

Supporting Academic Women in STEM: The Post-Doc Institute

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Improving Career-Life Balance
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Outline of this talk

- ◆ Need for PDI type workshops?
- ◆ Planning the series of workshops
 - topics
 - timeline
 - modes
- ◆ Running the workshops
 - choosing the expert panelists and presenters
 - preparing the presenters
 - preparing the audience
- ◆ Challenges which had to be overcome
- ◆ Evaluation
- ◆ Lessons learned

Need for Post-Doc Institute type workshops?



- was a key component of the 2-year post-doc program part of NSF ADVANCE program at UIC
- training for post-docs & grad students
- support and development for new assistant professors

Choice of Topics

- guided by experience as a 40-year academic:
- guided by HHMI / Burroughs-Wellcome workshops [*Making the Right Moves. A Practical Guide to Scientific Management for Postdocs and New Faculty, 2nd Ed*]

Timeline



Modes used



- Presentation by an expert; discussion
- Panel of experts compare and contrast; discussion
- Guided discussion of case studies (some clear cases, also grey areas)
- Anonymous review of participant's manuscript by topic expert; discussion with mentor how to respond to reviewer comments
- Written anonymous review of participant's proposal by topic expert, followed by panel review of same by discipline experts with program-officer experience

modes used (cont.) ...

- Team-on-one discussion of academic job search; preview of draft application package
- Panel review of complete application package of participant by mock search committee
- Participant “job talk” to panel of faculty (mock search committee members of hiring department) followed by realistic probing Q&A
- Formal research seminar by participant in standard setting of a “hiring department”
- One-on-one 30-min interview of participant with a senior faculty of “hiring department”

The Postdoc Institute

1. Balancing personal and professional life

Panel discussion

Panel of experts

Manuscript review

Panel of experts

Informal job talk (proposal) to mock search committee

Team-on-one

Proposal review by panel

Case studies

7. Panelists discuss each submitted proposal in turn

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10. Search Committee review of application package II: finding a suitable niche, positioning

10. Search Committee review of application package I: CV, cover letter, research statement, teaching philosophy

11. Preparing for the campus interview

12. Giving a presentation followed by discussion

One-on-one interview

Research talk to mock hiring

Research talk to mock hiring

Presentation followed by discussion

13. A 30-min mock job interview one-on-one with a senior professor of the hiring department

14. Research presentations for a 50-min talk by participants on their completed work to host department

15. Preparing a budget for an NSF CAREER proposal.

16. Getting started, Staffing your laboratory

17. Your role as a lab leader, building & sustaining an effective team

18. Becoming an effective teacher, the impact of gender on the evaluation of teaching

Running the workshops

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- choosing the expert panelists and presenters, moderator for each session
- preparing the experts
- preparing the participants

Faculty of the Post-doc Institute

- 39 individuals, 17 women 22 men, all research active (except for budget expert at grants office), 27 full professors, several professors are former or present federal agency funding officers, 3 scientists from Argonne National Lab, several Distinguished Professors, 3 department heads, 2 deans, 3 professors visiting from other institutions
- some served as anonymous expert reviewers of manuscripts and proposals
- 3 professors from liberal arts colleges provided materials, one participated in a panel
- UIC's Research Standards Officer -- Research Integrity

Preparing the experts

- Provide very clear guidelines on goals to be achieved in the specific session
- Give some indication how these goals might be achieved
- Define scope of session and how it fits into series
- Describe sequence and timing of parts of session
- Provide a session flyer with biosketches (& copy of e-mail invitation to participants)

Do not tell them how to do their part.

Preparing the participants

- Provide (a) purpose of session, (b) names & qualifications of experts, (c) the nature of their participation (e.g., submit a proposal by a specific date, bring a list of questions, ...)
- Attach a session flyer to the e-mail invitation to STEM post-docs (occasional senior grad students, first year faculty, as appropriate).
- 3-4 wks ahead of time, collect the 'tickets of admission' to sessions where the participant's work is to be evaluated .

Challenges which had to be overcome

- Recruiting the experts: faculty willing to contribute to the effort, anonymous expert reviewers appropriate for manuscript or proposal, seasoned search committee members, ...
- Getting the participants to provide their own work to be evaluated
- Organizing the labor-intensive sessions, e.g., written reviews of manuscripts prior to 'responding to reviewers' session

Evaluation



- Survey questionnaire administered at end of each session
- On-line survey of mentors included questions about the Post-doc Institute.
- Individual interviews of the 5 WISEST postdocs by project evaluator

Lessons learned

- Each workshop needs planning:
(a) specific goals, (b) time allotted and mode best suited to achieve these goals, (c) choice of experts.
- Choice of experts is crucial to quality of the session, important to instruct them about goals, scope, context of the session.
- The most successful sessions are very labor intensive and participants had to provide their “ticket of admission” to the session ahead of time (proposals, manuscripts, application packages, job talks: participants prepare materials to be evaluated by experts). Two of the most successful sessions were the panel of proposal reviewers and the mock interview “chalk talk”.

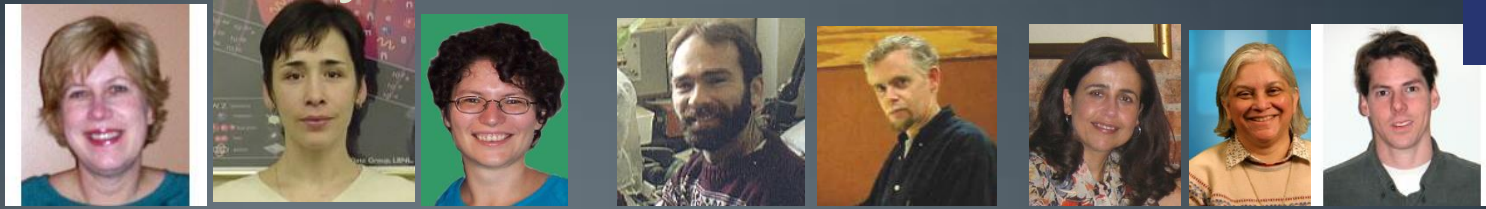
The post-docs did not even realize what incredibly incisive, insightful assessment and advice they received!

Besides design/planning/implementing, the coordinator needs an assistant who will:

- Monitor a checklist for each session
- Do promotional work (who? – research advisers, dept heads, deans, graduate secretary, where? – websites, list-serves, newsletters)
- Maintain e-mail list of possible participants and recipients of promotion
- Print up materials for distribution
- Distribute/collect the attendance/survey questionnaires
- See to the room/AV/refreshments

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Faculty of the Post-doc Institute



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Thank you
Any Questions?