

# Getting what you came for: making the most of your NIH postbac

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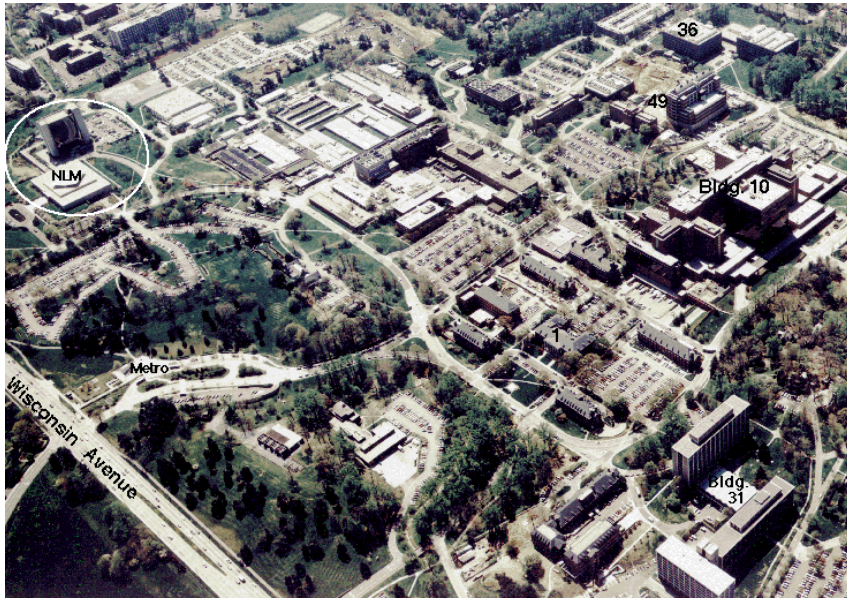
# Success means developing skills in many areas

- Your discipline
- Problem solving
- Communication
- Teaching/mentoring
- Interpersonal relationships
- Time management & organization
- Stress management
- Leadership
- Career planning

# **Expect that this experience will be different**

- Lack of structure
- Expectation of independence
- Infrequent feedback

# What is the NIH?



“The Nation’s biomedical research institution”

- The goal of the NIH is to acquire new knowledge to help prevent, detect, diagnose, & treat disease & disability
- Composed of 27 Institutes and Centers, each with its own mission of supporting biomedical research and science training
- Two main divisions -- **intramural** and **extramural**

# The NIH Intramural Research Community

- 4000 Postdocs
- 1000 Summer Students
- 500 Postbaccs
- 450 Graduate Students
- 100 Medical Students
  
- 280 Tenure-Track Investigators
- 940 Senior Investigators

Annual Intramural Budget ~ \$2.8 billion

# Focus on development in three areas:

- Science
- Career
- personal



First --

Define your

goals

# What expectations does your mentor have of you?

- Engagement in planning your research
- Honest communication regarding research progress
- Active participation in lab activities
- Foster collegial relationships in lab
- Good work ethic
- Balance lab and outside responsibilities effectively



# **What expectations should you have of your mentor?**

- Intellectual support and guidance
- Availability when needed
- Financial support for your professional training
- Guidance in planning the next step

# To achieve your science goals

- Meet with your lab supervisors - EARLY & OFTEN
- Read papers in your field
- Focus on the “big picture” AND the details of your work
- Use “down-time” in lab wisely
- Actively participate in lab meetings
- Attend seminars & journal clubs
- Join a Scientific Special Interest Group
- Attend the Postbac Lecture Series
- Present your work at the Postbac Research Festival
- Take a course at FAES

# To achieve your career goals

- Attend IC and OITE Career Workshops
- Get involved in the NIH community - develop leadership skills on the Postbac IRTA committee
- Volunteer, shadow, and do informational interviews
- Visit the OITE Career Services Center and check out our library of resources

# Develop excellent interpersonal skills

- Both communication & listening skills
- Learn to deal with conflict calmly & respectfully
- Practice networking
- Supervise & mentor a summer intern
- Treat ALL people with respect, acknowledge & understand difference, give credit when appropriate, learn to listen, learn to speak up, and honor your word

# **To set the stage for productivity and success:**

- Cultivate relationships with mentors
- Set up a workspace that is free of distractions
- Set up a calendar system; pay attention to deadlines
- Set realistic goals & assess progress on a regular basis
- Think about your next step from day one
- Identify bad habits that waste time and sap your physical & mental energy
- Take care of your physical and mental health

# Taking care of yourself

- IC and OITE Program staff
- NIH Employees Assistance Program (EAP)
- Office of the Ombudsman, Center for Cooperative Resolution
- Recreation & Welfare Association (R&W)
- NIH Fitness Centers
- The DC Metro area

# Avoid these common mistakes

- Wait until someone gives you something to do or read before getting started
- Read papers only if asked
- Keep your cell phone on all the time
- Spend lots of time surfing the internet in lab
- Set a rigid work schedule - stick to it no matter what
- Don't practice lab meeting or poster presentations in advance
- Miss deadlines; ignore work e-mails; generally behave & dress unprofessionally
- Ignore lab issues and assume they will go away on their own

# Take advantage of all the NIH has to offer!

- Your IC Training Office
- OITE
- Postbac IRTA committee
- Club-PCR
- FAES
- WALS
- Scientific Special Interest Group
- R & W