

Advice on Postdoctoral Fellowships

By Karisma Morton

Finding Postdoc Positions

- Sign up on websites that specifically cater to individuals in search of jobs in academia. Examples include [HigherEdJobs](#) and [ChronicleVitae](#). Based on the settings you create in your account, sites such as these will send you emails with links to job openings as they are posted by institutions.
- Sign up for listservs. For instance, there is a mathematics education listserv managed by Jerry Becker at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. To get on that listserv, simply send your email address to jbecker@siu.edu. Through this listserv, you not only get information about job postings, but you also get emails about other math education related topics that may be of interest to you.
- Use social media to connect you to other individuals who may have inside information on job opportunities in STEM education. Usually, these social media options are found through networking at conferences and other education related events, so be mindful of making connections!
- Speak with your advisor about possible postdoc opportunities. I know of quite a few postdocs who have secured postdoc positions with professors at other institutions who are linked to their graduate advisors in some way. The position you may secure through this avenue may not ever be a posted postdoc position, but may be created just for you based on that relationship that your graduate advisor has with that individual.

Getting the Most Out of the Postdoc Experience

- Set concrete goals for what you hope to accomplish during your postdoc. These goals can be related specifically to the project that you are working on during your postdoc; however, they should also include goals that you have for moving your own research forward. For example, if you would like to submit a portion of your dissertation for publication within a year of completing your doctoral degree, be sure to include that as part of your goal for the year.
- Set a reasonable timeline for completion of your goals. It is amazing how quickly time goes by, so the more detailed you are about your goals and timeline for completing those goals, the better. For the first half of my postdoc, I went from task to task without ever stepping back and looking at bigger goals. I could have gotten much more accomplished had I done that sooner.

- Learn how to say no. Being a postdoc is not quite the same as being a graduate student. You do not have to do everything that you are asked to do. As you become more visible to other scholars in your field, you may be asked to participate in things that may pull you away from your main responsibilities. While some of these activities may be beneficial to you (e.g., serving on a department-wide panel), others may not be as beneficial and may take time away from other things that are more important.
- Learn as much as you can from those around you. Take advantage of opportunities that arise to learn about different research methodologies and processes (e.g., grant writing).
- Have fun, Dr.! With the stress of the dissertation defense behind you, and the possible anxiety of getting tenure ahead of you, this is a great time to explore and learn more about your area of interest and make contributions. Do not take yourself too seriously, but commit to doing quality work. This postdoc year has been a year of exploring who I am as a researcher and what types of questions I am most interested in answering. I have also been enjoying the autonomy that I now have as well as the collaborative work that I have been able to do. So make the most of the experience!

About the Author:

Dr. Karisma Morton is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Morton was one of ten postdocs chosen to attend the [2018 DRK-12 PI Meeting](#).