

# The Junior Faculty Networking Cohort: Filling a gap in support for our community

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JGP, in partnership with the Society of General Physiologists, announces a new networking and mentoring program for junior faculty.

In the beginning, the vision of *The Journal of General Physiology's* founders was to create a gathering place for mechanistic work on the physiochemical basis of life. 100 yr later, the mission of JGP is to still to gather scientific work along these lines, but also to nurture the life of scientists who do this work. Fostering a community of physiologists makes JGP a journal like no other, and nearly 100 yr after JGP's founding in September 1918, we launch a new program aimed at a transient and sometimes neglected segment of our community.

Junior faculty are newly independent scientists tasked with creating laboratories and research programs de novo. They typically have first-rate bench science skills but have received little or no training in the hidden curriculum that must be mastered to run a successful research program. They transition from postdoctoral positions, in which they may be part of a team working on similar problems, to leaders of empty spaces without others in their field to talk to. In their new role as respected experts, they may lose the camaraderie associated with being a trainee, as students and postdoctoral scholars no longer view them as peers. Especially if they are one of a few or the only junior faculty member in their department, junior faculty face many new challenges just as they have left their system of peer and advisor support.

JGP, in partnership with the Society of General Physiologists, is now accepting applications for our Junior Faculty Networking Cohort, a program designed to support and connect junior faculty in the first stage of their independent careers. This program will match up to six junior faculty with a member of our Editorial Advisory Board for quarterly group discussions. Each discussion will begin with a topic of relevance, such as selecting and managing personnel, financial management, and collaborating wisely. The remaining time will be devoted to topics chosen by the participants. The Cohort will continue to meet until most or all of the participants have transitioned to the next stage of their careers.

Although the Cohort leader will be a senior scientist, who will contribute sage advice and act as a sounding board for ideas, it is likely that the junior faculty who

participate will get as much or more benefit from mentoring each other. Peer mentoring happens organically among graduate students and postdoctoral scholars, but the isolation experienced by many junior faculty tends to make finding appropriate peers a challenge. Based on my experience with a cohort-based program for postdoctoral scholars, I believe that bringing together people at similar career stages and with shared trajectories creates a sense of support that adds to individuals' resilience and sense of purpose.

The Junior Faculty Networking Cohort is not a replacement for the in-house mentoring done by departments and schools. Indeed, there are many institution-specific customs and regulations that the Cohorts will not address at all. For many people, a single mentor who can advise them in all aspects of their professional life is unrealistic; a broad network of mentors with varied perspectives and expertise may be superior. Further, some advice is best sought from someone who will not be involved in the promotion decision. In addition, we will attempt to match scientists with aligned interests, raising the possibility of both professional and scientific benefits to the Cohort discussions.

In addition to quarterly meetings, participants in our Junior Faculty Networking Cohort will be given a behind-the-scenes tour of the review process at JGP. Every manuscript that is received by JGP is discussed by myself and the Associate Editors at a weekly meeting to determine whether it will go out for review and who the best reviewers would be. If sent out for review, the manuscript is discussed again when the reviews come in, and the work and reviews are presented to the group by the reviewing editor. A decision is then made collectively. This careful, labor-intensive process allows us to ensure that our review quality is high and uniform. Junior faculty in our program will be given the opportunity to participate in a weekly meeting and see first-hand how our process works, in accordance with our conflict of interest policy for editors and reviewers. This experience,

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like serving on study sections for grant writers, will provide junior faculty participants with a new perspective that will strengthen them in their roles as reviewers and authors. We will also invite them to join one of our Focus Groups—the means by which we communicate with the various communities that we serve—and attend the annual meeting of our Editorial Advisory Board. In short, we will welcome the participants of the Junior Faculty Networking Cohort into the JGP community.

To learn more and apply, visit the Junior Faculty Networking Cohort webpage.

**Eligibility:**

- Have accepted a first independent position at an academic or research institution to start within the next year, or
- Be within 3 yr of starting an independent position.
- Applicants who have been an author on a paper in JGP within the last 5 yr will receive priority.