Professional Development Day – June 20, 2018

Welcomes postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, and members of the campus community to attend. Graduate students wishing to use these sessions towards their PD hours will need to confirm their eligibility with their Graduate Administrators and bring attendance signature sheets with them.

Location: All sessions take place in South Academic Building (SAB) 321.

Quick Overview of the Day

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Landing the Right Reference Letters
9:30-10:30

Whether you have been asked to write a reference letter or if you need one for scholarship or work purposes, the magic behind crafting great letters comes from knowing the candidate and understanding the criteria of how candidates will be judged. Join this session to get an idea of how you can prepare your referees to write better letters and what you may want from candidates if you are the one who needs to deliver on a reference. Please bring a pen or pencil to this session for a quick exercise.

Presenter: Dr. Renee Polziehn is the Professional Development Director for the Postdoctoral Fellows Office. Following 19 years developing the Community Volunteer Program, Graduate Teaching and Learning Program, and Professional Development programing for the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, writing reference letters has been one of many tasks that crossed her desk. As an adjudicator for several scholarships, she has had access to seeing both well written and poorly crafted letters. Renee has also had the opportunity to consult with many academics over their reference writing practices.
Funding Mayhem
10:45-11:45

With 27% of UofA Postdocs working in tenure track positions and another 14% as research associates, understanding how funding moves through an institution would be an asset for anyone considering a career in academia. All research institutions follow a similar process, so as you continue your research journey, knowing what you should be paying attention to can be very helpful. When should you accept the conditions of a grant and how could this effect your publication options? Do I really only get 80% of my grant – what happens to the other 20%? Can a postdoc or graduate student be named on a research grant? Learn the very basics of how a research grant is managed, some common errors that new researchers make when setting up their funded research programs, and who is there to assist you when you manage your first research grant.

Presenters: Julie Stephens is the Assistant Director, Research Facilitation and Strategic Initiative, and Martine Desrochers is a Research Facilitator with the Research Services Office. Collectively they have more than 26 years of working with research grants and their jobs have included reviewing conditions of research grants, catching errors in grant applications, following up on the release of research funds, and closing down research accounts. The Research Service Office reviews and signs off on approximately 2600 grant applications a year and currently manages over 8700 awards worth more than $500 million dollars per year.

Acing the Academic Interview
12:00-13:00

While we know the academic job market is discouraging, the trend for UofA postdocs to land a position in academia is about 30%. How are UofA candidates making themselves competitive? The following former UofA postdoctoral fellows have offered to share their experiences of the academic hiring practice they experienced in landing their UofA tenure track positions.

Presenters:
Dr. Shannon Studden Bower – Assistant Professor in History and Classics. She has her PhD in Geography from the University of British Columbia. Her UofA postdoc from 2006 to 2012 in History and Classics was first funded by the Grant Notley Postdoctoral Fellowship and later by SSHRC. Following 3 years as a Research Director and Director, she began her tenure track position in 2015.

Dr. Michael Doschak – Associate Professor in Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences with ties to Biomedical Engineering and Dentistry/Dental Hygiene. He received his PhD in Medical Sciences with the Faculty of Medicine at the Uof Calgary. His UofA postdoc in Chemical and Materials Engineering was from 2004 to 2005 and he started his tenure track position here in 2005.

Dr. Marleny Saldana – Associate Professor in Food/Bio-Engineering Processing. She has her PhD in Process Engineering from the State University of Campinas, Brazil. Her UofA postdoc in Agriculture, Food, and Nutritional Sciences was from 2003 to 2004 and she started her tenure track position here in 2004.
Picking Apart the Job Application Process
13:15-14:15

There are many factors that lead to one person getting a job over someone else - work experience, skills, and professional contacts. Sometimes it comes down to how you communicate the skills you have - remember that your cover letter and résumé are key ways for you to share your personal branding. Improve your career success by uncovering the common errors and assumptions people make in compiling their résumé and cover letter and interpreting job descriptions. Bring your CV or résumé with you to take notes on where you can improvements.

Presenters:
As a Career Advisor for the UofA’s Graduate Student Internship Program (GSIP), Tyree McCrackin provides support to graduate students applying for a wide range of internships. Since 2012 he has held several Human Resource positions where he managed recruitment, advised employers on best HR practices, and oversaw marketing of job opportunities. In his current role, Tyree advises graduate students on the application process and has a keen sense of what employers are looking for in their postings and what applicants can do to effectively communicate their many skills and strengths.

