



NIH VFC Newsletter

2015 Summer Edition

Contributing to global science development by building careers

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VFC Brown Bag Seminar Series

“Mentoring Matters” with OITE

By Randi Parks, PhD and Masfique Mehedi, PhD

The NIH Visiting Fellows Committee (VFC) had the pleasure of hosting a seminar on the topic “Mentoring Matters at the NIH” on April 21, 2015. This informative seminar was given by Dr. Lori Conlan, the Director for the Office of Postdoc Services at Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE). Dr. Conlan shared her expertise on the importance of obtaining good mentoring and how Postdoctoral Fellows at the NIH can take advantage of resources available to them.

The seminar began with a discussion of the importance of having several good mentors who are able to provide guidance and constructive criticism, and help in planning and fulfilling your goals throughout your career path. One point that was stressed is that a postdoctoral supervisor may not be sufficient to achieve career mentoring and a fellow can benefit from having additional mentors. Dr. Conlan then highlighted where postdoctoral fellows can look to find additional mentors. She suggests that fellows take advantage of their professional networks, as well as looking to people who are currently in positions that they would like. Perhaps most common is obtaining mentorship from past institutions, including past supervisors and graduate student committees.

These strategies often differ slightly for Visiting Fellows who strive to return to their home countries following their time at the NIH. Dr. Conlan provided tips specific for this scenario, including using LinkedIn or the NIH alumni database to find new contacts. It is also important to make sure that every trip abroad has a professional purpose in addition to personal fun,

whether that means paying a visit to a past lab or meeting an existing mentor for coffee.

In addition to obtaining good mentoring, this seminar also highlighted resources for NIH Fellows that are looking to improve their mentoring skills. The OITE offers various courses and classes throughout the year. “Management Bootcamp” is held every January and June, and instructs participants on how to be successful managers and supervisors. “Scientists Teaching Science” is an online course that focuses on mentoring from the perspective of effective teaching. Fellows can also practice their mentoring by working with a summer intern in the lab.

The NIH Fellows Committee (Felcom) has a Mentoring Committee that is concerned with the state of mentoring at the NIH. The Mentoring Committee surveys postdocs to gain an understanding of the current state of mentoring for postdocs, and they advocate for improved practices to be implemented. The Felcom Mentoring Committee has put together a very helpful “Field Guide to Good Mentoring”, which can be found at the following link: <https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/mentoring/felcom-mentoring-committee>.

Above all, Dr. Conlan stressed that mentoring relationships are only as good as the time you put into them. This means maintaining contact, and advocating for your scientific and career needs. For further discussion, the OITE Careers Blog has useful information on being a mentor and mentee (<https://oitecareersblog.wordpress.com/category/mentoring-2/>).

This seminar was an installment of the VFC Brown Bag seminar series. Visit us online at www.training.nih.gov/vfc_brown_bag_series or contact organizing members Masfique Mehedi at masfique.mehedi@nih.gov and Randi Parks at randi.parks@nih.gov. Look for more helpful and instructive seminars in the future.

VFC Brown Bag Seminar Series

Opportunities for Teaching and Learning through FAES at the NIH

By Divya Gangaramani, PhD

Continuing education in any form is extremely valuable for career advancements. The NIH offers a variety of opportunities to its postdoctoral fellows, residents, and staff scientists to enhance their teaching and learning skills through the Foundation for Advanced Education in the Sciences (FAES). On July 28th, 2015, the VFC Brown Bag series hosted Dr. Krisztina Miner, Academic Program Manager at the FAES Graduate School where she discussed many of the teaching and learning opportunities offered by FAES.

The FAES is located in Building 10 at the NIH Bethesda Campus. We are all familiar with FAES for health insurance services, but it is also an independent secondary school offering a variety of training opportunities such as: hands-on lab training and medical workshops, training for scientific meetings, and opportunities for researchers to become better managers. Additionally, there are approximately 150 courses of both graduate and under graduate levels available to NIH researchers/staff/general public. These courses are offered over two academic semesters at a nominal rate of \$150 per credit and span over 12 departments. Courses are typically offered as 1,2 or 3 credits and credits may be transferable, depending on the transfer policy of the receiving institution. Some of the most popular courses include introduction to Perl, Python, English as a second language, French and Spanish. Importantly, the FAES offers partial scholarships in the form of 40% tuition discount per credit. For more information, visit <https://faes.org/content/tuition-and-funding>.

