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2003 MBI POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH  
PROGRAM HANDBOOK

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This booklet provides friendly advice for postdoctoral fellows, postdoctoral researchers and their mentors at the MBI. Although unofficial, the information provided is based on discussions between previous MBI postdocs, MBI directors and staff. Hopefully this can be used to promote successful collaborative research within the MBI and ease the transition to life at OSU. Although each individual's needs and issues will be unique, it is hoped that the information provided here addresses the most common issues and will serve as a useful starting point for gathering information and generating discussion.

## 1 Measures of a Postdoc's Success at MBI

Postdoctoral research at the MBI offers great opportunities and a large amount of flexibility. To ensure that time is well spent a postdoc should consider the following as measures of success:

- Publishing good papers in good journals
- Actively participating (presenting) in conferences outside of the MBI
- Developing collaborations within and outside OSU
- Collaborating within well-funded research programs

## 2 Mentor–Postdoc Relationships

### 2.1 The set-up...

- The mentoring program is intended to strongly encourage the postdoc to set up working (interdisciplinary) collaborations at OSU, and provide guidance for further academic development.
- The mentors may become collaborators and “advisers”, or just help the postdoc connect with other people
- Postdocs and mentors are expected to establish a working relationship as soon as possible.
- If a mentor-postdoc relationship does not appear promising, the postdoc should talk to the MBI directors as soon as possible. They will help to make adjustments.
- As an exception to the above, the sponsored postdocs enter a specific established research program as part of their work. There may be less flexibility in modifying this arrangement once the agreement has been made between both parties.
- During the first month of each year, there will be short presentations by postdocs and potential mentors in order to facilitate matching of postdocs and mentors.

### 2.2 What is expected of mentors?

- A meeting between the postdoc and both mentors should be arranged within the first 2-3 weeks after their arrival

- If the postdoc is sponsored, the mentor should expect to provide guidance or supervision reflective of their percentage sponsorship. The mentor should also expect the postdoc to commit to the research program in an amount reflective of their percentage sponsorship.
- If the postdoc is a fellow, the mentor's role is more as collaborator rather than a PI or boss. Guidance is driven more by common interest and by the common commitment to research projects.

### 2.3 What is expected of postdocs?

- If the postdoc is sponsored then he/she is required to provide commitment to the sponsor's research program in an amount reflective of the percentage sponsorship. The research program of the sponsor is usually highly constrained by the funding source. However, the postdoc is allowed to work on other projects and develop collaborations outside of sponsor's program to the extent that such commitments do not interfere with the commitment to the sponsor.
- If the postdoc is a fellow, he/she may work on projects and develop collaborations outside of the MBI. Collaborations with mentors may, but are not required to, result in the postdoc's primary research efforts.

## 3 Preparing for the future

Note that the criteria on which a postdoc will be judged after leaving the MBI differ depending on whether they are pursuing a career in Mathematics or Biology. For example, the journals which Biology departments associate with successful research are not the same as those which a Mathematics department would associate with successful research. The following are suggestions which may aid in establishing a career in these two disciplines:

- Biological Career Path
  - Aim to publish in prestigious biology journals (e.g. Nature, Science, Cell, J. Neurosci., etc.)
  - Strive to publish with well-funded and established collaborators.
  - Build collaborations with mathematicians. Publication in theoretical mathematical journals by itself may not be impressive to biologists looking to hire the postdoc, however, collaboration with mathematicians demonstrates real commitment to interdisciplinary research.
  - Demonstrate your personal command of mathematical modeling techniques rather than just publishing with mathematicians
- Mathematical Career Path
  - Build collaborations and co-authoring papers with experimentalists. These collaborations will stand out when looking to be hired by applied mathematicians or interdisciplinary institutions.
  - Publish theoretical papers in good mathematics journals (e.g. SIAM, J. Theo. Biol., J. Comp. Neurosci., etc.). Publishing as

the sole author on some of these demonstrates your competence and expertise.

- Demonstrate success as an interdisciplinary researcher. MBI postdocs are encouraged to publish with mentors, visitors, experimentalists and other collaborators.
- Academics, teaching etc...
  - If the postdoc is aiming for a career in academia, he/she should consider teaching while at OSU: summer program may be a great place to teach, and teaching of regular courses can be arranged through MBI directors about 2 quarters in advance.

#### 4 Grants, reimbursements, travel expenses...

- MBI postdocs do not automatically qualify as principle investigator (PI) but arrangements may be made in some cases. Bring such issues to the MBI director's attention well in advance.
- Postdocs may apply for grants however they usually can only request travel and living expenses (not salary) – however let the MBI director know of any questions or issues and all options will be investigated
- Participating in the grant writing process is good preparation for a postdoc's future career
- NIH RO1 grants allow a postdoc to be listed as collaborator but do not require a request for salary or other financial support. These types of grants may offer MBI-funded postdocs the opportunity to participate in the grant writing and application process.
- Various forms may have to be filed in advance with the university pursuant to grants, reimbursements and travel expenses. If a postdoc is considering any of these avenues, he/she should consult with the MBI (Director and Program Manager) and the university as early as possible.
- Travel expenses exceeding any travel allowances for the year may be reimbursed by the MBI if the postdoc is traveling to present work. Such reimbursements must be requested in advance.
- Unused travel money will roll over to the next year.

#### 5 Publications

- Costs of submission and publication will be covered by the MBI
- Author listings
  - The order of authors should always be agreed upon by all authors. Discussion about this issue should occur early in the writing process so that conflicts arising after the paper is written can be avoided.

