

POSTDOC FELLOWSHIPS

According to Caitlin...

Postdoc mentoring committee hosting a discussion of academic jobs on Oct 10! Go!

Disclaimer

Receiving a postdoc fellowship in astronomy means you're good at playing the game. The standards and rules of the game are inherently white, patriarchal, neurotypical, heteronormative, and classist. This is not good. This should be dismantled and rebuilt to remove biases and discrimination.

I hope to shed light on some of the rules of the game while acknowledging they are problematic and biased. Knowing what they are is crucial to “winning the game” then working to change them from within.

Rules of the game

- Be prepared and proactive years in advance: it's a lottery, but only for those who have worked super hard and done their homework.
- Be ambitious! But not outlandish. Be specific, but most importantly, cognizant of the big picture.
- Organization and timescale: have your ducks lined up in a row in August / September before applying...
- Prepare for devastation, uncertainty, and waves of intense jealousy.
- Rumor mill
- I have a job. Should I apply for another one?

Be prepared and proactive years in advance: it's a lottery, but only for those who have worked super hard and done their homework.

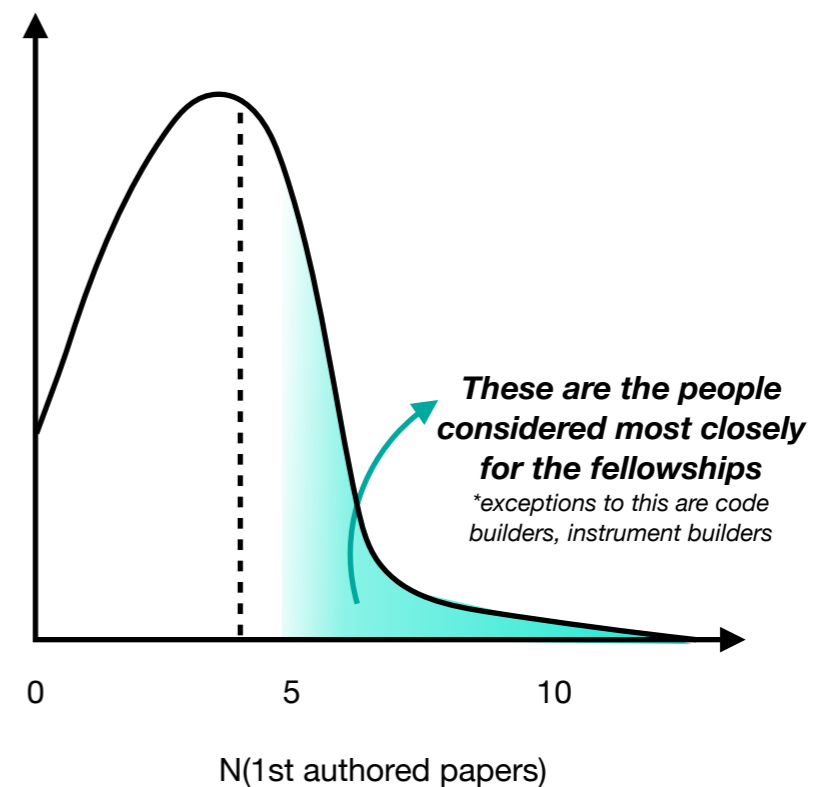
WRITE PAPERS, WRITE PAPERS, WRITE PAPERS, and

CREATE YOUR OWN UNIQUE SCIENCE VISION. How do you see yourself contributing uniquely to astronomy? What big picture questions do you want to answer? How has your track record demonstrated success in addressing those questions so far?

Meet a bunch of people at conferences. Make real connections, and not just with other grads/postdocs. How might you write a paper together? Do NOT rely on your advisor making those connections for you.

Who are your letter writers? You need three, and preferably from different institutions, all tied to your **research**. The more senior / well-known/well-respected, the better, but they should know you and your work.

- * are they writing a letter for multiple people for the same job?
- * are they going to write you an unequivocally positive letter?
- * what do you wish the letter writer highlights in their letter? do they know it?



Be ambitious! But not outlandish. Be specific, but most importantly, cognizant of the big picture.

This is not a telescope proposal or a funding proposal.

Reviewers should come away feeling that they've read a proposal to do something new, ambitious, and inspired.

- * Use backward design to write your proposal:
 1. why is this compelling?
 2. how will I do this?
 3. what I need to do it.
- * On a scale beyond what you've done as a student (3-5x more ambitious work?)
- * Read multiple prior successful proposals for inspiration, and you'll get the idea of what it should sound like. There is an art to writing these proposals well.
- * Why should all astronomers care to fund your work? Why is it urgently needed?
- * Why does this work need to be done at Institution X?
- * Get a professor you trust (who is in a field different than you) to read your application materials and give you honest feedback.

Different types of fellowships demand different approaches: institute fellows vs. nationally-funded fellows.

Do not underestimate the importance of highlighting why you are needed at an institute: how they benefit from having you, not just how you benefit from being there.

Organization and timescale: have your ducks lined up in a row in August / September before applying...

Flesh out the entire calendar of deadlines as far enough in advance as possible (use past rumor mills to inform this if deadlines are not yet published). Create a google doc of deadlines and requirements.

