

National Academies' Committee Meeting: Perspectives on Postdoctoral Researchers

Dr. Samantha Hindle
Assistant Professional Researcher, UCSF
[@HindleSamantha](#)



Who am I?



Research Environment Opinion Survey at UCSF

Question 1: What is your current career stage?

Question 2: Career preference: please tell us which of these options best matches your current career goal

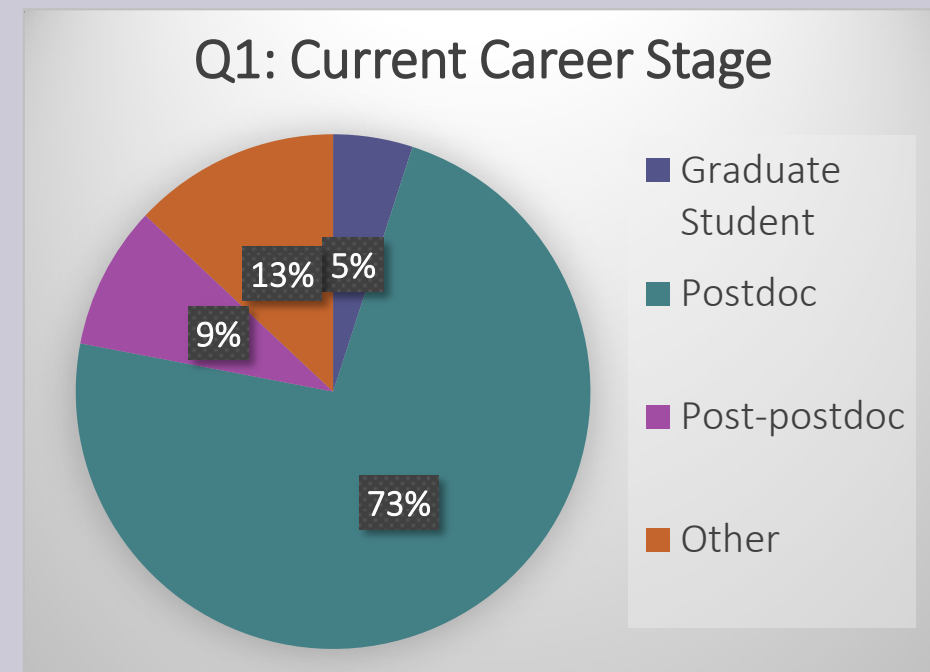
Question 3: If your career preference changed during your research training, please tell us your previous career choice

Question 4: What are your reasons for choosing your current career preference?

Question 5: Have you experienced any barriers during your scientific training that have led you to question your career preference?

Question 6: Do you have suggestions for how your research training environment could have been improved to avoid these barriers?

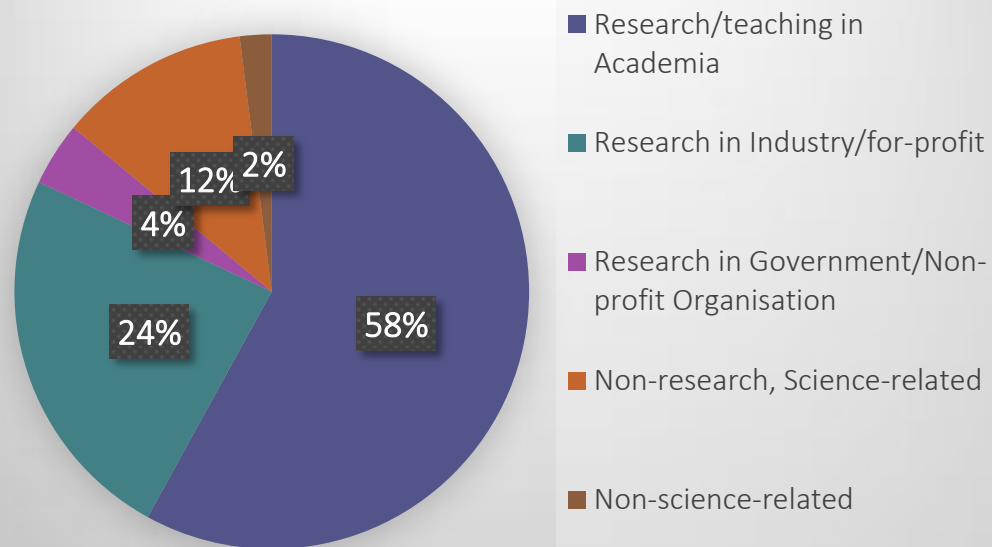
Question 7: If you have any other comments (positive or negative) about your research training environment, please state them here



