



Mount
Sinai

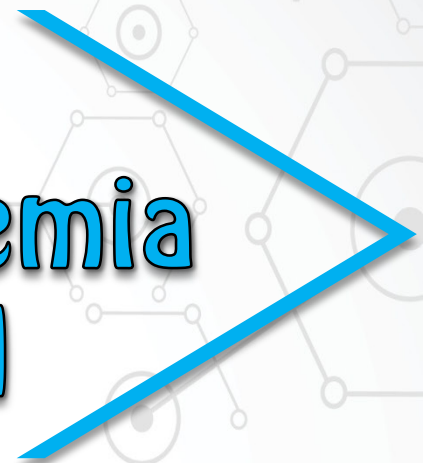
The Mount Sinai Postdoc Periodical

Monthly newsletter, September 2017

8th Annual
ISMMS

Postdoc Symposium

Moving
Academia
Forward



September 15, 2017

Patricia Phelps, Ph.D

Director of Professional Development and Career Office
Johns Hopkins University

Melanie Sinche, NCC

Author of "Next Gen PhD"
Director of Education
The Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine



Save the Date

THAW: A New Organization to Combat Trainee Isolation

By Madeline Pfau

Founded by members of the Sinai research community, the new Trainee Health and Wellness (THAW) Committee aims to prevent isolation and build community among postdocs, students, and alumni. Of the wellness organizations at Sinai, THAW is the first to engage both students and postdocs. The organization hopes to create companionship and social support among the diverse academic trainee populations at Sinai using direct mentorship as a logical first step. “*We want to build a mentorship community*”, explains Adam Schaffner, a Mount Sinai PhD alumnus, current Mount Sinai postdoc, and co-chairman of THAW.

Postdocs are the largest population of academic trainees at Mount Sinai, comprising about 70% of trainees. While the post-doctoral period can be one of great professional growth and satisfaction, postdocs face unique challenges during their training. A 2014 report by the National Academy of Sciences described major hurdles for postdocs, including long periods of training, dissatisfaction with salary and benefits, and lack of adequate mentoring. Factors accompanying and compounding these hurdles can be social isolation, increased pressure, and the loss of organizational support mechanisms characteristic of the graduate school experience.

The goal of THAW’s postdoc peer mentoring program is to enhance the quality of life of Sinai postdocs by proactively preventing social isolation, excessive stress, and anxiety. “*All of this ultimately is to help people feel less alone*”, says Patricia Thibault, a Mount Sinai postdoc and director of THAW’s nine-member postdoc peer mentoring committee. Thibault envisions postdoc mentor-mentee relationships to be one-on-one informal sources of advice, companionship, and friendship. She explains THAW’s process of facilitated postdoc mentor-mentee selection as follows: Mentees will be able to choose their mentors from a compiled list of mentor profiles. THAW committee members will facilitate the process and suggest particular mentors for special circumstances (for instance, mentors who have specific visa expertise, or mentors familiar with child care options). Postdocs can also volunteer to mentor current PhD students. Starting in late August, THAW will begin hosting regular orientations for new mentors and mentees. As THAW will invite all mentors/mentees to subsequent orientation events, THAW organizers expect that these orientations will ultimately evolve into mixers that will facilitate community building.

THAW is a trainee-run organization and is independent of the formal ISMMS administration. However, the familiarity of THAW leadership with other wellness organizations and resources at Mount Sinai will enable them to serve as a gateway to other supportive resources, such as the Office of the Ombudsman, the Office of International Personnel, and the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. THAW further envisions expanding its mentorship program to include Mount Sinai alumni.

If you are interested in becoming involved in THAW, the organization is actively recruiting postdoctoral mentors and mentees. Contact Patricia Thibault directly (patricia.thibault@mssm.edu) or reach out to THAW via its organizational website, email, or social media accounts (see box).

¹Committee to Review the State of Postdoctoral Experience in Scientists and Engineers; Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy; Policy and Global Affairs; National Academy of Sciences; National Academy of Engineering; Institute of Medicine. The Postdoctoral Experience Revisited. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2014 Dec 8. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK268776>

²Arnold C. The Stressed-Out Postdoc. Science. 2014 Aug 1.

THAW

Website: <https://webcommons.mssm.edu/thaw/peer-mentorship/postdoc-peer-mentorship/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Postdoc-Peers-Mount-Sinai-School-of-Medicine-358645844550579/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8600181>



314 Action: Getting Scientists Elected to Public Office

By Kathryn Bambino

Greetings fellow postdocs,

We hope the summer has been treating you well and that you had the chance to enjoy some time away from the bench. The Postdoc Executive Committee (PEC) has lined up a lot of events for the early fall and to help you say goodbye to the summer.

