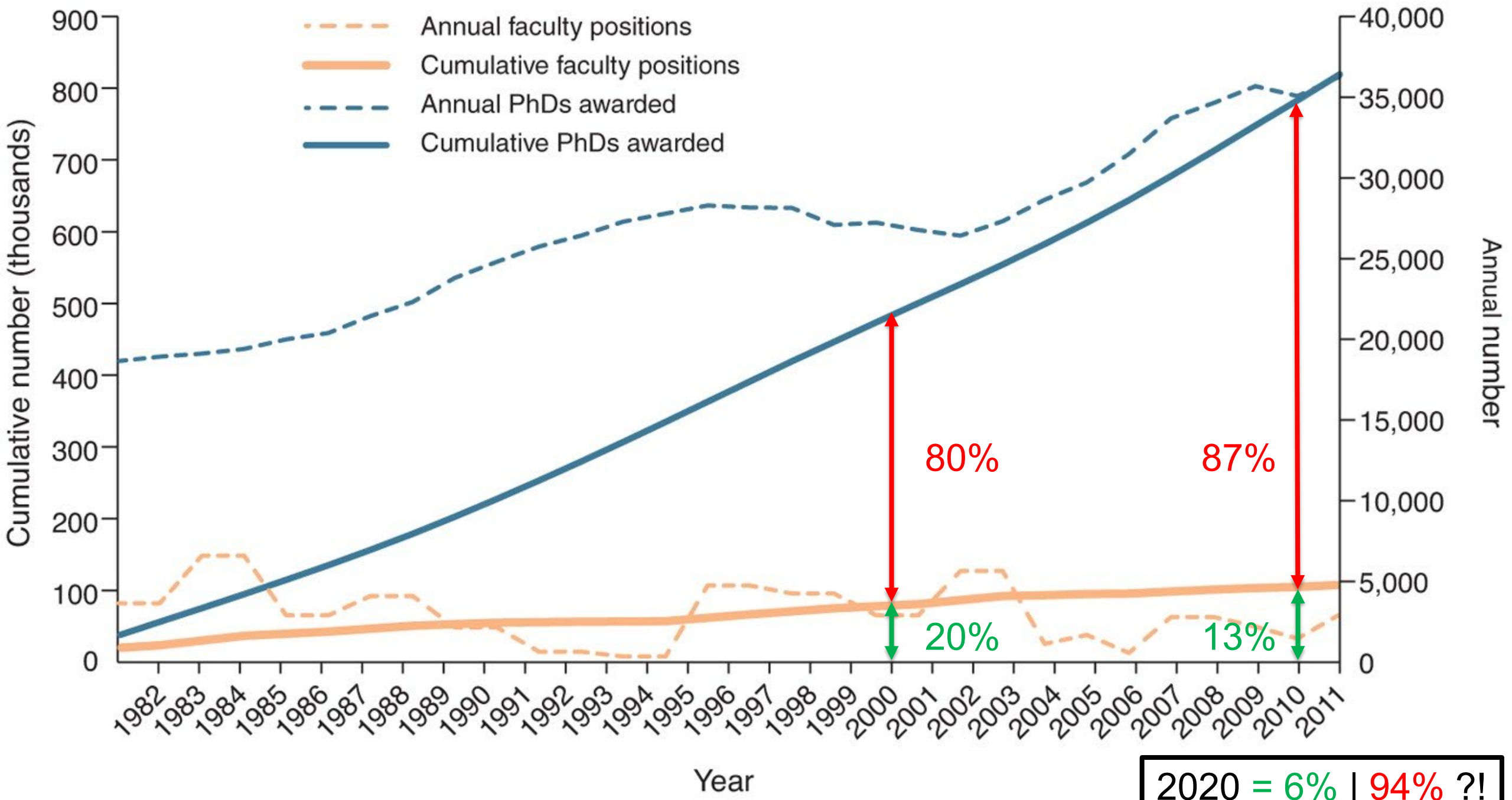


Other careers
It depends!

Reality check

What careers do postdocs want to pursue?





2020 = 6% | 94% ?!

