



Postdoc Quarterly

Yale University

The Postdoc Quarterly (PDQ), a newsletter for the Postdoctoral community at Yale.
Presented by the Office for Postdoctoral Affairs

NEWS

New Members of the Postdoc Advisory Committee (PAC)

Please welcome the PAC for the 2008-2009 year. Feel free to contact any one of them with questions or suggestions. We look forward to a successful year!

Sangeeta Ahluwalia; Geriatrics, Internal Medicine

Uzma Alam; Epidemiology and Public Health

Zoe Cournia; Chemistry

Salim Derrouiche; Chemical Engineering

Chengpeng Fan; Pharmacology

Erika Gyengesi; OB/GYN

Robert McBride; Ecology & Evolutionary Biology

Ty Schepis; Psychiatry

Sadie Smith; Molecular, Cellular & Developmental Biology

Sonja van Wichelen; Sociology

Alicia Weisberg-Roberts; Yale Center for British Art

Congratulations to the First Winners of the Postdoctoral Scholar Travel Fund!

Weiwei Deng; Mechanical Engineering

Julien Michel; Chemistry

Alessandro Monsutti; Agrarian Studies

Massimiliano Stagi; Molecular Biophysics & Biochemistry

The next deadline for the Travel Fund is February 1st. Please note that only postdocs in the Faculty of Arts & Sciences are eligible to apply. Please go to http://www.yale.edu/postdocs/postdocs_career.html for more information.

SPOTLIGHT

Congratulations to Shobha Vasudevan, Postdoctoral Fellow in Molecular Biophysics & Biochemistry, Dr. Joan Steitz's laboratory. She is among one of the seven finalists in the postdoctoral category for the Blavatnik Awards sponsored by the New York Academy of Sciences. The award recognizes outstanding, innovative and interdisciplinary research in the life sciences, physical sciences and engineering. Two of the postdoctoral finalists will be chosen as Blavatnik Awards winners at the Academy's annual Science & the City Gala on November 17th. We would like to wish Shobha good luck with the competition!

UPCOMING EVENTS

"Writing Your first Grant": November 6th, 2008; 4:30-6pm; Hope 110 (315 Cedar St.)



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The Academic Job Search: Identifying opportunities and preparing a successful application

Erika Gyengesi
 Postdoctoral Associate
 Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology

Thursday, September 18th, 2008

The monthly Postdoctoral Career Development Lecture Series drew about 60 postdoctoral associates and fellows who gathered to learn more about how to prepare a successful application for academic positions. Members of the panel included Hagit Affek (Asst. Professor, Geology & Geophysics), Seth Herzon (Asst. Professor, Chemistry), Michael Robek (Asst. Professor, Pathology) and Brian Scholl (Assoc. Professor, Department of Psychology; Director, Yale Perception and Cognition Laboratory). Each of the panelists gave a short introduction about their experiences or suggestions for job hunting in academia and answered questions from the postdocs in the audience. Below are highlights from each panelist:

Michael Robek posed an important question: when do you think you are ready to go out on the job market? You might feel that you are not ready yet, but the truth is, postdocs are constantly on the job market: while giving talks, delivering presentations, and publishing papers. You never know when you will come across someone who might be interested in you and your research. Interestingly enough,

there's a good chance that you won't find the perfect job, but the perfect job may find you when you might not even be looking for it! Dr. Robek pointed out that it can take 6-12 months to find a job. It's important, then, to start looking even when you're not completely sure if you're ready.

Hagit Affek offered insight into the international versus US academic job search. Apparently, it might be helpful to have job offers in the US in order to get the job of your dreams in Europe. It is also essential to cast a wide net. Do not exclude any job postings just because you think it may not be a good fit at first glance. Try to apply anywhere you think might be relevant (within reason, of course!). However, apply only if you would really consider accepting a possible offer. Needless to say, presenting the appropriate and informative cover letter, CV and publication list is the next step to get an interview and eventually, a job.

Seth Herzon added that you must not forget to have a conversation about your job search with your faculty mentor. It's important to discuss your ideas about your career (and the projects you want to take away from your postdoc). It's probably not worth leaving a postdoc position before finishing up a project or publishing, which could take from 2 to 5 years, depending on your field. In general, 4-5 years is the average time for postdoc training in the biosciences, while only 1-2 years may be required in chemistry.



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Brian Scholl mentioned some principles of social psychology, namely the power that lies in the first impression and how it affects the evaluation of whatever you present (such as your cover letter, research statement, or job talk). Even without having any degree in psychology, we already know that first impressions are crucial. Dr. Scholl also pointed out some of the random factors of the academic job market: the number of jobs, the research areas, as well as the competition changes yearly. The state of the economy can also play a role.

In my opinion, there are other important questions to address before you start applying. For example, what is your flexibility in terms of geographic location? How far would you be willing to go? What distance or inconveniences are you willing to take for a job that otherwise would be perfect for you? Postdocs who have families who do not live in the Tri-State area can understand the importance of this issue.

One of the most important messages of the talk was to have the right attitude. Stop

thinking about yourself as a student but as an independent scientist! You are working with a faculty mentor, also known as your boss, but you are not a student anymore. Instead of focusing on your interests, try to focus on your particular discoveries and on what you have brought to the field during your job search. The relationship with your faculty mentor is important but you should consider yourself to be his/her colleague. Just like any other human relationship, this one requires a lot of work, so social skills are also crucial.

I believe the sooner individuals begin to discuss possible job opportunities the more likely they are to figure out what they want from their scientific careers. Events like this and many others organized by the Office for Postdoctoral Affairs are crucial for postdocs, and I was pleased to see many postdocs in attendance.

REMINDERS

We've paid for your membership in the Science Alliance of the New York Academy of Sciences. As a member you will have the opportunity to network, attend free meetings/ events and much, much more! Please go to this link to register:

<http://www.nyas.org/landing/sa/yale.asp>



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Have you seen the new Postdoc website? www.yale.edu/postdocs

- Get information on upcoming events

- Career Development Information

- Read past issues of the PDQ

- Find contact information for the Postdoc Advisory Committee

- Download the Postdoc Policies & Handbook

Need To Contact Us?

Have a topic you'd like us to cover in a future issue of the PDQ? E-mail your ideas to Monica.

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