

The NICHD Connection

September 2013

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Interesting Opportunity: NIH Science Policy Discussion Group...and Beyond

By Katherine Donigan, PhD

My interest in science policy dates back to when I was in grade school in the late 1990's—the era of the Human Genome Project. My first exposure to the intersection between policy and science occurred when discussing proposed legislation aimed at protecting against genetic-related discrimination by insurance companies and employers. This interest in policy continued throughout college and graduate school, and through a chance meeting with Sharon Milgram I learned about the possibility of bridging a scientific background with a career in policy. As a graduate student, I attended the annual Experimental Biology meeting where I heard Sharon give a talk about scientific careers "at and away from the bench," including careers in science policy. I spoke with Sharon after her talk and she encouraged me to consider doing a postdoc at NIH to further my scientific training in genetics and to have the opportunity to participate in policy-related activities.



Katherine Donigan, PhD
(photo courtesy of Dr. Donigan)

A few months later, I attended the NIH career symposium and learned more about policy-related opportunities available for postdocs. It was evident that being at NIH would provide exceptional scientific training, as well as the opportunity to gain exposure to science policy, particularly through the Science Policy Discussion Group (SPDG) open to NIH fellows. Shortly after starting my postdoc at NICHD, I joined SPDG and attended

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Letter from the Editor

There's something invigorating about the beginning of autumn. We trade lazy weekends at the pool for cooler days and the anticipation of academic progress. While we might regret unfinished summer tasks—like cleaning out the garage—we get to make new to-do lists... investigate a project for the new grad student; plan for the upcoming job search; or map a conference to attend this year.

This month, our articles will motivate you to make your own career lists. First, Dr. Katherine Donigan writes an "Interesting Opportunities" column chronicling her successful path to a genetics and public policy fellowship ([page 1](#)). Using her network and experiences, she developed the skills needed to stand out from over 70 applicants for the highly coveted fellowship position. If you too want to develop your network, consider expanding your online presence using tips from the "21st Century Networking: LinkedIn and Beyond" workshop, recapped by Dr. Parmit Kumar Singh ([page 4](#)).

For our more junior trainees, we introduce our

two new NICHD postbac reps, Jeffery Head and Amanda Krause ([page 6](#)). They will lead a postbac orientation later this month, where they will highlight how to fully utilize your time at the NIH. This is an important event for new postbacs.

The NICHD biovisualization team is excited to begin the academic year with a new column and workshop series on data visualization ([page 9](#)). Here they will share tricks of the trade in creating superb scientific graphics.

As always, don't forget to check out [September's announcements](#) and [events](#). As a bonus, we have a new submission to our "Life Outside Lab" column by Dr. Sudhir Rai. Turn to [page 8](#) to see the beautiful photo he shot while in Colorado.

Your Editor in Chief,
Shana R. Spindler, PhD

Questions, comments, suggestions? Please contact me at Shana.Spindler@gmail.com.

NIH Science Policy Discussion Group...and Beyond (continued from page 1)

bi-weekly meetings for discussions and seminars covering a range of science policy topics. Application to SPDG is open to all NIH fellows, with around 30 members admitted each year. Applicants who are initially wait-listed are admitted throughout the year as spots become available. Groups within SPDG select individual discussion topics and recruit qualified speakers to present seminars. The discussion at SPDG is always lively and thought provoking, with many different points of view considered. Seminar speakers, typically science policy professionals, provide significant insight into discussion topics, and also highlight many different types of policy careers.

The discussion group also provided me with the opportunity to become a member and group leader of the SPDG writing team, which maintains the group's blog (sciencepolicyforall.wordpress.com). I researched and wrote essay posts for a general readership on a variety of science policy topics and provided feedback for other members' posts. Together with other team members, I also generated a weekly post highlighting current events related to

science policy issues. This experience helped me further develop the skills to communicate scientific issues to a general audience and refine my thought process when analyzing such topics. My interest in science policy issues, in conjunction with my background in genetics, led me to apply to the Genetics & Public Policy Fellowship program.

The Genetics & Public Policy Fellowship is a joint effort between the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) and NHGRI. The fellowship was established in 2002 to address the increasing need for individuals with genetics and genomics-related expertise to contribute to the policy-making process in the post-genome project era. It provides the unique opportunity to experience three distinct science policy arenas: the policy branch at NHGRI, nonprofit advocacy at ASHG, and as a staffer on Capitol Hill. Fellows have the opportunity to engage in research on a range of policy issues related to genetic research and medicine. The fellowship serves as a bridge for professionals in genetics to transition to a career in science policy.

Recap of “21st Century Networking: LinkedIn & Beyond”

By Parmit Kumar Singh, PhD

Science is global. Advertising your science online can increase your connectivity with other people working in the same field around the world and help you learn about the job market to, hopefully, find your dream job. Researchers need to increase skills not only at bench work, but also in networking and branding themselves to the online scientific community. The online networking site LinkedIn can do just that.



The “21st Century Networking: LinkedIn and Beyond” workshop, led by Scott Morgan on July 25, 2013, taught us that branding yourself and your science is very important for being a successful scientist. The talk was divided into four phases: LinkedIn, “speed dating,” the three-minute thesis, and negotiation. In this article, I will highlight a few key points from each section.

LINKEDIN

In this session, we discussed how to make a good profile on LinkedIn. What should we write, and what should we avoid? The rule of thumb is to think about your dream job before writing anything. Since there is a word limitation for your title, you should use a noun that best describes your overall experience, such as retro-virologist, enzymologist, or protein-biochemist. Avoid using very broad field titles like biochemist or developmental biologist. In contrast, do not use the name of your model organism—like *Drosophila* geneticist—and avoid pronouns and verbs.

Finally, Scott Morgan cautioned against highlighting technical skills, like spectroscopy, in your title unless you are interested in a technical position.

We also learned about a new feature on LinkedIn where you can attach a power point presentation with your work. If you haven't already, using this feature is a good a way to promote your research.

“SPEED DATING”

During the speed dating portion, people interacted with three to four people for three minutes each and asked about work, family, and hobbies. The theme of this exercise was to find two common interests using a top-to-bottom approach. For example, if two people have reading as a hobby, this approach encouraged us to find out what kind of reading material we have in common or whether we read the same author or not. This approach should be followed in our

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Recap of "21st Century Networking" (continued from page 4)

professional interactions also to find common interests among people.

THREE-MINUTE THESIS

The three-minute thesis is a competition hosted by the organization EURAXESS where researchers can present their work in three-minute videos. The video can then be uploaded to the EURAXESS LinkedIn page. For more information on this new three-minute thesis competition, please visit http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/data/links/usa/docs/Science_Slam_NA_2013.pdf.

NEGOTIATION

Your online networking is successful, and you get offered a position! Now you must negotiate favorable terms. There is always a way to postpone the decision, like by mentioning "I will let you know after consulting my family." It is good to think about

the big picture before joining any institute. For example, a scientist working on mouse models will prefer an institute that hosts a good facility for mice.

Overall, this workshop presented the importance of branding your science. LinkedIn is just one way to do so, but other resources, like YouTube videos, are good too. The important point—whether you are presenting at a conference or by video, are interviewing or writing a LinkedIn summary—is that you have to be concise, to the point, and always use words that are specific to your dream job or interest. Don't forget, it is essential to keep others' time and a word limit in mind before writing anything, and use interactions to find out the common interest between two people. Follow this advice, and you will be on your way to successfully branding yourself and your science online.

Meet Our New NICHD Postbac Reps

The *NICHD Connection* would like to introduce NICHD's new postbac IC representatives, Jeffery Head and Amanda Krause. Postbac IC reps serve on the NIH-wide Pre-IRTA Committee on behalf of the institute's postbac fellow population. They also work closely with the Office of Education in NICHD to plan events of interest to the postbacs, whether academic or social. NICHD currently has over 40 postbacs who are conducting both clinical and basic science research.

MEET JEFFERY HEAD:

I hail from the small state of Connecticut, which as some of you might know is essentially just an extended suburb of New York City. I graduated from Colgate University where I majored in Cellular Neuroscience and dedicated two years of research to studying the role of a putative stem cell population in the regeneration of sensory cells in zebrafish. After graduation, I followed my research down here to the NIH where I joined the lab of Dr. Ajay Chitnis to study the same sensory cells, but now looking at the signaling pathways that allow these cells to self-organize and migrate together during the development of the organ in embryos.

As I'm certain some of you can appreciate, I chose to come to the NIH specifically because I found it difficult to decide between a career in research, medicine, or both during my undergraduate education. The opportunities that were made available to me at the NIH far exceeded any of my expectations and have proven to be critical in my decision-making process. As a postbac rep, I want to strive to make these same opportunities available to you whether to help you make a decision or simply to increase your exposure to the career you have already chosen.

One such opportunity that I will be heading is the ExploreINN program that allows postbacs to simultaneously entertain and educate children between the ages of 5-18 with "wacky" science experiments one hour each week. In addition, Amanda and I are planning several career-exploration events for the upcoming year and would like to get your input on the types of burning questions you might have and also who you might want to answer them. Feel free to contact me with any questions at headjr@mail.nih.gov.



Jeffery Head
(photo by Jeremy Swan)

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Meet Our New NICHD Postbac Reps

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MEET AMANDA KRAUSE:

I grew up in the northern suburbs of Chicago and graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where I majored in Food Science and Human Nutrition.



Amanda Krause
(photo provided by Amanda)

Always having an interest in public health and obesity, I had the chance to become involved in several research studies examining these areas during college. Following graduation, I joined the NICHD's Section on Growth and Obesity where I now work under the pediatric endocrinologist Dr. Jack A. Yanovski conducting clinical obesity research. Currently, I am involved in two main protocols; one is a longitudinal study examining why some children gain weight over time, and the other looks at the effects of inhibiting lipolysis on Growth Hormone secretion in children with increased adiposity.

As a postbac representative I am eager to make the NICHD postbac experience as enriching as possible by acting as the contact for postbacs who would like to become involved in both volunteering and clinical experiences, such as ExploreINN at the Children's Inn and the NICHD's pediatric genetics clinic. So far, I am greatly enjoying leading the postbac community, and learning from Drs. Raygada, Rennert, and Stratakis in the Genetics Clinic.

Jeff and I have several career development activities in the works, but would be happy to hear suggestions, comments, or questions for other activities. Feel free to contact me at krauseaj@mail.nih.gov.

Life Outside Lab



For our Life Outside Lab column, Dr. Sudhir K. Rai submitted the above photo, taken while traveling from the Rocky Mountains to the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO, in August, 2012. He used a SONY-DSLR ALPHA 230 model camera with a 50-300mm lens.

Dr. Rai is a visiting fellow in Dr. Henry Levin's lab in the Section on Eukaryotic Transposable Elements.

The Arts: A New Bioviz Column

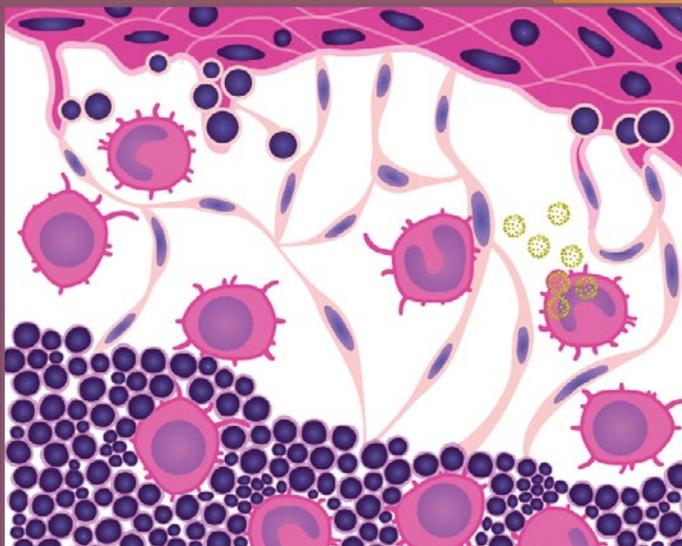
By the NICHD Bioviz Team

Today, visual communications are an important facet of scientific research. Graphs, diagrams, posters, videos, and animations help communicate scientific findings and their significance. Clear, concise, and professional images can make a huge difference when presenting your research, submitting an article, or trying to land a new position.

Becoming competent with graphic editing programs will allow you to make and modify your own research graphics. Services exist to create visual communications for scientists, but starting with rough concept images often improves the final products.

The intention of this new column is to help you create excellent scientific graphics. NICHD's Biovisualization group will deconstruct the graphics we've produced in the past as a means to share tips and tricks for creating compelling and informative images. We'll share resources for elevating your design quality, as well as facilitate your access to computers and software.

In addition to this column, we will conduct workshops to introduce you to graphics editing tools like Photoshop and Illustrator, as well as more specialized software like Imaris and Matlab. These workshops will be an opportunity



for you to come with any questions you may have about the creation of scientific graphics and to receive hands-on support and advice.

If interested, please register for the first class on October 1 by emailing Yvette Pittman at Yvette.Pittman@nih.gov (more info in the [announcements](#)).

This month, we want to highlight a valuable resource for learning about visual presentation: the "Points of View" column in *Nature Methods*, where expert contributors share short articles on varying topics, including composition, layout, color, figure elements, figure clarity, multidimensional data, and data exploration. A complete compilation of "Points of View" articles to date can be found at <http://blogs.nature.com/methagora/2013/07/data-visualization-points-of-view.html>.

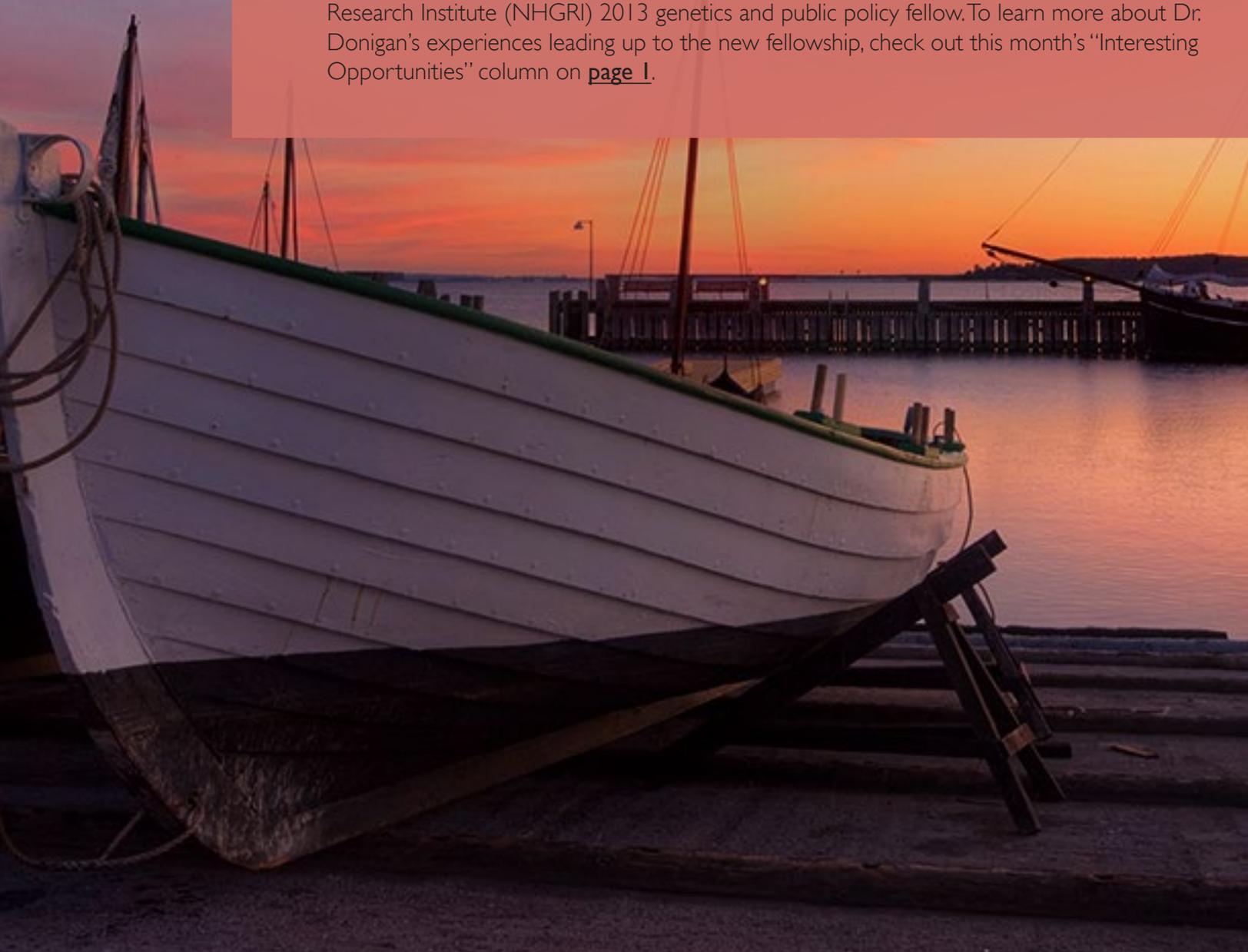
September Announcements

NATIONAL POSTDOC APPRECIATION WEEK IS SEPTEMBER 16-20

On behalf of the entire NICHD community, thank you to all of our postdocs for your hard work and dedication to the NICHD vision. Learn more about National Postdoc Appreciation week on the National Postdoctoral Association's website at <http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/meetings-and-events-4/appreciation>.

CONGRATULATIONS TO DR. KATHERINE DONIGAN!

The NICHD Connection extends a big congratulations to Dr. Donigan, who was recently selected as the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG)/National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) 2013 genetics and public policy fellow. To learn more about Dr. Donigan's experiences leading up to the new fellowship, check out this month's "Interesting Opportunities" column on [page 1](#).





**SAVE THE DATE: WEDNESDAY,
OCTOBER 23, 2–4 PM**

**“Job Interviewing Skills” Workshop, for
senior fellows**

Will you be actively searching for employment this fall? Gain a competitive edge!

This workshop is designed to help scientists make a strong impression during a job interview. It focuses on identifying singular examples to help answer questions, and expected questions, themes, dilemmas and comportsment will be analyzed though interactive exercises and peer review. Limited to 10 people and can include an one-one-one session with the instructor, Scott Morgan.

Please register with Yvette Pittman at yvette.pittman@nih.gov.

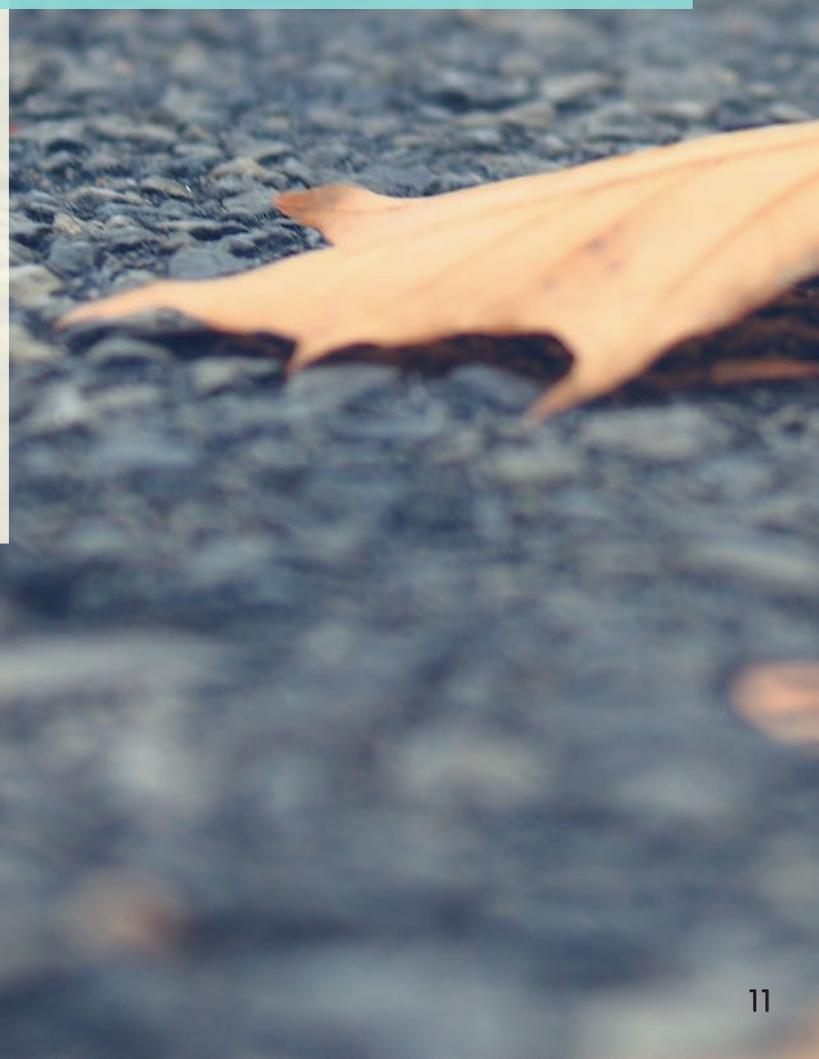
September Events

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2–3PM
**NICHD Welcome and Social Event for all
postbacs!**

Come and learn about our volunteer and training opportunities such as ICU simulator rounds, the “Becoming an Effective Scientist” postbac course, and shadowing at the Genetics Clinic! Come and meet other postbacs in the institute—to mingle and enjoy some light refreshments.

Please RSVP with Yvette Pittman at yvette.pittman@nih.gov.

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September Events

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 9 AM–12 NOON

“NIH Grants' Submissions and Reviews” Workshop

Preparing for your academic careers—working towards securing NIH funding for your research program, and want to learn what happens to your application after you hit “SUBMIT”?

This workshop will cover how a study section works, the roles of program officers and scientific review officers and how they can be helpful to you, and the process after your grant is reviewed. To gain an understanding of the distinctions among grant applications, the kinds of scientific comparisons that are made, and how scoring is modified based on the discussion, it will also include a mock study section with six reviewers, scoring three types of NIH applications: K99/R00, R01, and R03.

Note there are only 5 slots left, if you would like to attend, please send Yvette Pittman yvette.pittman@nih.gov an email.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER, 23, 2–4 PM

OITE Series: Academic Careers; Job Search Skills

Sharon Milgram, PhD, Director, OITE

» Building 50, Room 1227

After you submit your academic job package, the job interview is the next major hurdle to securing a position. In this workshop, learn the "do's and don'ts" of academic job interviewing and hear what interview committees like to see. In addition, the workshop will address job talks, chalk talks and teaching talks—important elements of many academic job interviews.

Register at [https://www.training.nih.gov/events/view/2/1161/Academic Job Interviews](https://www.training.nih.gov/events/view/2/1161/Academic%20Job%20Interviews)

Save the Date!

SAVE THE DATE: TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 10 AM–12 NOON

Graphics Workshop: Creating and editing graphics for figures, diagrams and cartoons

» Building 31, Room 2A48

Have you ever struggled in producing graphics for use in a publication or presentation? This workshop will help you learn the ins and outs of working with graphic applications, from conceptualization through publishing. We will walk you through a tutorial using the basic editing tools in Illustrator and Photoshop and will provide an opportunity for you to work with your own material.

Agenda:

- » Overview of the creation workflow
- » Conceptualization (pencil and paper)
- » Creating elements using shape and line tools in Illustrator (lines and fills)
- » Working with points (add/subtract points on a line, join lines)
- » Revolve, rotate and extrude shapes
- » Creating perspective through transparency and size
- » Vector to raster: How to export from Illustrator to Photoshop and manipulate in Photoshop
- » Exporting graphics for publications.

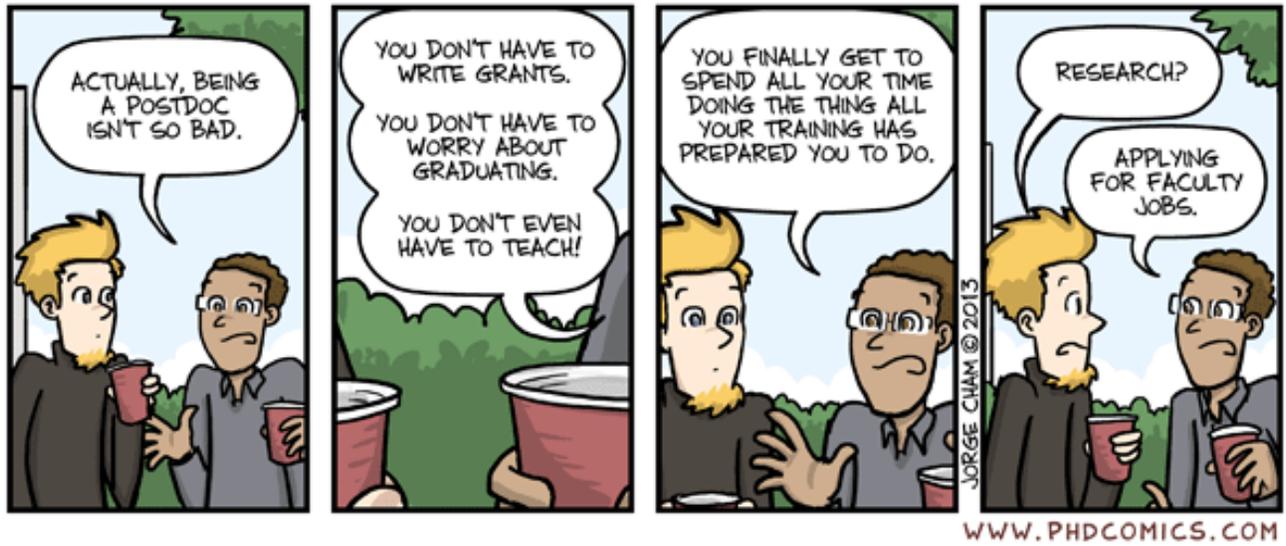
The remainder of the time will be used to work with participants' materials and address individual challenges.

SAVE THE DATE: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2–4 PM

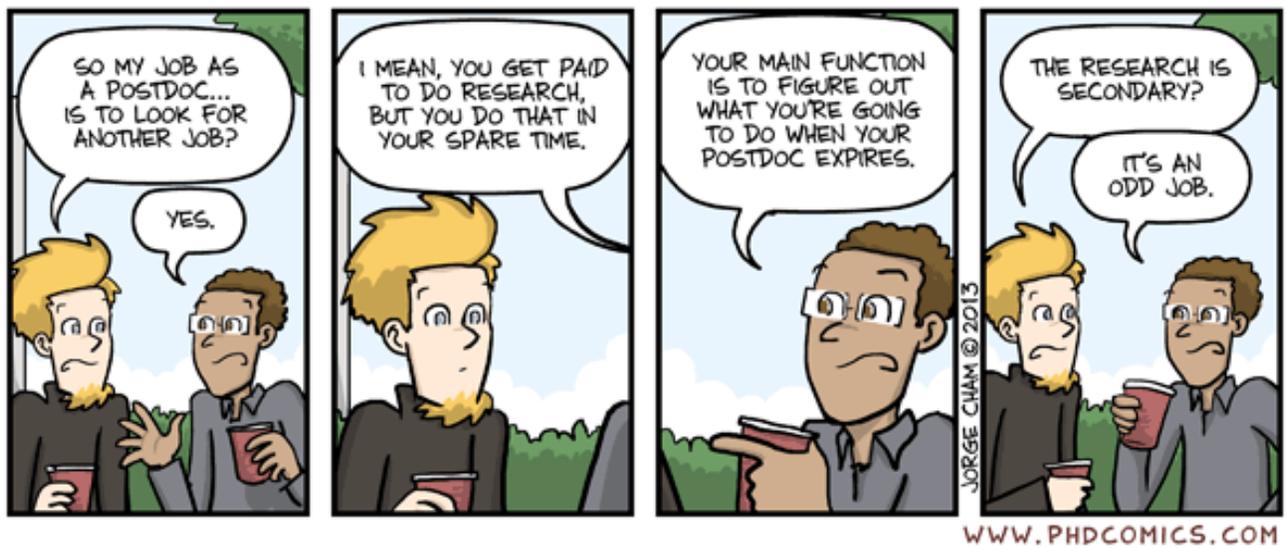
“Job Interviewing Skills” Workshop, for senior fellows

Please register with Yvette Pittman at yvette.pittman@nih.gov.

Happy Postdoc Appreciation Week!



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