Let letter writers know *WELL* in advance that you are asking them to write you letters for the season, and create a google doc for *THEM* with all of the information they need on deadlines, information on submitting letters, etc. Then send them email reminders as well (unless you know they have submitted the letters already). If they are bad at doing this on time, GET SOMEONE ELSE TO DO IT.

First thing to do, starting in ~August is to flesh out general form of the research proposal. Don't worry about specific criteria for one fellowship, which can be addressed once this is mostly on paper and you're pleased with the product. (possible exception: NSF Broader Impacts criterion)

If you decide *NOT* to apply to a job on your list, let your letter writers know. Once you get a job, let your letter writers know, and seek out their advice on what to do next!

Prepare for devastation, uncertainty, and waves of intense jealousy.

Have a backup plan.

- * If you want to stay in astronomy no matter what, think of how to obtain funding to make that happen, or contact a PI elsewhere who could pay for you for a short period of time (~1 year) while you try to secure something else. You might also have to accept a job you were not expecting, somewhere on the other side of the world.
- * Always have a backup plan outside of astronomy: teaching, policy, industry, etc.

Acknowledge the pain of uncertainty and practice self-care during the long process (~ August - April), and know that your sense of self-worth should not be tied up in the drama of it all.

It is a lottery: are you in the right place at the right time, working on the right project? Reviewers might think yes or no depending on personal interests, which is completely out of your control.

Jealousy: it's real, and I think it's healthy to acknowledge. Some folks (~1-2 per year) strike gold and get ALL the job offers, and let EVERYONE know it on the rumor mill. Try to practice being happy for them, as long as they aren't jerks (just because they post about it on the rumor mill does not make them jerks).

Rumor Mill — caution: it can be an amazingly informative tool, but also an unhealthy obsession.

AstroBetter *Tips and Tricks for Professional Astronomers*

Blog About Archives Support Wiki

Astrophysics Jobs Rumor Mill - Postdoc & Term

Recent revisions - Faculty & Staff Page - Previous Years

To edit the page anonymously, do not be logged in.

Recent revisions can be seen by clicking the History button at the bottom of the page. If you register for an account on the wiki and login, you can also Monitor the page by clicking on the eyeball in the upper right and receive email notifications of changes. (An RSS feed of recent changes is in progress.)

You can add new rows by right clicking within the table.

Please include a link to the job when adding it to the list.

If possible, include names and dates when offers are made and accepted, since this helps to differentiate wrong rumors from right ones. Use **boldface** to indicate when a position has been accepted.

An old revision should not be restored at any time! Unless, of course, you manage to make so many errors while editing the page that you can't fix them all one by one. Then you can go back by **one** revision. If you go back by more you've also erased other people's rumors inadvertently.

If a rumor you put on keeps getting removed by someone else (and that rumor is not about you) please respect that person's wishes—they might have reasons to keep it private and/or your rumor might be wrong.

Prior experience shows that the rumor page is not 100% accurate. If you need to make an important time-critical decision based on the status of a job opening, we strongly encourage you to get your information from the official search committee, not this page.

We have chosen to adopt a hands-off policy for the Rumor Mill; however, you may contact admin at for technical difficulties.

Postdoc or term positions

Place/Institution (alphabetical)	Matches (in boldface if accepted)Describe
51 Pegasi b Fellowship in Planetary Astronomy (link)	Application deadline Oct 13, 2017. Some rejections sent in Dec. 15. Accepted fellowships (eight) listed here. Update #2: Statement from HSF responding to feedback. Wiki Admin update: The foundation has been contacted by numerous community members regarding the dearth of representation from under-represented groups among the fellows. Pls use Twitter #HSF51Pegb to discuss and not this page.
Aachen University: postdoc in Theoretical Cosmology (ad)	Application deadline Dec 15, 2017. Offer made and accepted .
Academia Sinica Institute of Astronomy and Astrophysics (ad)	Application deadline Nov. 15 2017. At least one offer made to Haifeng Yang.
Postdoc - ultralight dark matter dynamics, University of Auckland (ad)	Applications deadline Dec 15, 2017 but will be accepted until position filled. Some interviews scheduled.
AIP Potsdam Schwarzschild Fellowship (ad)	Application deadline Nov. 30, 2017. Any news? Waitlist includes Sarah Pearson.

Log in

Username:

Password:

[I forgot my password](#)

[Register](#)

Latest Changes

- Rumor Mill
- Rumor Mill 2017-2018 Faculty-Staff
- Rumor Mill Faculty-Staff
- Rumor Mill 2017-2018
- Accessibility
- Previous Rumor Mill Pages
- PhD Programs
- Wiki Home
- Astro 101 Resources
- Presentation Skills
- ...more

I have a job. Should I apply to another one?

It depends. Things to consider:

- overheads of moving: usually ~6 months loss in productivity
- can you apply to bring a fellowship to your existing institution, where you already hold a job?
- freedom a fellowship buys you — can also be hard to not have immediate guidance and support from others
- is a fellowship necessary for my long-term career goals?

You get a job! Hooray! Maybe you get a few! Glorious day! Immediately withdrawal from consideration for other jobs after:

(1) you accept a job, or

(2) you receive an offer you would definitely accept over the other.