Other popular courses are the ‘Advanced Studies’ series in Tech Transfer and Public Health. These courses attract postdoctoral fellows in the third and fourth years of their training, a critical phase in which they decide their next career moves. The Tech Transfer series is a 15-credit curriculum where students are introduced to patenting, product development and innovation, business development, and entrepreneurship. The Public Health series is a 21-credit curriculum that provides an overview of the five core disciplines of public health as defined by the Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH).

The FAES successfully enrolls about 1,200 to 1,600 students per year (over 90,000 registrations since 1971). The education level of students varies from MD/PhD (40%), MS/MA/MBA/MSC/MPH (20%), and BS/BA (40%). The deadline for the upcoming academic year is August 31, 2015 (Fall 2015) and January 22, 2016 (Spring 2016). The registration process is simple. Register online at <https://my.faes.org/> and pay with a credit card. Payment made by a third party is also possible through a secure payment gateway at <https://faes.org/content/payment-portal>.

Importantly, the FAES has an agreement with a few universities in the area that allow you to waive or transfer credits to the Master of Biotechnology Enterprise and Entrepreneurship (MBEE) program from Johns Hopkins (1) or obtain a Master’s Degree in Management, Technology Management, Information Technology, or Biotechnology Studies at the University of Maryland, University College (UMUC) (2).

FAES opportunities are not limited to coursework. With more than 10 years of experience in organizing medical workshops, scientific meetings, the FAES is now offering specialized three-day management, leadership, and professional development training seminars and workshops for scientists and medical professionals. These include:

- Scientific Management Training: Becoming an Effective Manager
- Leadership Skills for BioScientists

- Project Management for Scientists and Medical Professionals

If you are interested in gaining advanced teaching experience or designing your own course, contact Krisztina Miner at krisztina.miner@nih.gov. Here are the basic requirements for teaching at FAES:

- Fellows have thorough mastery of the course they propose to teach.
- Although not a requirement, it is strongly recommended that fellows complete GENL511 Boot Camp for University Teaching in case they have no prior teaching experience or if they have not completed an equivalent course elsewhere.
- Hiring decisions are made based on the overall preparedness of a fellow as well as the communication skills as exhibited during the oral interview to teach a proposed course.
- Fellows should have a very concrete proposal either about which course they could co-teach or, if proposing a new course, they should provide a justification as to why they think this course is needed and of interest to the NIH community.
- In order for FAES to be able to schedule the course in a timely manner, fellows would need to have a new course presented to FAES at a minimum of 3 months prior to the start of the term.

To learn more, email training@faes.org or visit <https://faes.org/content/training-conferences>

The VFC is thankful to Krisztina Miner for highlighting all of the teaching and learning opportunities offered by the FAES. We hope that the NIH workforce takes full advantage of this great foundation.

VFC Science Voices from Home: France Big Data and Public Health

By Adelaide Doussau de Bazignan, MD, PhD

The Visiting Fellows Committee recently invited Pr Geneviève Chêne, MD, PhD as part of its Science Voices from Home event. She has established an INSERM research team on “HIV infections and associated morbidity” and a Clinical Trials Unit as a platform of excellence for national and international studies in HIV/AIDS. Pr Geneviève Chêne is currently Director of the French Public Health Institute of INSERM.

What is INSERM?

INSERM, or Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale (<http://english.inserm.fr>) is the only French public research organization entirely devoted to human health. Through its 9 thematic institutes including basic and translational science, public health and health technologies, INSERM is involved in all stages of basic, preclinical, clinical research in France.

