The Academy for Future Science Faculty

Group II - Advanced Stage PhD Students

Get a BIG head-start on the next critical step toward an academic career!

Answers to some Questions you might have…

What will be the format of the Summer Academies?

The Summer Academies will be a mixture of workshops, discussions, practice sessions for skill-building, and general networking among students and Coaches. Some of the time will be spent in the large group with all 60 students and 6 Coaches, and some will be spent in smaller groups of 10 students and their Coach. Meals will also be together in various combinations of small groups. It will be a busy few days but there will be time for socializing.

What kinds of topics will be covered in the Summer Academies?

The summer meetings will be long enough to accomplish a great deal but short enough that they will not interfere significantly with your PhD program requirements; the time will be similar to or less than other professional meetings. The topics covered in each of the two Summer Academies will be carefully selected so they are most relevant to you for the upcoming academic year while also helping you plan and prepare for the longer road ahead. Below is a summary of the kinds of topics to be covered each summer. The details of the schedule are still being created and the design of year two will depend on how much we accomplish during year one as well as the desires and needs of students.

Summer Academy 2012 – July 21-23

- The Roadmap to an Academic Career – what is a faculty search committee looking for?
- An introduction to social science theories that reveal and explain the social dynamics that highly impact scientific development and success
- Self-assessment – Where are you now, what are you good at, what do you need to get better at?
- Balancing multiple identities – scientific, professional & personal
- Identifying a scientific niche for your future
- A search strategy for identifying your postdoctoral experience
- Thinking ahead toward independence
- NIH Grant Writing – A Novel Approach to Writing Grants that Simultaneously Refines Scientific Thinking and Enhances Precision of Writing
- Interviewing and managing how others perceive you
- Networking
- One-on-one time with an Academic Career Coach

Summer Academy 2013 – 2 days

- The transition into a new research group or other postdoctoral setting
- Keeping focused on a clear research direction and/or balancing multiple projects
- Building mentoring skills
- NIH Grant writing – the next steps
- Other topics that students and Coaches identify as important to cover

What will happen between the Summer Academies?

You will be very busy with finishing your PhD program so the Academy will not add on a great deal of extra time or requirements to your schedule. Nor will it interfere with what you are learning from and accomplishing with your research mentors. But the full Academy group and each 10 student coaching group will stay connected using a variety of social networking and other tools. Each of the coaching groups will develop their own preference for frequency of ‘meeting’ synchronously or asynchronously and individuals will be encouraged to keep in touch with each other as they wish. Coaches will check in with students on a regular basis to see how things are going. Throughout the year, we will also run our Academy Scientific and Professional Skills
Series, designed to pass on invaluable advice and information that will be of interest to everyone at the closing stages of their PhD.

Who are the Academic Career Coaches?
The Coaches have been carefully chosen for their demonstrated skill at guiding the development of young scientists, especially within diverse communities. They all have expertise in bench research and extensive experience mentoring graduate students and postdocs and promoting collaborations among scientists from diverse backgrounds; many are playing leadership roles in their universities in this capacity. Many of them are national leaders in various organizations focused on training of biomedical scientists. The Academy will draw from their extensive expertise as it continues to develop. They are highly committed to the Academy as an experimental model to be developed and studied and are fully prepared to give the time necessary to make it work most effectively for the benefit of Academy students.

Who is leading the Academy?
Dr. Rick McGee spent 20 years as a bench scientist and gradually shifted his full-time effort to guiding the development of young scientists and clinicians. He has played leadership roles in PhD and MD/PhD training at four academic health centers plus the NIH. In the past 15 years he shifted from just leading traditional research training programs to studying them and designing new approaches to address some of their inherent limitations. Much of his work has included an extra emphasis on efforts to bring into the research community students whose backgrounds are different from those that predominate. The Academy is part of the Scientific Careers Research and Development Group (SCRDG) at Northwestern, led by Dr. McGee, that includes 14 people, including senior investigators, PhD level social science researchers, and program coordinators. Being situated within this diverse group of natural and social scientists provides the Academy with access to and expertise of a broad array of resources.

Why emphasize diversity and why is NIH interested in it?
The rapidly changing demographic makeup of the U.S. and the critical need to fully involve the full breadth of our population in science careers is old news. But the value of bringing diverse backgrounds, experiences, and ways of thinking together to identify which research questions to pursue and most creatively solve them is only recently being fully appreciated. Additionally, as research questions become more complex and methods to solve them more sophisticated, it requires bigger research teams and more advanced interpersonal skills for working in them. The Academy is designed to actively bring young scientists together from different genders, races, ethnicities and socio-economic statuses with very different life experiences, interests, and expertise as the best way to take advantage of the benefits of diversity, promote career success, and position students for leadership roles in developing the talents of future scientists who will learn from them.

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