- In biological journals, or if the work is funded through a biologist’s grant, the list of authors is often pre-defined. In mathematical journals, the list of authors is usually alphabetical and short. The postdoc should consult with mentor or co-authors to determine the appropriate format.

## 6 Activities at the MBI

- Workshops and Tutorials
  - Postdocs are not required to attend all workshops and tutorials but are encouraged to attend.
  - During weeks of tutorials and workshops, postdocs should organize their schedules so that they can attend as many sessions as possible and carry on the research program effectively
- Postdocs should take advantage of collaborative opportunities with MBI visitors.
- A postdoc may be able to give a talk or poster presentation at a workshop. Arrangements should be made well in advance (usually during the planning of the workshop) with the MBI director and workshop organizers.
- Postdocs wishing to teach should consider the MBI Summer programs. Also, it is possible to teach a university course. Interested postdocs should contact the MBI director 2 quarters in advance and supply a list or preferred courses.

## 7 Housing, accommodations

Much of the housing around the campus area of Columbus is occupied by undergraduates. However previous MBI postdocs have found convenient well-maintained apartments in the following locations:

Heritage Apartments 1456 Presidential Drive Columbus Ohio, 43212 phone: (614)486-5232 <a href="http://www.villagegreen.com">http://www.villagegreen.com</a>	Governours Square Apts
Ravine Ridge Apts Mark & Sara Skripsak 2040 Iuka Ave. (614) 299-4715	Olentangy Village 2907 N. High Street Columbus, OH 43202 phone:(614) 261-0202 <a href="http://www.olentangyvillage.com">http://www.olentangyvillage.com</a>
Colony House Apts	

The availability of city or campus bus service varies from location to location and is subject to change from year to year. Ask the landlord.

- Those interested in purchasing or renting a house might consider working through a real estate agent or viewing real estate guides etc.

- The OSU Off Campus Student Services website (<http://www.osuoffcampus.com>) offers a searchable database of faculty/staff preferred housing and may provide guidance on which property managers to consider.
- Campus area apartments and other real estate listings may be found at <http://www.thelantern.com/>

## 8 Visas and Residency Issues

- Be aware that anything that happens with residency status and visa paperwork etc. is very important. Therefore, one should become familiar with immigration and visa regulations, and double-check everything that is being done by various offices.
- The MBI Program Manager will contact international postdocs well in advance of starting the appointment, to determine what visa status they are going to have while at OSU. Postdocs should contact the MBI (Director and Program Manager) at any time if they have any questions or concerns regarding the start dates, restrictions etc. of any visa status.
- If a postdoc's current visa is issued through OSU (J1, H1, F1 practical training from OSU), certain paperwork and obligatory workshops for the foreign scholar may be required by the Office of International Education (OIE). OIE is located in Oxley Hall which is near the corner of Neil and 12th Avenue. It is a good idea to stay in contact with them – they are generally friendly and reasonably knowledgeable about issues of foreigners.
- If moving from within the USA, the postdoc should file the “change of address form” for INS (Form AR-11). This form can be obtained through OIE.
- International postdocs should be very clear on whether MBI is going to apply for a J1 or H1 visa while they are working here. There are important differences between these types of visas. For example, a J1 visa may require that one leave the USA for several years after completing their work. On the other hand, one may be limited to a total of 6 years under the H1 visa and the application is lengthy.
- The process of H1 approval takes up to 6 months. During this time travel abroad, for example, is restricted. Therefore, the postdoc should determine together with the MBI Director and Program Manager the exact desired start date of the H1 status and make sure that the paperwork is started 6 months before then.
- Before any plans to travel outside of the country are made, identify the documents required for re-entry (e.g. valid entry visa, signature from OSU, employment letter etc). Confirm these requirements with OIE.

## 9 Moving to Ohio

When moving to Columbus, a postdoc may have to get:

- Social security number (SSN). A temporary Social Security number will be assigned when the MBI Program Manager adds the postdoc to the Human Resources system. Contact the OIE as soon as possible to determine how to apply for a permanent social security number.
- Ohio driving license or “non-driver’s ID.” See driver license information at <http://www.stat.oh.us/odps/division/bmv/bmv.html>
- A local bank account. There are multiple banks around campus and there is also the State Employees Credit Union which postdocs are eligible for upon beginning their employment (see <http://www.osecu.org/>)
- Health insurance. University plans are reasonable and University Prime Care is the most popular one. It is important to remember that there are health insurance requirements associated with different visas. University Prime Care fulfills all these requirements.

## 10 Taxes

- Postdocs must file yearly tax returns (due by April 15th).
- Postdocs may be required to pay income tax on fellowship and sponsored fellowship income. Income may include health and other benefit income.
- Federal, state and Columbus city (2%) taxes may have to be paid. Tax payments to other states may also be required because of part-year residency status.
- A copy of Form 1099-MISC, W2 or 1042 will be mailed to the postdoc after January 1 which will list their total income from MBI. Copies of these forms are also sent to the IRS.
- Tax return forms can be obtained from state, local and federal revenue department websites and can often be filed on-line. Printed versions of these forms are also available in the William Oxley Thompson (Main) Library. Which forms are to be used will depend on the postdoc’s residency status and may depend on treaties that the postdoc’s country of origin has with the USA.
- Here is a link to the OSU Office of International Education (OIE) web-page that has general tax information for foreigners: [http://www.oie.ohio-state.edu/int\\_scholars/taxes.asp](http://www.oie.ohio-state.edu/int_scholars/taxes.asp)