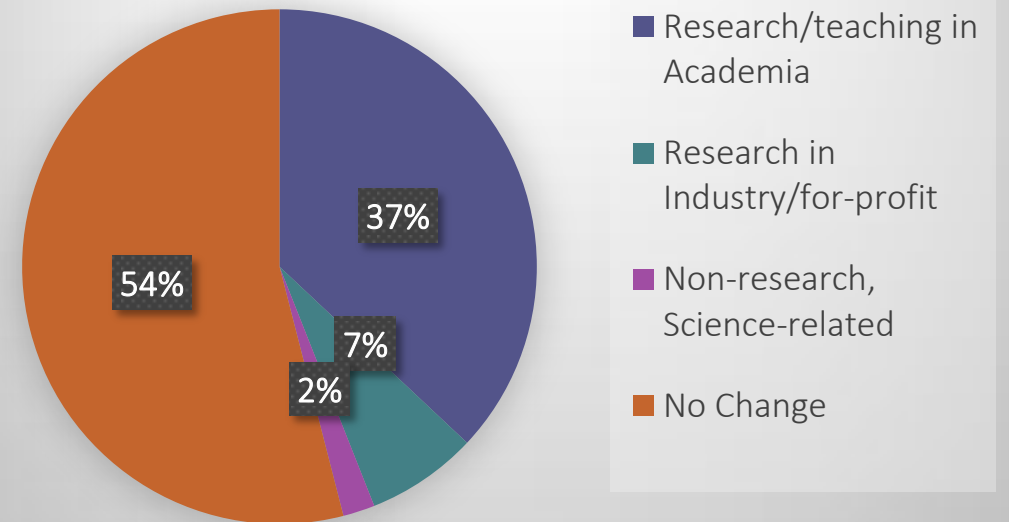
N= 59 responses

Research Environment Opinion Survey at UCSF

Q2: Current Career Goal



Q3: Original Career Goal



Research Environment Opinion Survey at UCSF

Question 5: Have you experienced any barriers during your scientific training that have led you to question your career preference?

- **PI/Postdoc (Graduate student) power differential:** “PI using manuscript authorship as a bait to get students or postdocs to stay” and “I feel like I can't be open about my goals.” and “The sticky issue is what can be taken to an independent position...Postdocs are pretty powerless, and can't do anything about this.”
- **Family planning:** “It seemed that I had to sacrifice important time with my young child to be able to advance my work, all while feeling judged by my colleagues and mentors for making the decision to start a family.”
- **Insufficient structure and support:** “if I worked in a company, there would be a reporting structure and shared accountability. instead, as a postdoc, I'm all on my own to sink or swim.”
- **Success measured by publications:** “My PI is not fair in giving authorship credit on publications. The university HR department is aware of my PI misconduct and has never done anything about it. I feel like PIs have tremendous power that allows them to behave in a very unprofessional way and there is nothing HR or department chair can do or are willing to do about it.”

Research Environment Opinion Survey at UCSF

Question 6: Do you have suggestions for how your research training environment could have been improved to avoid these barriers?

- **PI/Postdoc (Graduate student) power differential:** “University action on behaviors that hold one back/power games” and “There should be some control system in place to prevent this type of abusive behaviour...maybe some sort of committee, or office, maybe a two-way annual review system, where the grad student or postdoc gets to evaluate the PI... An academic mentor -not the PI, and preferably in a different department- scheme”
- **Family planning:** “I believe more can be done to support female (but also male) postdocs with young children. As I was working on my project on my own, my work would have benefitted from the help by an RA or technician. I believe that my PI could have made more resources and support available to me during this time, but the attitude was that it was my fault the project was not progressing faster and I should not be rewarded.”
- **Insufficient structure and support:** “I think PIs need to receive training in how to mentor people. This is very standard practice for managerial positions in non-academic career settings. I think most PIs are well-meaning people who are both very skilled and intelligent, but going through the independence gauntlet of academia to get the papers to become a PI I think may actually disincentivize people from taking time out of their careers to learn how to mentor.”
- **Success measured by publications:** “Come up with new measures of success outside of impact factor and number of publications”

N= 59 responses

Success metrics are wrong

Publication record (# of papers in “high impact” journals) = Fundability

=> Pressure

=> Rigor and reproducibility issues

=> Secrecy and massive fear of being scooped

=> Deflating as feels like success is down to luck

=> Good scientists leave academia

Metrics for success are wrong and can lead to a skewed perspective of what it means to be a good PI

