

Managing Your Relationship with Your Supervisor - Case Studies

March 28, 2009

National Postdoctoral Association Meeting

1. **Danielle** (<http://scforum.aaas.org/viewthread.php?id=44165>) – I finally have enough data for publication. My PI has said that we can publish this and that but he hasn't moved forward. When I ask him about it, he says he's too busy with classes, grant applications, committee meetings, etc. So, a few months ago I decided to write the manuscript. He hasn't read it. He only seems interested in some new hot topics. I have no problem with that, but I need to improve my publication record. I haven't produced any new publications in my postdoc because of the attitude from my PI. What can I do?
2. **George** (<http://scforum.aaas.org/view.php?id=48186>) – I have decided to leave my current postdoc, where I have been for almost a year and a half. I have spoken to a potential new mentor about joining his lab. I sent my CV and names of three references, and all three gave me a good recommendation. However, the new mentor said that he has to talk to my current advisor in order to get an accurate picture of my performance. My current advisor really doesn't like me (we've been having problems since I came) and just told me that he would not give me a good reference. What do I do? I really want this job. What do I tell the potential new mentor?
3. **Julie** (<http://scforum.aaas.org/view.php?id=48431>) – I'm looking for a new postdoc position and I want to avoid any potentially difficult potential PIs. Other than the number of postdocs already in the lab and the publication record of the lab, what are potential signs of insanity and/or narcissism that might come through in the content and personal information that the PI chooses to post on the webpage? What should I look for during interviews with potential PIs?
4. **Arthur** (<http://scforum.aaas.org/view.php?id=48286>) - I am a postdoc in the life sciences and am applying for jobs. I'm mostly apply for writing jobs and am finding myself running into unexpected problems. I've managed to get some interviews through friends/acquaintances. When I asked my postdoc advisor for recommendations he said he would not be able to write a letter vouching for my writing since he has not had a chance to evaluate it (I haven't done a lot of writing in his lab). I am surprised and a little demoralized at this lack of support and I am not sure where it comes from. What can I do?
5. **Jennifer** (<http://scforum.aaas.org/view.php?id=48089>) – I found a class at my university on science and entrepreneurship. I am interested in taking this course, so I mentioned it to my mentor, who I have a good relationship with. He suggested taking clinical courses instead to supplement my basic research and help me write a clinically relevant grant. I am more interested in the entrepreneurial course. Do I need to let him know if I decide to take it? It's offered in the evening, and shouldn't take away my time in the lab. My tuition would be paid for by benefits and he wouldn't even need to know. If I take the class, it would be to enhance my personal development and not to help my lab work. I'm worried it may sour my relationship with my mentor because of conflict of interest.

- What issues is the postdoc facing?
- What do you think the PI's perspective is?
- What can the postdoc do to improve his or her situation?
- What, if anything, could the postdoc have done to prevent the situation from occurring?

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