Career exploration lens


- (some) Career exploration is the foundation of postdoc success
- Having a plan B (or plan A*) is critical in a hypercompetitive job market



The case for not doing a postdoc

Published: 10 January 2017

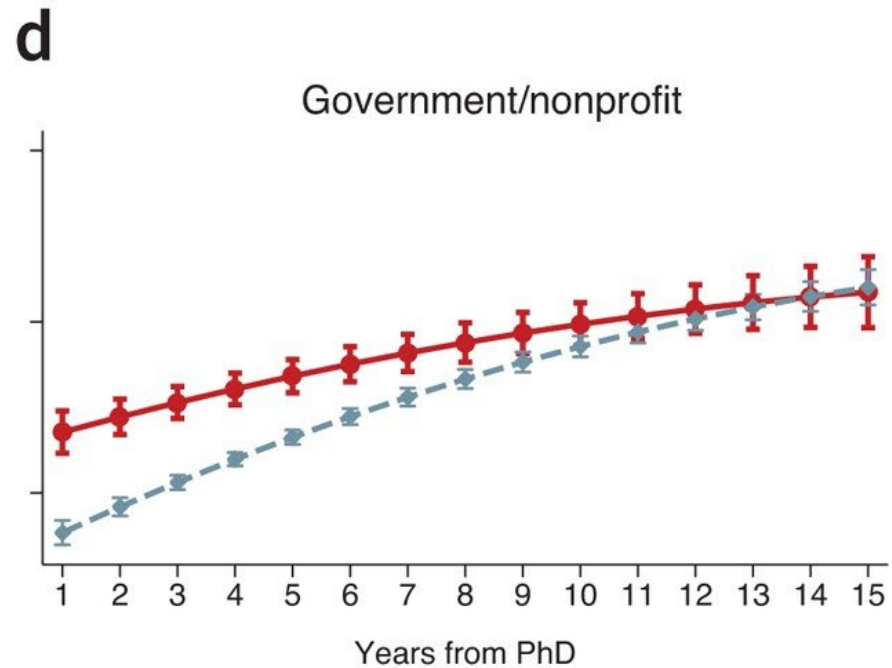
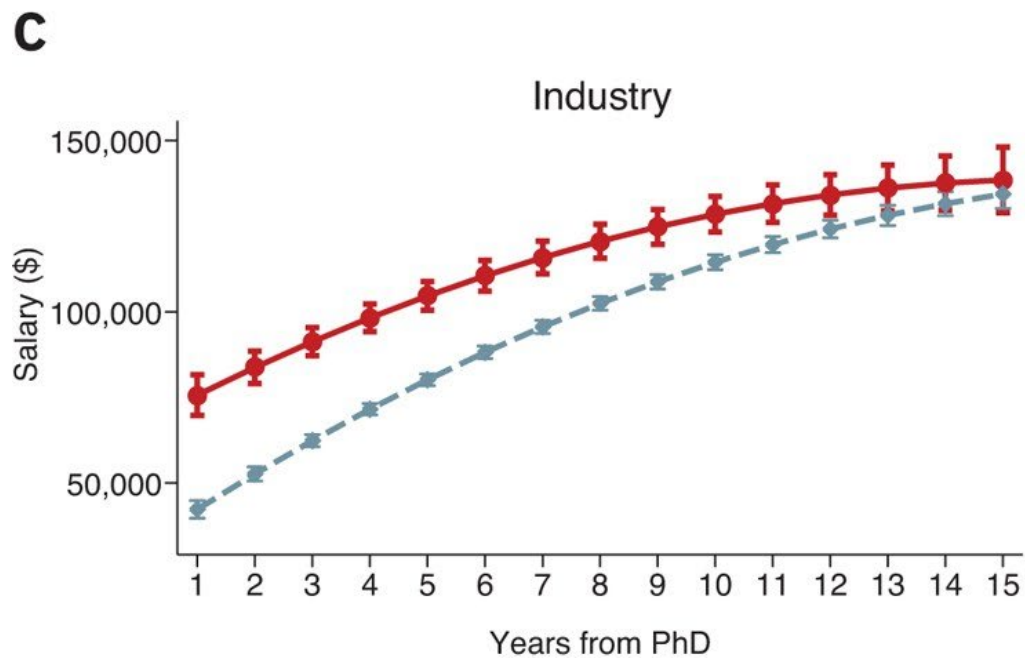
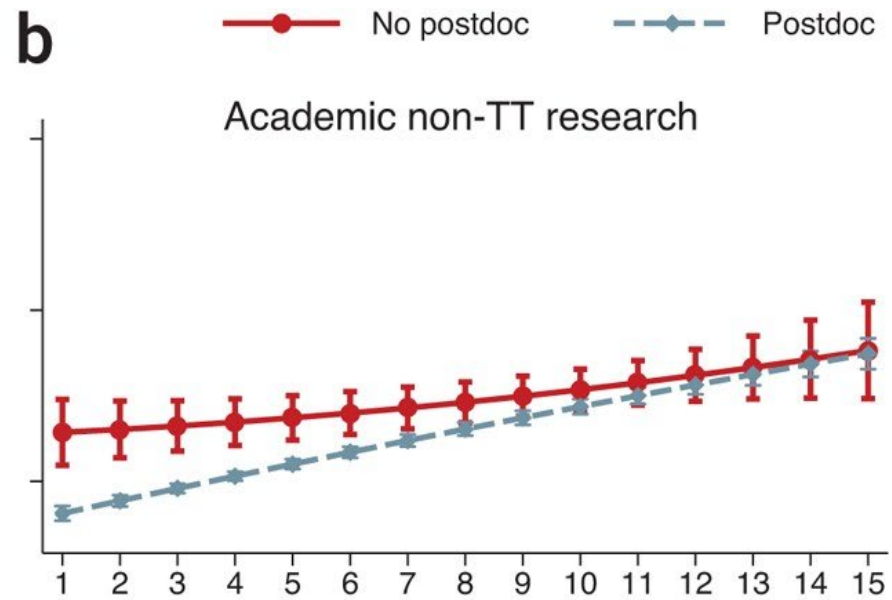
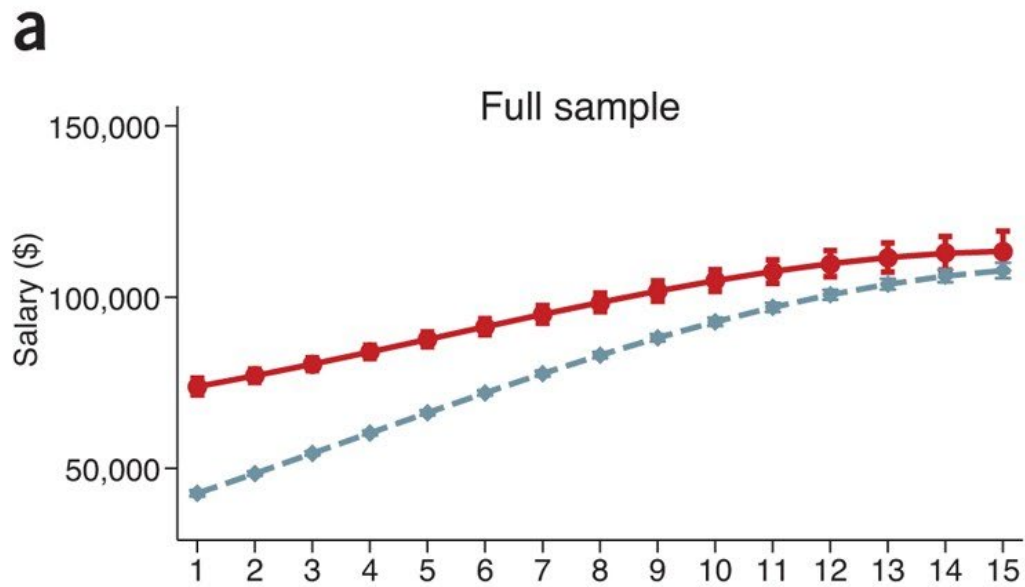
The impact of postdoctoral training on early careers in biomedicine