- Solutions: change the metrics by incentivizing a broader outlook of what a good PI should be
 - => greater incentives to develop skills away from bench, e.g. in communication, teaching, management/business
 - => alternate metrics for measuring success, e.g. citations, reuse metrics, contribution to peer review, outreach
 - => more PI role models with diverse skill-sets
 - => generate new roles in R1/R2 institutions that welcome/encourage these skills, e.g. teaching vs research-only
- What have I done to try and help fix this?
 - => iBiology Young Scientist Seminar Series: coaching Graduate students and Postdocs in science communication
 - => Postdoc Slam Easy group: develop effective science communication with Postdocs
 - => ASAPbio Ambassador: preprint education and advocacy
 - => Preprint Journal Club: to help train early career researchers in peer review and promote open peer review

Is it a training position?

Role: to adhere to well-defined learning outcomes
Compensation: time and room to learn broad skill-set, some ownership over your data??

PI's Role: a mentor to guide postdocs to reach their desired career outcome (discussed before join lab)

- Creates clear expectations
- Avoids issues caused by PI/Postdoc power differential

What is a Postdoc, anyway?



Or a staff researcher position?

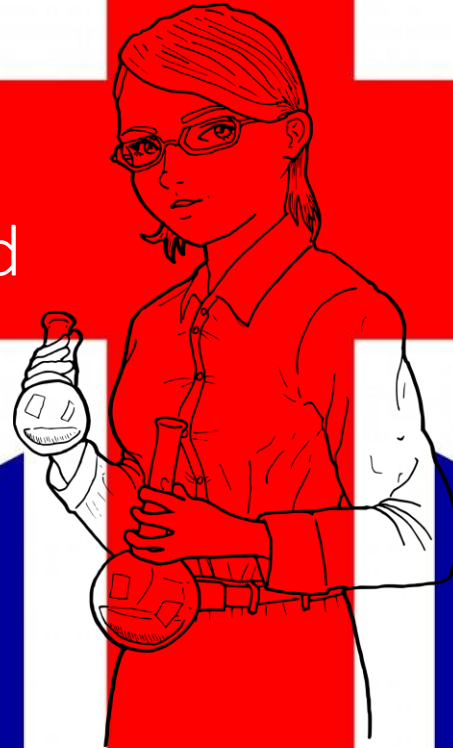
Role: to produce data and publish
Compensation: decent salary

PI's Role: a supervisor

Factors specific to international postdocs (~600 postdocs at UCSF)

Eligibility period for K99/R00
Pathway to Independence Award

Visa pressures and
J1 => H1B transition



Supportive initiatives provided at UCSF

Postdoc Office and PSA:

- Postdoc Slam
- Postdoc Interest Groups
- Bay Area Postdoc Symposium
- Data collection on career outcomes



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Office of Career and Professional Development (OCPD):

- Career development workshops (e.g. STEP-UP)
- Career exploration workshops/courses (e.g. MIND)
- Database generation for networking/career exploration (e.g. MINDbank and UCSFconnect)
- One-on-one training and support
- Data collection for career readiness guidance (ACRA)

International Students and Scholars Office:

- Host events to create an international scholar community
- Provide information and support about visa issues

UCSF Office of Career & Professional Development
Student Academic Affairs

serving students & postdocs

Interested in a faculty position at a research-intensive (R1) institution?
What to hear the personal experiences of UCSF postdocs that recently accepted faculty positions at R1 institutions?
Panel: Recently hired R1 faculty
Wednesday, Sept 27
1:30 p.m. - 3 p.m.
Mission Bay
bit.ly/recently-hired-faculty

Need to practice for your faculty job talk?
Practicing the faculty job talk
Friday, October 6
11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Mission Bay
bit.ly/jobtalkpractice

Need feedback on your application?
Getting feedback on your application materials for faculty positions
Sept. 14th
1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Mission Bay
bit.ly/faculty-feedback

Waiting for a faculty job offer?
NEGOTIATING your faculty job offer
Tuesday, Nov 7
1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Mission Bay, SH 1405
bit.ly/negotiation-qa

Applying to faculty positions?
Overview
Hiring requirements
CVs and Cover Letters
Statements
Feedback on materials
Job talk
Chalk talk
Negotiating
Budget and negotiation strategy
PAC-UP Programs
Planning your Academic Career for Upcoming Professors

September is non-profit and think tank month
NON PROFIT
bit.ly/sep2017
Non-profits and think tanks: what are my options?
Networking strategies for a career in a non-profit or think tank
CV/Resume workshop: Emphasis on non-profit and think tank
Every Month is Career Exploration Month for PhD!

Scan this code to hear about upcoming programs!

career.ucsf.edu