

Pod Activity #1

Guide for Senior Postdocs

Estimated Time: 1 hour

Venue: Virtual or In-Person

Completion: Between March 1-15, 2022

Icebreaker Questions

Time: ~30 minutes

Goal: Get to know each other and open lines of communication regarding professional and non-professional interests.

Notes: All of these questions are starting points for discussion. You can pick and choose which ones you want to tackle. If the conversation wanders, that's perfectly okay! The first part is designed for you to get to know each other, and the second part is designed to identify topics of concern, which can be delved further into during sponsored coffee sessions.

Intro:

1. Share your name, pronouns, # years at Rockefeller and host lab.

Personal/Get-to-know questions:

2. If you feel comfortable sharing, where did you grow up? How is NYC different or similar to where you grew up?
3. Favorite thing about NYC & least favorite thing about NYC
4. What are some activities you enjoy outside of the lab? (take note of common interests for Pod activity #2)
5. Would you describe yourself as an introvert? Extrovert? Both? Why?
6. Do you live on or off campus? What do you like about it? What don't you like about it? If you'd like to share: do you live on your own, with friends/roommates, or family?

Rockefeller-related questions:

7. Why did you choose to come to Rockefeller for your postdoc?
8. Are there any aspects of Rockefeller that you would like to know more about (clubs, events, organizational support, etc.)?

Science/work questions:

9. What lab are you in? In 1 sentence (only 1!), or a haiku, describe your research. (Everyone can take 3-4 minutes to compose, or challenge each other to do it on the spot.)
10. What is a source of excitement and/or enjoyment for you right now in your work?
11. What is(are) a source(s) of anxiety for you right now in your work?

Career questions:

12. What would a successful postdoctoral phase entail for you?
13. If you could choose any type of job after your postdoc, what would it be like? Where would it be? What would the day-to-day look like?
14. In what ways is your chosen career path 1) aligned and 2) in conflict, with your non-professional and/or personal interests?

Reading Discussion Questions (optional)

Time: ~15 minutes

Goal: To begin discussing the joys and obstacles of a life in science and identify some shared and/or distinct experiences among pod members.

Notes: See some suggested readings at end of document and choose 1 for pod members to read prior to meeting. They are all very short articles!

1. What about this article resonated with you?
2. Was there any aspect of the article that frustrated you?

3. Are there facets of the article that seem outdated, particularly given the current states of the scientific enterprise, academic ecosystem, and/or the world at-large?

Planning for the Future

Time: ~15 minutes

Goal: Begin making plans for the month of March.

Notes: Explain the purpose and process for informal coffee breaks and brainstorm for Pod Activity #2. If you are particularly busy between March 15-31st, frame the brainstorm around activities that are possible for you.

1. Self-scheduled coffee breaks (a few minutes)

Consider whether there are certain topics you'd like to explore as a pod, or one-on-one with members of your pod.

- "Postdoc Buddy System" is name of the tab at Bass
- \$3 purchase limit for beverage (doesn't have to be coffee)
- One participant submits coffee break google form within 24 hrs of meeting (on behalf of all participants):

<https://forms.gle/D4sQ2V9uzkfx2XLV9>

2. Brainstorm for Self-Guided Pod Activity #2 (~ 10 min)

Goal: Converge on an activity and schedule a time/date for the activity.

Notes: Ideally you will choose this activity today. If this is not possible, move the discussion to SLACK after this meeting. See some suggestions at the end of this document. Prior to meeting, consider your own availability in March and try to steer the conversation around what is possible for you. Have a discussion about comfort with indoors versus outdoors activities.

Wrap-Up

Time: ~5 minutes

Goals: Establish shared expectations for the next few weeks.

1. If Pod Activity #2 has been chosen, choose a time and date. If this is not yet possible after brainstorming, then move the discussion to SLACK. Please aim to schedule the activity before March 31 (+/- a few days).
2. Did any suggestions for a pod coffee break emerge? If so, choose a time/date.
3. Encourage use of SLACK for impromptu coffee breaks among pod (doesn't have to include the entire group; 2 participants minimum), and/or joining each other for in-person seminars or at the Faculty Club.

Appendix**Suggested Supplemental Readings**

Choose 1 thought-provoking commentary about life in science (a few suggestions below), to be read by the pod prior to meeting.

Living Science: A good life, by Eve Marder (2012)

<https://elifesciences.org/articles/00353>

“Following a career in science involves long hours and hard work, but...it can also be extremely rewarding.”

Living Science: Words without meaning, by Eve Marder (2020)

<https://elifesciences.org/articles/54867>

“Many of the words used by scientists when reviewing manuscripts, job candidates, and grant applications—words such as incremental, novelty, mechanism, descriptive and impact—have lost their meaning.”

Living Science: Triaging Shakespeare, by Indira Raman (2015)

<https://elifesciences.org/articles/07157>

“After acknowledging that power differentials exist, can scientists find inspiration to persevere anyway?”

Living Science: Power analysis, by Indira Raman (2019)

<https://elifesciences.org/articles/52232>

“What if every creative endeavor had to go through Peer Review?”

The Awesomest 7-Year Postdoc, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Tenure-Track Faculty Life, by Radhika Nagpal (2013)

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/the-awesomest-7-year-postdoc-or-how-i-learned-to-stop-worrying-and-love-the-tenure-track-faculty-life/>

Suggestions for Pod Activity #2

Free or Cheap (\$)

Go on a stroll around Central Park

- Grab a coffee & croissant at Sail Boat Pond
- Go geocaching (challenge another pod in a contest?)
- Rent Citibikes and enjoy the loop road
- Go birdwatching

Movie Night

Game Night

Grab ice cream or gelato in the neighborhood

New York Earth Room in Soho (Free)

Ride the Staten Island Ferry (Free)

Take a fast ferry to Brooklyn (Free)

Check out MoMA or the Met (Free w/ RU ID)

Take a [tour of the New York Public Library](#) & check out [current exhibitions](#) (Free)

Visit the [High Line](#) (Free)

Visit the [NY Transit Museum](#) (\$10/person)

\$\$ A little more expensive

Grab drinks and/or a meal off campus; try a new cuisine together!

Grab Dim Sum in Chinatown (some locations, like Nom Wah Tea Parlor have outdoor seating, if desired)

Go on a tenement museum walking tour (\$30/person)

Check out the NY Botanical Garden in the Bronx (\$30/person)

Check out one (or a few) breweries in Brooklyn or Queens (join forces with another pod!). Many venues have outdoor seating.

Central Park Zoo (\$20/person), easy to walk to from campus.

Watch an opera or Broadway show (rush tickets from \$35)

Watch a comedy show (\$20-30)

Watch a jazz or classical concert

Check out the Brooklyn Botanical Garden (\$18/person)

Paths of Minimal Resistance (if scheduling

becomes impossible)

Lunch or breakfast at Bass

Order delivery lunch or dinner

Drinks at the Faculty Club