Shulamit Kahn  & Donna K Ginther

Nature Biotechnology **35**, 90–94(2017) | [Cite this article](#)

5054 Accesses | **30** Citations | **333** Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

While postdocs are necessary for entry into tenure-track jobs, they do not enhance salaries in other job sectors over time.



Predicted inflation-adjusted salary (2013 dollars) 1–15 years after PhD completion

Why does this matter?

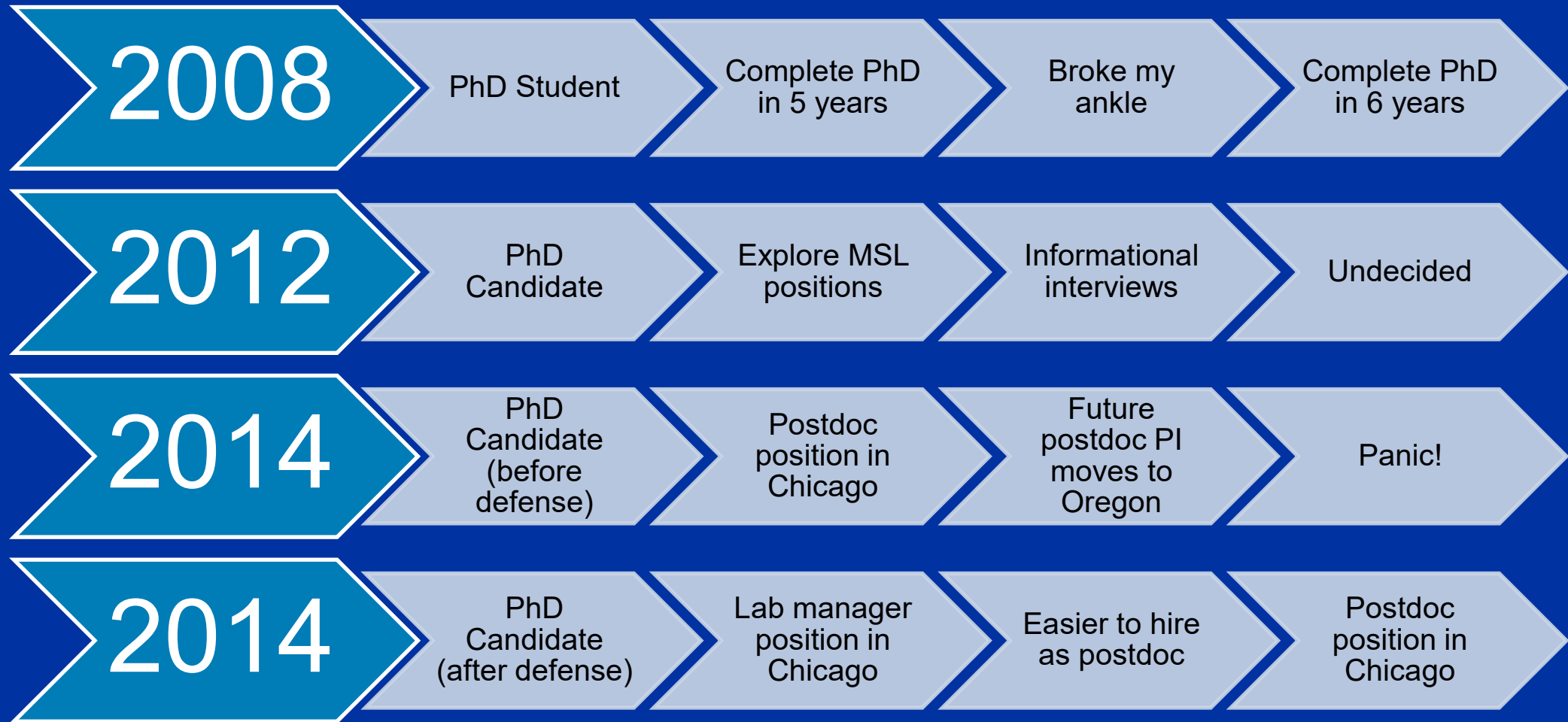
“For non-faculty careers, the value of a postdoc is highly variable” – Keith Micoli

- Don't default into a postdoc
- Start making career plans now!
- Let those plans inform your decision to do a postdoc or not