Inserm’s Public Health Institute and Big Data

Big data can be understood as health data about an entire population, i.e. a lot of individuals. Another definition of big data relates to the quantity of data that is measured from each individual, e.g. genomic research in which big data is collected from a single sample. The public health institute supports researchers to accelerate re-use of existing big data for research in public health on several levels including:

- Health databases in France: An internet tool that offers a detailed description of existing French health databases and provides access to metadata and point of contact (<https://epidemiologie-france.aviesan.fr/en/epidemiology/pages/portal-epidemiology>). Mutualize scientific efforts around major public infrastructures: France has

been contributing to the construction and funding of world-known cohorts in the field of HIV and hepatitis, aging and dementia, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. The Institute has recently contributed to the funding of new cohorts and coordinates a network where the investigators of the cohorts meet regularly to share experiences and expertise.

- Providing funding for specific projects: There is an annual funding opportunity for research proposals that re-use existing databases (<http://www.iresp.net/>).
- Support access to health administrative data and appropriate linkage between databases: the French public health insurance database (health care reimbursement), hospital activity database, and the mortality data collected by INSERM.
- Contribute to quality of research: An International Congress on e-Health Research (*Use of information and communication technology in Epidemiology and Medical Research*) will be held in Paris in October 2016 and is supported by the Institute.

Academic Job Opportunities in France

Positions in France include being a research associate, research engineer, or a group leader. Available positions in academic biomedical research are mainly at INSERM, CNRS, and universities. Some general advice given for any researcher interested in finding a job in France included: Contact PI(s) in France, visit laboratories and give a talk, identify a host lab, select relevant scientific committee(s) to submit your application, and prepare for the interview.

A program named “ATIP-Avenir” is a very competitive program that helps a researcher import a new theme of research in an existing research team. The goal is to attract highly talented young investigators and provide them with means to start their own group. This includes providing a salary for 3-5 years, a research budget of about \$70,000/year for 3 years, lab space, and a 2-year salary for a postdoctoral fellow. French citizenship is not required, but you must have obtained your PhD no greater than 10 years before applying. In 2010, there were 105 candidates and 29 laureates (including 16 from abroad). This program is

extremely prestigious and helps a person obtain a permanent position.

Mireille Guyader, PhD is the INSERM contact in the United States and is specifically dedicated to help researchers interested in a career in France. Please feel free to contact her at: Inserm-usa@ambascience-usa.org, 202-944-6253 (Office), 202-290-9994 (Cell).

Career Workshop Planning for Career Satisfaction & Success

By Ashley Parker, PhD

On June 30, 2015, Dr. Sharon Milgram, Director of the Office of Intramural Training and Research (OITE) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) held a workshop designed to prepare fellows at the NIH for “Planning for Career Satisfaction & Success.” This workshop attracted post-bachelorette, graduate, and post-doctoral fellows and provided pertinent information for career planning particularly in STEM fields. Although there is no single career path to an ideal science job, fellows were able to capture the career development process as Dr. Milgram discussed her trajectory that varied from physical therapy, teaching in higher education, to training and education at the NIH! Therefore, every individual will have their own career path and as Dr. Milgram quoted “when it comes to choosing a career, one size does not fit all.” It was important to understand what I like to call the central dogma of career planning: knowing yourself and the options, gaining credentials, job searching, and ultimately performing the job which are all reversible processes that can be intertwined.

The first step of having self-knowledge encompasses knowing your professional interest, personality traits, learning styles, and work preferences. In addition, it is important to identify your credentials, know your strengths and the

areas where you are highly developed, but also understand and identify the skills that need to be further developed. These skill sets that will develop with time and experience can be analytical, budget management, communication, leadership, mentoring, and project management to list a few. Dr. Milgram discussed the importance of defining your skills during the career exploration process and highlighted the use of transferrable skills, which are acquired during any activities in your life that can be applied to a future job.

Furthermore, personal and geographical restrictions should also be considered during the career planning process and not overlooked. For example, if a prospective job requires for you to travel 4-5 days per week, but you have no interest in traveling, it would be beneficial to identify your limitations and constraints before accepting or applying for that particular position.