Andrea Spevak is the Internship Advisor for GSIP. She was first on the ground to get GSIP growing and is on a target to place 450 interns from all disciplines by 2019. Andrea has contact with a variety of companies and organizations, from government to industry to not-for-profit. She has a diverse background across many sectors, including roles as a Research Manager of a Not-for-Profit, Entrepreneur, Program Coordinator with the Federal government, and ESL instructor. Andrea has a good sense of the challenges that people with post-graduate degrees make when preparing their job applications.

FEATURE

Looking Ahead: Career Advice from Former UofA Postdocs
14:30-16:00

Do you know what career path you want to follow? Was your next step after a PhD’s to secure a postdoctoral fellowship, but are approaching the following step with apprehension. Career decisions are challenging for most of us and asking other people who have traveled a similar path “What has helped you make decisions” can be insightful. What is it like to work for the government? Not-for-Profit? Should I strike out on my own or can I find something else on campus? What questions should I be asking? Should I stay in Edmonton? Join our panelists, Drs. Thomas Lo, Craig Emmerton, Rebecca Graff-McRae, and Michael Taschuk as they have carved out their own paths following the completion of their fellowships at the UofA.
Panelists:

Dr. Thomas Lo is a health economist who has a strong passion for cost-effective ways to improve the health of the aging population. He is currently employed at the Institute of Health Economics, a Not-For-Profit organization where his goal is to provide policy-relevant evidence to enhance the provision of healthcare services and use of prescription medicines. During his postdoctoral training with the Translating Research in Elder Care (TREC) program at the University of Alberta, Thomas’ research focused on critical elements of the Promoting Action on Research Implementation in Health Sciences framework and their association with evidence-based practice in clinical settings. Thomas has Bachelor’s degrees in Economics and Life Sciences from Queen’s University. He received his Master of Clinical Epidemiology and Doctor of Philosophy in Gender and Health at the University of Newcastle in Australia.

Dr. Craig Emmerton is a Water Quality Scientist in the Environmental Monitoring and Science Division with the Government of Alberta (Environment and Parks). He has almost 15 years of environmental science research experience focused mainly on the cycling of nutrients and contaminants in rapidly-warming northern ecosystems. Craig has held postdoctoral fellowship positions at the University of Alberta and the International Institute for Sustainable Development in Winnipeg. During his PhD he managed to supplement his degree and teaching requirements with a MITACS internship, teaching training, and volunteering. In addition to research, Craig has over 5 years of government, consulting and industry experience with relevant skills in environmental monitoring, data management and community outreach, among others. His degrees and co-op placements have taken him from one side of Canada to the other with a BSc in Environmental Sciences at McMaster University (Ont), an MSc in Physical Geography at Simon Fraser University (BC), and a PhD in Ecology at the UofA.

Dr. Rebecca Graff-McRae is a Research Manager with the Parkland Institute, an Alberta-wide, non-partisan research centre situated within the Faculty of Arts at the UofA. The Parkland Institute examines power and wealth differentials, social and class-based conflicts, and ways in which public policy and public choice shape and are shaped by these factors. Rebecca previously worked with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Edmonton City Council. Although an Alberta native, Rebecca’s schooling as a Political Sciences was developed at Queen’s University Belfast, Ireland where she completed both her undergraduate and doctoral studies. Her research which probed the role of memory and commemoration in post-conflict transition brought her first to a postdoc position at Memorial University Newfoundland and later at the UofA.

Dr. Michael Taschuk is the Founder and Technical Lead for G2V Optics Inc. Following a short time working as a machinist in Calgary, Michael moved to Edmonton to complete his Bachelors and PhD in Electrical Engineering at the UofA. His research on laser-induced breakdown spectroscopy (LIBS) led to numerous scholarships and a patent. Michael is a dedicated, efficient Research and Development engineer who thrives on challenging technical problems in experimental optics, nanostructured thin films, compact optical devices, gas sensors and organic solar cells. After 7 years working as a Research Associate at the UofA, Michael founded his company to commercialize his research in Edmonton. He has found that many of the skills in engineering are transferable to the world of commercialization, and that many supports were available at the UofA to get him started on this career path.