We'd like to invite the postdoc community to the 8th Annual Postdoc Day "Moving academia forward" on Friday, September 15th, 2017. As early career scientists in the academic world, we may have been impacted by the uncertainties generated by these turbulent times. Despite the intrinsic vulnerability of our position, we hold the chance to promote changes in academia while we work towards our future career goals. It will be uplifting to hear from experts on how to invest the skills we acquire behind the bench and computer screen to smooth transition to a variety of careers. Also, what's new in the grant world for early career scientists? How are new publishing realities, like pre-prints, impacting knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer evaluation? We have an outstanding line-up of speakers and panelists to illustrate these evolving aspects of the scientific world and networking representatives to learn about the exciting career opportunities available to you. A data blitz session by Mount Sinai postdocs, presentations by the Robin Chemers-Neustein Fellowship awardees, and the ceremony for the Postdoctoral Awards will complete the day! You can find the complete program [here](#), and you can register [here](#).

If you wish to optimize your networking skills before the event, the Office of Career Services and Strategy will host a "Networking: Conquering Your Fear and Making the Most of It". A presentation delivering networking tips and a practice networking session on Wednesday, September 13th will prepare you for the actual session on Postdoc Day. We hope to see you there!

Finally, it's a pleasure for me to introduce and welcome Dr. Agata Kurowski as the new co-chair of the PEC. Dr. Kurowski's resourcefulness and passion for postdoc rights will be an invaluable asset for the entire postdoc community.

Don't forget to join us for the **8th Annual Postdoc Day** on Friday, September 15th at Davis Auditorium in the Hess Building.

Cheers,
Nicholas

Agata Kurowski and Nicholas Barbieri are your PEC co-chairs

Ways to keep in touch

- Our website: <http://icahn.mssm.edu/education/postdoctoral-training>
- Follow our Twitter account: [@MtSinaiPostdocs](#)
- Join our Facebook page: "ISMMS Postdoc Executive Committee"
- Follow us on LinkedIn: [Mount Sinai Postdocs and Postdoc Alumni](#)
- Trainee Mistreatment Resource Panel: <http://web-commons.mssm.edu/mistreatmentresourcepanel/>

The Mount Sinai Postdoc Periodical

Chief editor: Delaine Ceholski Contributing editors: Przemek Gorski, Laura Lecce, Agata Kurowski, Ben Shackleton, Ishaan Gupta, Chandrani Mondal, Madeline Pfau.

The Mount Sinai Postdoc Periodical, September 2017

The Science and Education Policy Association (SEPA) and the Rockefeller University Science Communications course recently hosted an event with Dr. Shaughnessy Naughton, the founder of 314 Action. 314 Action is a political action committee whose main goal is to get more scientists elected to public office and help scientists claim a seat at the legislative table. Although 314 Action does not have a specific policy platform, they train scientists to call upon their own expertise on a diverse set of issues with the goal of increasing the use of data and empirical evidence in drafting legislation. They have an advocacy model which seeks to make scientists more visible and to relay the relevance of science to local communities. This model is based on a foundation of organizing, lobbying, and communication.

For now, 314 Action is focused on the recruitment, training, and support of candidates for elected office. Approximately 6,000 scientists have contacted 314 Action so far. Recruits have launched campaigns in five congressional districts in California, Texas, and Pennsylvania. Based on credibility of the campaign structure and staff, in addition to "winnability" of the seat, 314 Action selects the best candidates to support. These candidates are provided with training on running a successful campaign that encompasses communication and advertising strategies, team management, devising financial plans, and introducing candidates to supporters, volunteers, and the 75 campus chapters affiliated with 314 Action. To support their candidates, 314 Action is tapping into existing infrastructure by partnering with the Democratic National Committee, [Emily's List](#), [Americans for Responsible Solutions](#), and [Indivisible](#), as well as local Democratic committees. In the future they plan to draft their own bills and support legislation that is based on sound science.

Dr. Naughton also offered a series of suggestions on how you can get involved even if you are not able to run for office: consider submitting columns or letters to the editor for publication in local newspapers or volunteering on campaigns. Contacting your elected officials is also a good way to introduce yourself as a constituent. You could offer your expertise by referring to a piece of legislation if it falls within your research area. Dr. Naughton suggested that these contacts be very specific. For instance, "I saw you were sponsoring/co-sponsoring H.B./S.B.XXXX. The language in Section X may benefit from my scientific knowledge" and then conclude with your contact information. She encouraged people who are interested in running for political office in the future, but are unsure where their training will take them, to get involved in their local community. Helping on local campaigns or becoming involved in grass roots initiatives are two ways that you can gain useful skills and experience for a potential transition into politics.

If you are interested in the intersection between science and policy or politics, please join us at the monthly meetings of the [Mount Sinai Science Policy Group](#)! We meet on the first Thursday of every month from 3-4pm in Annenberg 5-212. Please email giovanna.collu@mssm.edu or ms.science.policy@gmail.com for more information. Follow SEPA on twitter @SEpanyc.

Alternative Careers in Sciences: Interview with Mount Sinai Postdoc Alumnus, Albino Troilo, PhD

By Agata Kurowski

Dr. Albino Troilo is a former Mount Sinai postdoc and Postdoc Executive Committee (PEC) member. Currently, he is a Senior Product and Marketing Manager responsible for leading the development and marketing of molecular diagnostic solutions for clinical laboratories at Enzo. Enzo is an integrated diagnostic company with about 700 employees, located in Farmingdale, NY. I spoke with Dr. Troilo to discuss his current position and the journey he took to get there.

What graduate degree(s) have you received?

I obtained my PhD in Molecular Health Science from ETH Zurich, Switzerland in 2013.

Can you give us a brief description of your current position?

I coordinate the efforts of the R&D, manufacturing and clinical laboratory teams throughout the development and marketing of molecular diagnostic products while serving as a subject matter expert. My roles also include developing new marketing and strategic plans using both qualitative and quantitative marketing tools (e.g., market research, competitive analysis, surveys and customer interviews). In addition, I lead Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) -integrated solutions by building global partnerships with manufacturers of hardware, reagents and consumables.

Did you have any jobs between this one and your postdoc? No

How many years of postdoc, or other work experience, did you have before your current job?

I was a postdoc for two and a half years in the lab of Prof. Stuart Aaronson in the Department of Oncological Sciences, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

What did you learn during your PhD/postdoc that is most helpful to you in your current position?

Knowledge of molecular biology and problem-solving approaches. Moreover, it was particularly helpful to participate in the Consulting Interest Group run by Nikos Tzavaras and Laura Zheng at Mount Sinai, where we had the opportunity to fine-tune problem-solving techniques by working on different kinds of business and consulting case studies.

What was the most important event or factor that contributed to your transition into an alternative career outside academia?

I was tired of working at the bench and ready for a new challenge.

What, if anything, do you miss about being a postdoc?

I mostly miss the people that I met during these two and half years and the Postdoc Executive Committee (PEC). PEC gave me the opportunity to be directly involved in projects focused on improving the life of the postdoc community at Mount Sinai and in other institutions of the NYC area. It's an experience that I would definitely recommend.

What do you wish you had known before accepting your current position?

I did not experience any surprises. Perhaps I wished I knew that I had to wait 6 months for my O-1 visa but unfortunately the timing for obtaining a visa is unpredictable.

Approximately how many hours do you work per week?

I work 40 hours a week, of which I spend 10 hours in meetings.

How frequently do you work in the evenings and/or on the weekends?

Not very often. I became much more efficient with this job. I get everything done during working hours.

On a scale of 1-10 (1=low, 10=high), how much autonomy do you have in your current position? What are the restrictions, if any?

I don't feel I have any restrictions, I would say 9.

Does your position require that you travel? If/when you travel, how long is your trip?

Traveling takes about 10% of my time. The trips are always within the US and they last between 2 to 5 days.

Do you work with other people and/or in a team?

I currently work with four teams such as R&D, for products that are at very early stage of development; manufacturing, for products that are ready for clinical validation and launch; a clinical validation team, for products that need to be clinically validated according to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) regulations; and marketing, for products that are ready to be launched in the market. Moreover, I strictly collaborate with my manager and the CEO for strategic marketing decisions related, for instance, to the image of the company and the product pipeline.

How did you learn to do your job?

I learned it on the job through self-education and by following suggestions of my manager and more experienced colleagues.

What is the average salary range for your position?

It depends on the company, experience, and responsibilities. A product manager can generally earn between \$80k and \$120k.

Is a PhD necessary to apply for this type of position?

It's not necessary but it can be a big advantage.

Is it valued to have a PhD in your current position? Yes, very much.

Is previous postdoc experience valued to apply for this type of position? Is it required? If so, how many years?

It's not required.

Did your PhD/postdoc research focus matter to get this position?

It was important that I had knowledge of molecular biology.

Was your publication record important towards getting this position?

Not at all but I used my publication to leverage my personal work experience, proving that I can get things done fast and efficiently.