

ASHG 2014- Summary of session 7: Curiouser and curiouser! Navigating career transitions & challenges in genetics

For SMIG meeting October 24, 2014

Postdoc

Has a PhD

Temporary period of mentored research

Purpose: to become an independent scientist

Expectations trainees should

have for his/her mentor

Stipend

Travel to meetings

Place to do work

Career guidance

Networking

Honesty and respect

Expectations of the trainee

Active participation in lab activities

Work ethic

Progress in a reasonable time

Professional skills

Honest communication

Foster collegial relationships

Meet deadlines

When to start the search

Think about the exact area you want to be in (find your passion- papers you've read, invited seminar series, meetings)- exploration throughout grad school

Active searching as soon as you know when you'll defend

What to look for

Want a lab publishing in high impact journals

External funding record

National/international status

Rank, tenure status

Prior training record; talk to previous/current trainees

Lab organization

Work ethic

Other (geographical location, university reputation, etc.)

junior or established lab

Junior

Established

Smaller group; more one-on-one time

Larger; less one-on-one; work w/ senior post doc

PI driven to make it work

Name and recognition and contacts

See up close the life of junior PI

Opportunity for grant writing participation

How do faculty recruit

Lab website, job recruitment website (Science, Nature, university job or postdoc postings)

Letters/flyers

Departmental labs and graduate program

Unsolicited positions- not advertised; you contact them

Some tips- what PIs want

Ability to take charge of a project and execute it

Interest in the lab's research

Commitment

Communications skills

Enthusiasm, passion for science, creativity, drive, confidence

How to be recruited into a potential desired lab

Talk to the PI in person- express genuine interest
in their research- be specific

Unsolicited email to PI (CV, cover letter, names
contact info for references)

The documents

Cover letter- no CV rehash, short, state why you are interested in the lab/position

CV- look at postdocs/PIs' CVs for what to include

References- people who will recommend you

Interview

- Hooray!
- Usually asked to give a research seminar
- Ask questions both science & lab culture
- be yourself
- Follow-up- thank you email reiterating your continued interest in the lab

Things to consider

Authorship

Ownership of data

Expectations for time working

Mentor's availability

Salary; vacation; criteria for renewal (in offer letter may negotiate, if not sure ask current PI)

Research productivity

Need to attract and train excellent people

Continuous record of external funding

Publish continuously- volume, quality, impact, reviews, collaborations... Focus and finish

Develop a national reputation- host meetings

Be confident in yourself, and take care of yourself first

Final thoughts

Relationship with your advisor can be lifelong

But if it doesn't work out, you don't have to stay