# Finding a Good Postdoc: Tips & Resources

## WHAT IS A POSTDOCTORAL ASSIGNMENT (POSTDOC)?

- Opportunity to develop additional skills and experience, while still under supervision of experienced researcher
- Doesn't need to be in field of Ph.D., but will be longer if requires becoming proficient in new field

## PREPARING FOR A POSTDOC WHILE STILL IN GRADUATE SCHOOL:

- Present your work through departmental seminars and professional association meetings
- Supervise research of undergraduate students and technicians
- Participate in drafting research grant proposals
- Join professional associations and apply for honor societies in your field

## SEARCHING FOR A POSTDOC:

- Network! Go to scientific meetings, talk with PIs whose research you like, make contacts.
- Present at and attend conferences and meetings; read professional association websites and newsletters
- Look to advisors for ideas and to advocate for you
- Email departments or deans of interest, even if positions aren't posted. Be persistent, without being pushy

## SELECTING A POSTDOC THAT EXCITES YOU:

**Choice of a Postdoc Mentor: Consider special skills, rank, reputation, previous trainees, and funding status**

- Established vs. New Principal Investigator (PI): Established PI has rank and influence, while new PI is likely to spend a lot of time in lab and can give more direct training
- Training Record: Are past trainees in high-level positions? Are current trainees getting quality training?
- Funding: Does PI have funding to pay postdoc for 3-5 years? Does PI have good extramural funding record?
- Management Style: Does the PI give postdocs freedom to work independently? What kind of schedule are postdocs expected to follow? Is the lab collaborative or competitive? Does PI supply up-to-date equipment?

**Salary and Cost of Living**

- Many Postdocs in academia have roughly same salary nationwide due to federal funding guidelines
- Postdocs in industry generally pay more, but may not be best choice for those pursuing academic careers because of potential limits on publishing and applying for funding

**Select a Laboratory that Suits Your Work and Lifestyle**

- If at all possible, visit the lab before making a decision; consider the reputation of the institution
- Talk to other graduate students and postdocs in lab to determine work style
- Think about how you like to work—as part of a team, individually, with what level of supervision?
- Does lab location and surrounding environment satisfy your non-work interests?
- Do people in lab work 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., only when experiments need to be done, or all of the time?
- Do you prefer a lab with a lot of money and space, or are tight spaces and budgets okay?
- Do you want a lab that acts like a "family" and hangs out all the time, or sticks to business?
- How much attention do you want from mentor? More people means less time with mentor

**Select a Project with Outcomes that Match Your Career Goals**

- Determine why you want to do a postdoc and what you want to do/where you want to be after completion
- Avoid strictly continuing work you did in graduate school. A postdoc is an opportunity to diversify your expertise

- Think carefully before extending your graduate work into a postdoc in same lab. It is unlikely to maximize your gain of broader experience, but that can be offset by rapid and important publications
- Does lab you are entering have a track record in producing high-quality publications?
- Strive to have at least 1 quality publication per year
- Have an understanding with your mentor on your likelihood of first authorship before you start projects
- Find out about source and duration of funding before accepting position
- Good mentors will understand that your horizon is independence—your own future lab, as a group leader, etc.
- Strive to get your own money – plan ahead for this, as most funds come from joint application with mentor

## MAXIMIZING YOUR POSTDOC EXPERIENCE:

### Plan for Your Future

- Have at least two projects underway - include one that is guaranteed to generate good (if not exciting) results
- Network - Meet other postdocs on campus, serve on campus committees; Attend and present at seminars, and regional and national scientific meetings

## LIST OF RESOURCES:

### MIT Postdoc Resources

- MIT Postdoctoral Information: http://web.mit.edu/mitpostdocs/index.html
- Database on funding for research, travel, etc.: http://web.mit.edu/cis/dbsearch.html
- MIT Graduate Students Office (Room 3-138): http://odge.mit.edu/
- MIT Biology Postdoc Information: https://biology.mit.edu/postdoctoral

### Finding and Securing Postdoctoral Positions

- Finding Postdoctoral Positions: http://www.grad.wisc.edu/education/gspd/careerplanning.html

### General Postdoc Resources and Opportunities

- National Postdoctoral Association: http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/
- ScienceCareers.org: http://jobs.sciencecareers.org/landingpage/316096/find-postdoc-jobs-on-science-careers/
- Post-docs.com: http://www.post-docs.com
- PhDs.org: http://www.phds.org/postdoc
- Survival Guide for International Postdoc Students in the U.S.: http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/?page=SurvivalGuide
- Postdoctoral training, NIH Intramural Research Program: https://www.training.nih.gov/postdoctoral/index.asp
- PostdocJobs.com: www.postdocjobs.com
- Consider Post-doctoral Training in Industry: http://www.studentvision.org/post-doctoral-training.html

### Maximizing the Postdoctoral Experience

- Individual Development Plan for Postdoctoral Fellows: http://www.faseb.org/portals/2/pdfs/opa/idp.pdf
- Developing your Skills as a Postdoc: http://www.the-aps.org/mm/Careers/Mentor/Career-Choices-and-Planning/Postdoctoral-Fellow/Making-the-Most-of-Your-Postdoc
- AAMC Compact Between Postdoctoral Appointees and Their Mentors: http://www.aamc.org/postdoccompact
- Making the Right Moves: A Practical Guide to Scientific Management for Postdocs and New Faculty: http://www.hhmi.org/resources/labmanagement/moves.html
- Enhancing the Postdoctoral Experience for Scientists and Engineers: http://books.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=9831#toc

**Funding Sources** (awardee institutions, government agencies: NIH, NSF, NASA, EPA, USDA; & private organizations)

- Direct or indirect funding sources: http://www.nsf.gov/funding/education.jsp?fund_type=3
- Scientific Grants & Funding: http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/funding
- Resources on Funding & Proposal Development: http://www.rsp.wisc.edu/preaward/index.html
- Funding for Individuals: http://grants.library.wisc.edu/individuals/individuals.html
- Tips on Applying for Burroughs Wellcome Funding (Biomedical Sciences): http://www.bwfund.org/grant-programs/biomedical-sciences-1
- Links on Grant Writing from UCSF: https://accelerate.ucsf.edu/funding/grant-writing-guidance
- Grant/Fellowship Databases: http://www.med.upenn.edu/postdoc/funding.shtml#anchor101
- Funding Your Research: How to Apply for an NRSA: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/postdoc/nrsa.php
- Fellowship applications & grant writing resources: https://researchtraining.nih.gov/resources
- Nationally Coveted Scholarships, Fellowships and Postdoctoral Awards: http://scholarships.fatomei.com/
- Scholarships through MIT: http://gecd.mit.edu/go_abroad/fellowships/explore