Now you may ask, how do I get started with planning my career path? Dr. Milgram provided two basic questions: (1) In my job, I want to _____ every day and (2) I do not want to do a lot of _____. As scientists it is important to understand all of the available options and not only focus on the traditional career routes. There are many careers paths in STEM including Administration, Business, Consulting, Education, Healthcare Management, Law, Policy, Research and Development, and Technology to name a few of the major categories¹. So I guess you may ask, how do I find information about the various science career opportunities? The OITE here at the NIH provides regular workshops on careers in science. In addition, it is beneficial to attend panel discussions that are also hosted by the OITE and other affiliated campus organizations such as the Science Policy Discussion group, the Taiwanese Association, and other affiliated campus organizations. Dr. Milgram discussed these passive approaches along with reading specific blogs, websites, and books focused on the area interest. The workshop also highlighted the importance of networking and conducting informational interviews, which are great ways to build relationships with potential mentors and

employers, learn more about specific professional careers, and provide an opportunity to ask questions before and during the career transition periods². Additionally, take advantage of the alumni databases at the NIH, and at previous colleges and universities attended, join professional societies related to the career area of interest, and through professional networking sites such as Linked-In.

For more information regarding science career workshops, panel discussions, and career counseling here at the NIH, visit the websites provided below.

(1) <http://stemcareer.com/>

(2) https://www.training.nih.gov/assets/Informational_Interviews.pdf

(3) www.training.nih.gov

(4) https://www.training.nih.gov/career_services/appointments

Where are they now? From Bench to Assistant Teaching Professor

A conversation with Dr. Maria Julia Massimelli

By Christine C. Jao, PhD

Dr. Maria Julia Massimelli received her PhD in Biology from Universidad Nacional de Rio Cuarto in Argentina in 2008 where she studied gene regulation of choline in *P. aeruginosa*. She was a Visiting Fellow at NCI for three years in the lab of Dr. Zhi-Ming Zheng in the Center for Cancer Research, where she studied post-transcriptional regulation of non-coding RNA in Kaposi Sarcoma-associated Herpes virus. She is currently an Assistant Teaching Professor at the School of Biological Sciences, University of California,

Irvine. Below is a conversation with Dr. Massimelli about her career.

Q: Please describe your current position.

MJM: My current position is a teaching tenure-track. It is a permanent position, with full senate benefits and participation. However, unlike research assistant professors, my promotions and tenure are evaluated mainly on teaching. Assistant Teaching Professors are evaluated as follows: teaching (60-80%), professional achievement and activity (10-20%), and university/public service (10-20%).

Q: At which point in your training did you know that you would like to pursue a teaching career?

MJM: My teaching activities as a graduate student in Argentina, where I am from, were part of a program to maintain tuition-free schools where all graduate students were required to work as teaching assistants for one year. I quickly understood the importance of science education and I voluntarily continued working as a teaching assistant every year during my PhD studies. Although I enjoyed my teaching activities during grad school, it wasn't until I moved to the NIH where I had a research-only job that I realized teaching is part of who I am and decided to pursue a teaching career. With this in mind, I started my teaching career by complementing my research-focused postdoc with teaching activities which gave me the "previous teaching experience" I needed to apply for teaching positions. I led a Journal Club for summer interns and I was also selected as Instructor of the Community College Summer Enrichment Program (CCSEP) 2011 offered by NIH Office of Intramural Training & Education (OITE). I also participated in many of the seminars, webinars, and courses offered at the NIH OITE (e.g. Scientists Teaching Science).

Q: Please describe your job search.

MJM: While still at the NIH, I searched for teaching jobs using online search tools (Higher-Ed, Chronicles of Higher Education, etc.). I found two or three jobs I liked and started drafting

application packages. After I had all my drafts, I met with NIH OITE counselors to get feedback on my application documents. They did an incredible job! They patiently walked me through my CV, and gave me feedback on my teaching statements and cover letters. I also got feedback from colleagues and friends. I submitted all the applications and received two interview requests. I scheduled an appointment with the NIH OITE counselor for a mock interview before my favorite "real" interview. This was really helpful and made the whole process easier and more natural. Organizing your thoughts and coming up with answers for the most typical interview questions really made my interview day go very smoothly. I received an offer for my favorite job!

Q: Please describe your career path, and how you obtained your current position.