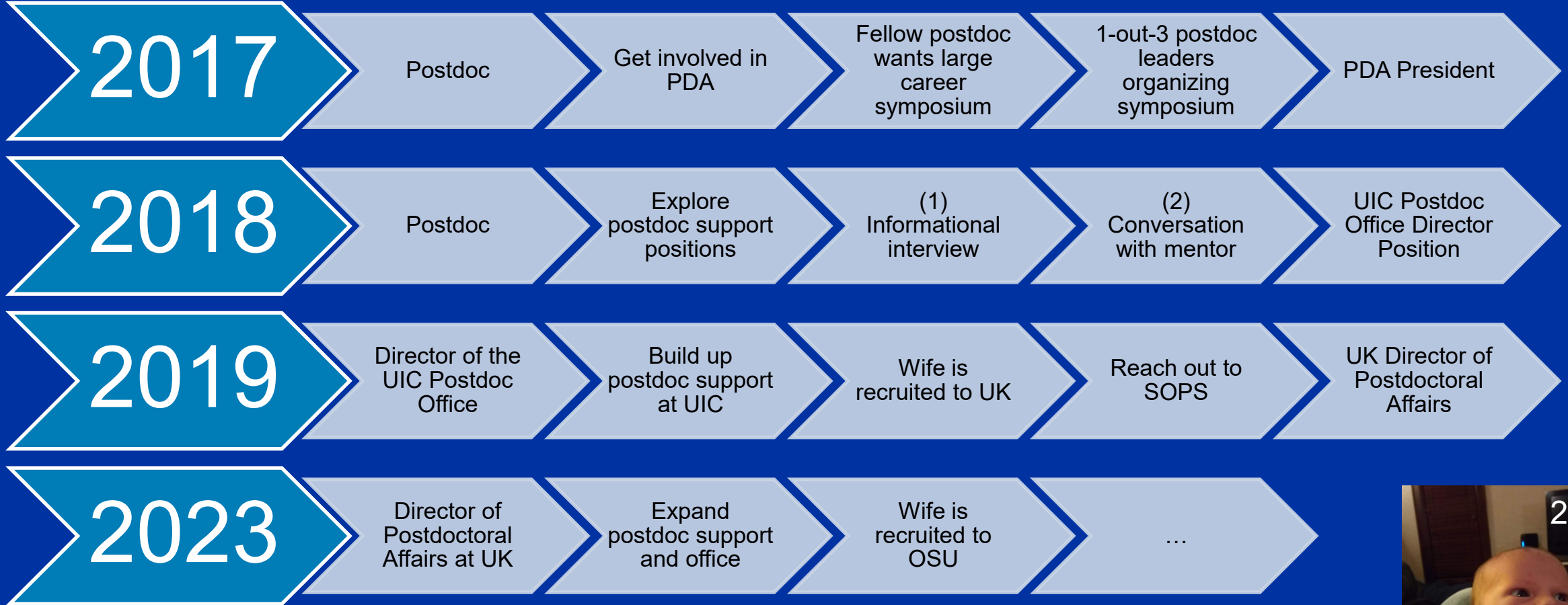
Career planning primer



Plans change



Plans change



Grouding thoughts

- Be gentle with yourself
- Be flexible
- Stay open minded
- Don't trade your personal life for a career
- Everyone's career is unique
- No one's career is better or more important than yours
- Recognize that you can't do it alone



Accept

Influence

Control

Tandem Career Planning



Faculty career

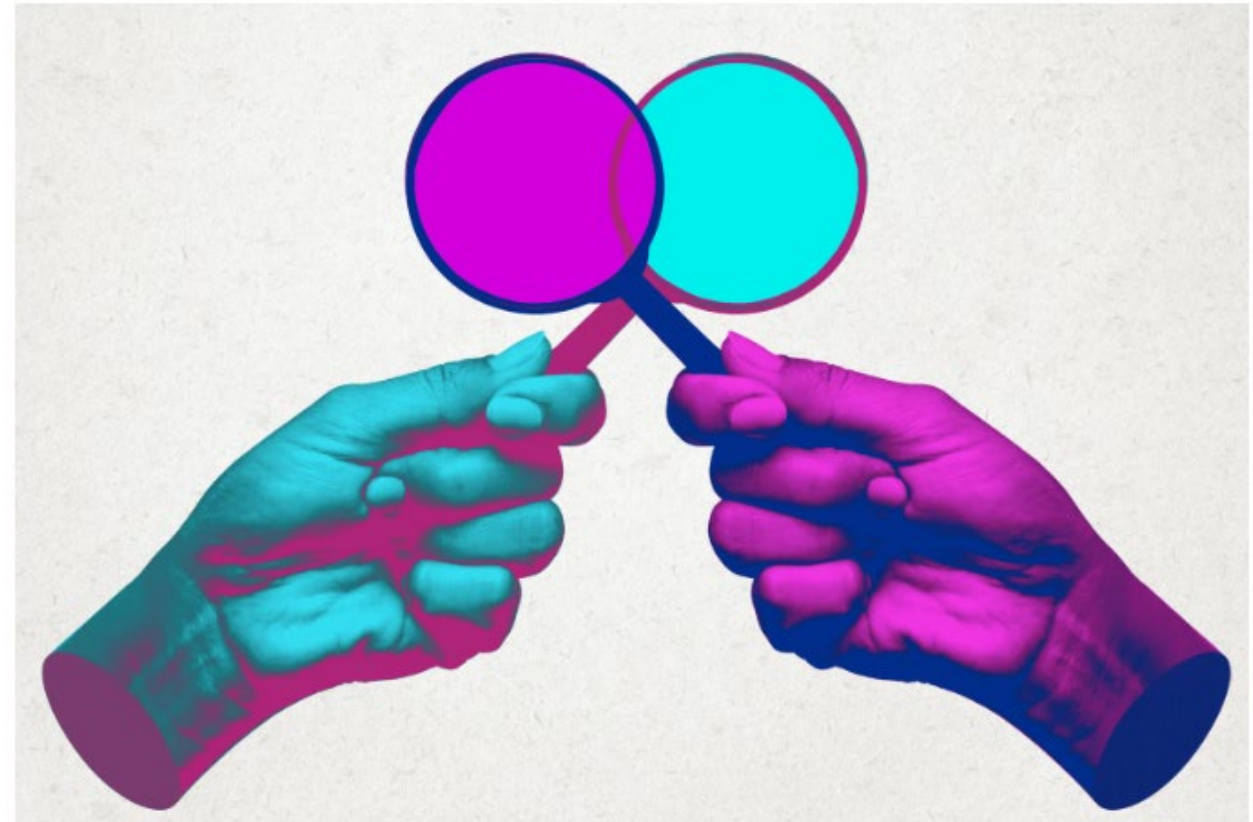


Other career

For Ph.D.s, a Tandem Job Search Is Increasingly the Norm

What to do, and when, if you are applying for both academic and industry positions.

By *Jennifer S. Furlong and Stacy M. Hartman* | AUGUST 2, 2023



Tandem Career Planning

Faculty Career Planning

- Take stock
- Build network
- Apply

Other Career Planning

- Learn about careers
- Build network
- Job search

- But first, secure a postdoc!

Takes time, organization, and effort!

Tandem Career Planning (resources)

Faculty Career Planning

- Remember Take stock
 - Research productivity is measured by grants, patents, and publications
- Academic Career Readiness Assessment
- NCFDD Network
- Professional organizations
- Faculty application materials Apply
 - Research, teaching, diversity statements
 - Cover letter & CV
- Typical academic job cycle starts in Aug

Other Career Planning

- myIDP @ Science Careers Learn
- Imagine PhD
- Beyond the Professoriate
- Attend career panels
- Informational interviews Network
- Professional organizations
- The Unwritten Rules of the Highly Effective Job Search (Book) Search

Thoughts on career planning

- It takes time
- You can't do it alone
- Special consideration for international trainees
 - Your career plan is intertwined with your immigration plan
- Don't lose sight of how many years of work you have in front of you

Looking for a postdoc position intentionally



Fewer U.S. scientists are pursuing postdoc positions, new data show

25 MAR 2024 · 10:55 AM ET · BY [KATIE LANGIN](#)



As professors struggle to recruit postdocs, calls for structural change in academia intensify

13 JUN 2022 · 4:15 PM ET · BY [KATIE LANGIN](#)



Types of postdocs

- Traditional @ academic institutions
- Government
 - NIH
 - NSF
 - National Labs
 - CDC
- Teaching postdocs (Becoming more common)
 - IRACDA
- Policy postdocs
 - AAAS fellowship
- Industry postdocs
 - Regeneron
 - Merck
 - Genentech
 - Novartis
 - Janssen
 - Pfizer
 - Etc.

Finding a postdoc

- Follow the money (or bring your own)
 - T32s/F32s
 - NIH Reporter
 - NSF Award Search
- Network, network, network
 - Professional Societies
 - Annual meeting
- Postdoc recruitment events

A photograph of the Houston skyline at night, featuring several illuminated skyscrapers against a dark blue sky. The buildings are lit up with warm yellow and white lights, and some have blue accents. The foreground shows some trees and streetlights.

Postdoc Houston

Thursday, May 16, 2024

1 p.m. - 4 p.m. CT

Postdoc Houston is a free virtual informational event for prospective



Presented by: Northwestern University, The University of Chicago, and University of Illinois Chicago

The application for the 2023 Initiative is now closed.

Welcome, Prospective Postdoctoral Scholars!

Thank you for your interest in the Chicagoland Diverse STEM Postdoc Recruitment Initiative! The virtual 2-day event for prospective postdocs hosted by the Initiative will take place October 19-20, 2023.

LOVE your
postdoc

**Philadelphia
Postdoc Preview**



Welcome, Prospective Postdocs!

Are you interested in learning more about postdoctoral training in the Philadelphia area?

Stanford

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
All Postdocs. All the Time.



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- [Postdoctoral Fellowships Landing Page](#)
- [School of Medicine Dean's Postdoctoral Fellowship](#)

Stanford Postdoctoral Recruitment Initiative in Sciences and Medicine (PRISM)

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APPLICANTS

[Yale Virtual Postdoc
Recruitment Event](#)

[Open Positions](#)

[How to Find a Faculty
Mentor](#)

[Yale Benefit Summary](#)

Yale Virtual Postdoc Recruitment Event

Welcome prospective postdoctoral scholars! Thank you for your interest in the Yale Virtual Postdoc Recruitment Event!

This event will take place on Thursday, February 15, 2024, from 1:00-4:00pm Eastern Time on Zoom and engages scholars interested in pursuing postdoctoral training at Yale University. Our goals are to support potential postdocs in their career exploration and identifying next steps, engage with potential postdocs from underrepresented and historically excluded groups, and increase awareness of the experience of and resources supporting Yale postdocs.



Home

Postdoc Recruitment Event

The Postdoc Recruitment Event (PRE) provides doctoral candidates the opportunity to explore postdoctoral opportunities and determine if the National Cancer Institute (NCI) is an ideal fit for their professional goals. Within the NCI divisions, candidates will have the ability to explore opportunities in basic and clinical research, cancer epidemiology and genetics research, cancer control science, as well as global health.

Apply Now to PRE

PRE Home

Eligibility

Guidelines

Selection

FAQs

Contact PRE

NCI is committed to training the next generation of scientific leaders, and it is crucial that these scholars reflect the diversity of the population we serve. We strongly encourage individuals from [underrepresented populations in biomedical research](#) to submit applications. The goals of the PRE (formerly known as the Graduate Student Recruiting Program) are to support doctoral candidates during their career exploration and raise awareness of the rich training environment and unique resources available at NCI. For additional details, please visit our [PRE homepage](#). As part of the program, accepted applicants will:

1. Network with Principal Investigators and laboratory personnel, current trainees, and Training Directors to learn more about research conducted at NCI;



PRE Timeline

Application Cycle Opens
Jan 10, 2024

Application Due Date
Feb 7, 2024

Reference Letter Due Date
Feb 14, 2024

Notification of Decision
Mar 28, 2024

PRE Conference

UCLA Bio-Launch



Welcome, Prospective Postdoctoral Trainees!

Thank you for your interest in UCLA Bio-Launch, a UCLA Bioscience recruitment initiative!

The virtual 2-day event for prospective postdocs hosted by UCLA Biosciences will take place March 14-15, 2024.



Postdoc Portal

Facilitating matches between postdocs and research groups

Choosing a postdoc

- Institution
 - Is there a postdoc office?
 - Is there a postdoc policy?
- Lab
 - Publication history
 - Funding history
 - Not just primary funding
 - But also postdoc/grad funding
- Principal Investigator
 - Management style
 - Mentoring philosophy
- Mentees
 - Publications
 - Funding
 - Career outcomes

Do your homework!

Do it in a group!

- Creates accountability
- Expand your network
- Makes this hard process less daunting



Questions?



International student bonus!

With Franny Henkel



5 immigration-related issues for postdocs

- Timing your degree completion and OPT application
- Research outside the US or international travel for conferences
- Is the institution E-Verified and will an OPT STEM extension be possible?
- If you have an offer, what status does the institution suggest?
- While OPT is usually a great start, some institutions have a specific status progression in mind or have limitations on what statuses are possible for their postdocs