Research Team Management Series
Quick Tips for Recruiting a Successful Research Team & Lab

The following has been adapted from Kevin Gardner, MD, PhD, Professor of Pathology & Cell Biology, Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons

Before the Interview
Do:
- Look for candidates in various settings (networking, referrals, local bulletin, Scientific Journal position postings)
- Establish evaluation criteria and stick to it
- Screen applicants:
  - Review all resumes carefully
  - Call references on the phone (do not contact over e-mail)
  - Rely on evidence
  - Seek different perspectives
- Schedule interview in advance and plan for about 30 to 90 minutes for the initial interview.

Avoid:
- Candidates with:
  - Inflated experience
  - Gaps in employment
  - Position and job hopping
  - OPP (Other People’s Problems)

During the Interview
Do:
- Ask open ended questions
- Allow interviewees to speak spontaneously and in detail
- Be aware of personal biases used during the interview
- Consult with your HR representative if an applicant needs reasonable accommodations

Ask About:
- Experience and skills
- Commitment and initiative
- Working and learning styles
- Time management
- Decision making and problem solving
- Interpersonal skills

Do Not Ask About:
- Personal details such as:
  - Marital status and marriage
  - Family plans
  - Religion
  - Sexual orientation
  - Number and ages of children
  - Childcare arrangements
  - Salary history
  - Conviction of any past crimes

After the Interview
Select Candidates Who:
- Are a good fit
- Have chemistry with your team
- Have expertise
- Express willingness to learn
- Have passion for science
- Have a strong work ethic

Avoid Candidates Who:
- Do not take responsibility
- Complain about co-workers and supervisors
- Delay or avoid answering questions
- Express anger
- Dominate the interview

Additional Resource: https://humanresources.columbia.edu/toolkit

Office of Faculty Professional Development, Diversity & Inclusion
ps.columbia.edu/faculty-development/faculty-diversity
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Quick Tips for *Leading* a Successful Research Team & Lab

Do:

- Be accessible
- Lead by example
- Delegate properly
- Match responsibility with authority
- Hold weekly meetings
- Communicate projects clearly and in details with the lab team
- Review lab issues
- Seek opinions from the lab members
- Hold one-on-one lab meetings every 1-3 months to discuss performance, expectations and mentoring needs
- Organize informal get-togethers
- Motivate your team:
  - Recognize and celebrate accomplishments
  - Match skills with competence to the task
  - Focus on the interest of the lab as a whole

Manage Conflicts:

- Acknowledge and address conflicts comprehensively
- Recognize your team members’ personality types
- Be a good facilitator
- Encourage cooperativeness and compromise
- Promote open and honest conversations
- Listen to both parties behind closed doors

Resources:

- How to give difficult feedback: [http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2012/03/12/how-to-give-difficult-feedback/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2012/03/12/how-to-give-difficult-feedback/)
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Additional Resources

**Office of Postdoctoral Affairs**
The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs’ mission is to holistically support and assist Columbia University Postdoctoral Research Scientists, Scholars, and Fellows in their professional training and development; to offer in-depth guidance and resources to the Columbia University community on matters pertaining to postdoctoral affairs.

*Website:* [https://research.columbia.edu/office-postdoctoral-affairs](https://research.columbia.edu/office-postdoctoral-affairs)

**Resources for PIs**
This site provides resources such as appointment letters and requirements and mentoring resources for PIs who wish to hire postdoctoral fellows.

*Website:* [https://research.columbia.edu/faculty-and-administrators](https://research.columbia.edu/faculty-and-administrators)

**Graduate School of Arts & Sciences**
One of the nation’s oldest and most distinguished graduate schools, GSAS confers graduate degrees in the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. Our renowned faculty works with students to cultivate advanced knowledge and offer preparation for a variety of careers.

*Website:* [https://gsas.columbia.edu/](https://gsas.columbia.edu/)

**The Columbia University Compliance Hotline**
The Hotline serves as a channel for employees to report or seek guidance on possible compliance issues. It is supported by a third party vendor and staffed by professionals. It is available to Columbia personnel through the telephone and the internet with the option to report anonymously.

*Website:* [https://compliance.columbia.edu/hotline](https://compliance.columbia.edu/hotline)

Readings of interest: