

University of Minnesota Neuroscience Graduate Program
Colloquium on Post-Doctoral Opportunities

1. What is your desired career path?
2. What is the purpose of your post-doctoral research opportunity and how will it help you advance towards your desired career path?
3. Type of Institutions that offer post-doctoral training
 - Academic: University or Medical School
 - Private or semi-private institutes: Cold Spring Harbor, Wistar Institute, others
 - NIH or other government agencies
 - Industry, generally Pharmaceutical Companies
 - Foreign Institutions, usually academic or private institutes
4. How to find a post-doctoral position?
 - Discuss with your mentor(s), make direct contact with possible post-doc mentors
 - Look for ads or letters of inquiry
 - Placement services at national meetings
 - Start looking early
 - Identify possible mentors- send letters of initial interest—narrow the list
 - Meet with potential mentors at national meetings; arrange lab visits
 - Narrow the list
 - Try to secure an opportunity 6-12 mos in advance of when you want to begin
 - Visit the potential lab(s); give a seminar on your thesis work; interview them as they interview you; prepare thoroughly for the visit.
 - Prepare and practice a 30 minute seminar on your thesis research; expect questions to evaluate your command of the field, ability to interpret data, and your thought process. Be sure you have thought about the most important “next” experiment.
5. What will the mentors be looking for in you?
 - Specific skills you have and skills you want to attain
 - Quality of the work you have done so far
 - Excellent letters of recommendation, evaluating your:
 - Creativity
 - Work ethic & motivation
 - Ability to work with others
 - Long term prospects for success
 - An intense interest in the research activities of the proposed lab
6. What features should you consider in selecting a post-doctoral position?
 - The research of the mentor: good science is key
 - Assess the ongoing projects and the plans for new projects
 - Past productivity
 - Grant success
 - Publication record
 - Level of “respect” in the field
 - The success and career path of former trainees
 - What new skills/approaches will you learn that will help your future career path
 - Quality/type of mentoring and frequency of interaction
 - Are there possibilities for dual mentoring and how will this be managed?

7. Environment for your post-doctoral position(s)
 - Number of lab members
 - Levels of other trainees
 - Who will train you, experimentally?
 - Other faculty nearby; journal clubs with other labs
 - Living environment
 - Different institution from where you did your pre-doc
8. What will your responsibilities be?
 - Will you be required to / have an opportunity to teach?
 - Will you be required to /have an opportunity to supervise others?
9. Stipend/ funding & benefits
 - Source of funds
 - How much and for how long are the funds secured?
 - Will you receive help writing and/or is there an expectation that you write for your own funding?
 - Are there sufficient funds for travel to meeting(s); post-docs need presentation exposure and need to start building a network of colleagues; suggest 2 meetings/yr.
 - What benefits are associated with the post-doctoral position?
10. Interactions with collaborative groups at the same institution or others
 - How will responsibilities and credit for work be determined?
 - Authorship issues on multi-author papers
 - Who will own/get to use any novel resources generated (eg antibodies, Tg mice, other reagents)?

Examples of some independent funding opportunities for post-doctoral work (not a complete list)

(Note: Most agencies have one deadline/year; NIH-NRSA's have 3 deadlines/year)

- NIH-NRSAs (National Research Service Award). Some NIH agencies do not support pre-doctoral awards but do support post-doctoral awards. You will need to inquire with the specific agency (e.g. NIMH, NINDS, NEI). For NRSA's, do not wait too long to submit them; once you have been in the lab a while it is difficult to justify "new training" opportunity which is a primary criterion for this award. Try to submit an NRSA before the end of your first year in the post-doctoral lab or earlier. For more information, see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-00-104.html>
- HHMI Postdoctoral Fellowships for Physicians (for people with M.D. or M.D./Ph.D.)
- Some examples of private groups that fund post-doctoral fellowships (competitive application process):
 - Hereditary Disease Foundation (for Huntington's Disease)
 - American Cancer Society
 - American Diabetes Assoc.
 - Muscular Dystrophy Association
 - Porter Minority Fellowship
 - Epilepsy Foundation of America
 - Parkinson's Disease Foundation, Inc.
 - Pharmaceutical Manufacturer's Association

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- Life Sciences Research Foundation
- American Lung Association
- American Heart Association (yes neuroscientists can be funded by the AHA-check it out!)
 - NOTE: each state has its own organization and they may have different deadlines.
Apply to the state organization in which you will do the post-doctoral research.
- There are some special fellowships for research abroad-- e.g. Alexander von Humboldt fellowships for post-doctoral research in Germany, Japan science fellowships, and others.
- Alfred P. Sloan Foundation - Computational Molecular Biology
- Office of Naval Research (research at Naval Centers)
- Ford Foundation Fellowships for Minorities

Note: The private organizations are very competitive and sometimes rumored to be “political”. If you have good publications from your thesis, you may be a good candidate for private funds. Excellent letters of recommendation are critical for these awards. These applications generally require that you have a lab & mentor already identified for the work. They are designed to provide additional training for you as well as advance science. Generally, preliminary data is not a stated requirement for these applications, but it is likely to be very helpful. It is sometimes best (if the timing is right) to try to join the lab and then submit an application several months later--your application will be better if you know more about your new field and if you can include a tidbit of preliminary data.