MJM: After my postdoc, I realized that I wasn't ready for a tenure-track teaching position as they usually require a lot more teaching experience that I had. For example, I had never designed and taught my own course, and this is a must for tenure-track jobs focused on teaching. For this reason, I concentrated my initial search on teaching postdocs and "visiting professorship" positions. I was a visiting assistant professor at a liberal arts college in Southern California in the Keck Science Department for three years. I spent the summer of my second year at the department writing my job application packages. Finding teaching tenure-track jobs is not that easy. Higher-Ed and Chronicle of Higher Education are two great resources to find them, but I needed more help. This is when a professional membership came handy. I am a member of the American Society for Microbiology (ASM) which is fully committed to science education. I was selected for an ASM program called "Teaching Fellows" which aims to prepare doctoral-trained students for science teaching positions at a variety of non-doctoral institutions. I found my current position at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) on Higher-Ed, and I immediately knew this was the position I wanted: a teaching-centered tenure-track with start-up funds to initiate my own educational research program.

Q: What advice would you give to someone who would like a teaching career?

MJM: Don't assume that you are ready for a teaching job because you have taught a class or two. Education is changing and most teaching-centered jobs are looking for candidates with skills beyond just mere classroom teaching. They want candidates fully trained in the National Education Initiative and who know how to implement active learning and assess progression in a quantitative manner. Get involved, read, learn.

The contents of this article were approved by Dr. Massimelli.

Where are they now? From Bench to Industry: An Interview with Dr. Holger Pflücke

By Aysegul Ergen, PhD

Dr. Holger received his PhD degree from the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry in Martinsried, Germany. He came to the National Cancer Institute (NCI) as a postdoctoral fellow in 2010 and worked in the lab of Dr. Udo Rudloff (Thoracic and Gastrointestinal Oncology Branch) until 2014. After his postdoctoral work, he went back to his home country and applied for jobs in the United States. Currently, Dr. Holger is working for vivoPharm, LLC in Hershey, PA as a study director, where he is responsible for the study design and management of clients in the US, Europe, Asia and Australia.

Q: Which skills did you develop during your postdoctoral training that helped you to get into your current position?

HP: I chose the position at the NCI since I knew that I did not want to stay in academia. Therefore, I needed skills that were transferable to industry. This included, but was not limited to any aspects

and techniques of preclinical drug development and animal models of cancer. At this point I would also like to give a big shout-out to Dr. Sharon Milgram and Dr. Lori Conlan and everyone else at the Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE) for providing such great services for fellows receiving training at the NIH. Everyone should attend as many workshops and courses as possible since they are very helpful and visit the counselors in Building 2 of the Bethesda campus to talk and get advice!

Q: How did you find your current position?

HP: I heard about the company through a friend back in Germany and applied to a position they posted on their website. At that point, my wife and I were looking for opportunities in Germany since finding a position in the US proved to be more difficult than anticipated. When I had the interview, the company told me they would rather hire me for a position here in the US, which fit our original plan. In the end it was a combination of chance and luck (as it often is during a job search).

Q: How did you prepare for your interview?

HP: Having a few informational interviews before applying for jobs helped a lot in preparing for good questions, answers, and getting an idea about the type of jobs I was looking for. The internet is a vast recourse on what might happen during job interviews (OITE's website!!!). Before each interview I researched background information about the company, and looked for any news articles about the company such as any major drug releases and cooperation announcements. I also figured out how my skill sets fit the position requirements, in addition to what I may have been lacking. I seriously thought about my strengths, weaknesses, and any long-term goals that I had. As long as I felt prepared, I was reasonably confident during the interview.

Q: What do you like about your job?

HP: It's a nice mix of computer and bench work. I can still do some model development, which I like, it's a team-oriented environment, and I help our

clients from all over the world to advance their products to the next stage.

Q: What will be the next step in your career?

HP: Within the next 3-5 years, I would like to move into a sole project management position (very little hands-on work required) with more managerial responsibility.

Q: What are the soft skills needed for this type of job?

HP: While being a scientist can sometimes mean you are a lone wolf, one definitely has to be a team player in this type of position. Great communication skills are essential within the company and particularly when dealing with clients. My clients are located in various areas of the world - every culture and every person is different. Attention to detail, time management, and excellent organization skills are a must.

Q: What kind of experience, paid or unpaid, would you encourage for pursuing a career in this field?

HP: While a comprehensive skill set covering a good range of in vitro and in vivo techniques is helpful, it is not all one needs in this type of job. Any experience outside the lab is valuable for acquiring and sharpening the type of soft skills discussed previously. Actively taking part in FelCom, helping to organize the NIH Career Symposia, volunteering, and networking is extremely important. I wish I had started utilizing these activities earlier in my career path and participated more frequently, because in this day and age it is very hard to obtain positions solely by applying through online job advertisements.

Q8: Does your company support H1 visa?

HP: For certain positions the company will sponsor visas.

The contents of this article were approved by Dr. Pflücke.

Upcoming Events

VFC Karaoke & Social Event

September 2, 2015

6PM

Flanagan's Harp and Fiddle
4844 Cordell Ave in Bethesda

Grab a microphone and channel your inner musical star. Join the VFC for its next social event at Flanagan's Harp and Fiddle for a night of Karaoke!

VFC Monthly Lunch

September 18, 2015

12PM

2nd floor cafeteria, Building 10

Looking for an easy way to meet new people without having to veer very far from your lab? Join the VFC for its monthly lunches held at the 2nd floor cafeteria in Building 10 every 3rd Friday of each month where you can bring your lunch and chat with other fellows. Look for the Visiting Fellows sign.

VFC Science Voices from Home:

Poland

October 19, 2015

4PM

Building 2, Room 2W15

Representatives from the Polish Embassy and Foundation for Polish Science will be on the NIH campus to discuss career opportunities in Poland. This is a good opportunity to have an informal, personal discussion with individuals who can give you insight to your career path and identify opportunities abroad.

Accent Reduction Workshop with

APAO

September 10, 2015

12:30PM

National Library of Medicine Building
2nd Floor Conference Room B

Learning and speaking English can be quite a challenge, particularly with so many different sounds that come with just a few vowels. Sara Kaul, the current president of the Asian & Pacific Islander American Organization (APAO) will be hosting an Accent Reduction Workshop. Using

practical exercises and group work, the goal is to gain confidence in sounding like an American when you speak.

**Global Health Interest Group
Symposium**

October 15, 2015

12:30PM – 5PM

Building 45 (Natcher), Balcony B

The NIH Global Health Interest Group (GHIG) was founded in 2012 by Dr. Jessica Taffe, a NIH postdoctoral fellow, and continues to be led by fellows and young scientists both at the NIH and the Uniformed Services University. The mission of the GHIG is to unite and strengthen the NIH community interested in and conducting research projects related to the interdisciplinary field of global health. To achieve our goal, the GHIG regularly holds global health seminars featuring speakers within and outside NIH and brings together members of the NIH community through social and professional networking. Some of the GHIG events include a monthly seminar series, documentary film screenings, social hours or brown bag lunches with speakers, and an annual symposium.

The NIH Global Health Interest Group's annual symposium will take place on Thursday, October 15, 2015 from 12:30 pm-5 pm in Building 45 (Natcher), Balcony B. This year's theme is "The Impact of Climate Change on Global Health". Weather and climate play significant roles in people's health. Warmer average temperatures or increases in the frequency/severity of extreme weather events induced by climate change could increase the number of weather-related illnesses and deaths and impact border security over key resources. Please join us for a discussion on how climate change affects all of us.

To register, please click on the following link and fill out the form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1M4ORFKjpwzm58spcORCrwHLjae6EHcEfWKEyV4gsaAw/viewform>

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Looking for Leadership Opportunities?

Join the NIH Visiting Fellows Committee (VFC), an organization that is:

- dedicated to building community amongst the NIH's diverse fellow population;
- committed to bringing career building resources and events to the fellows of the NIH;

Become a voice regarding issues of importance to visiting fellows.

Help your career as you help your colleagues.

Contact any of the Visiting Fellows Committee officers below to find out about being a part of the VFC.

WE ARE ON THE WEB

<https://www.training.nih.gov/felcom/visitingfellows2>