IAFPNA CAREER PATHWAYS Q&A Session
May 16, 2024

LIST OF QUESTIONS

INDUSTRY

Q: What types of roles can I pursue in the industry after graduation?
A: In the industry, you can pursue roles such as Research Scientist, Product Development Scientist, Quality Assurance/Control Specialist, Regulatory Affairs Specialist, Project Manager, or Technical Sales Representative.

Q: What skills are valued in the industry?
A: Skills valued in the industry include technical expertise in your field, project management, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability. Regarding the most valued skills in the industry, critical thinking is the key. Industry is fast paced so having the ability to get answers for research questions by efficient experimental design is good quality to have. Other than that, project management and organization skills are important because you are working on multiple things at a time in the industry.

Q: How do I transition from academia to the industry?
A: To transition from academia to industry, focus on gaining relevant experience through internships or collaborations, networking with industry professionals, and tailoring your resume to highlight applicable skills and achievements.

Q: What are the typical career advancement opportunities in the industry?
A: Career advancement opportunities in the industry often include moving from entry-level positions to senior scientist roles, project management, departmental leadership, and executive positions such as Director or Vice President. You can progress in your own field (for ex- from R&D Scientist to Sr. Scientist to principal scientist) or go to managerial positions. Another avenue is business development (usually a highly paid job). Industries prefer people in business who have prior scientific knowledge so they can better cater to business needs.

Q: What are the benefits of working in the industry?
A: Benefits of working in the industry include competitive salaries, opportunities for career advancement, practical application of research, collaboration with cross-functional teams, and access to advanced technologies and resources. Benefits of working in the industry: Fixed working hours typically, endless opportunities to grow (career growth), diverse community to network.

GOVERNMENT

Q: What roles are available in government after graduation?
A: Roles in government include Research Scientist, Policy Analyst, Regulatory Scientist, Public Health Specialist, Environmental Scientist, and Science Advisor.

Q: What qualifications are required for government positions?
A: Qualifications for government positions typically include a relevant degree, experience in your field, strong analytical and communication skills, and familiarity with regulatory and policy frameworks.

Q: How do I apply for government jobs?
A: Apply for government jobs through official job portals such as USA Jobs (for US federal positions) or equivalent platforms in your country. Networking and internships can also be helpful.

Q: What are the career advancement opportunities in the government?
A: Career advancement in government can lead to higher-level research positions, management roles, policy-making positions, and leadership roles such as Director or Deputy Director of departments or agencies.

Q: What are the benefits of working in the government?
A: Benefits include job stability, comprehensive benefits packages, opportunities to influence public policy, and the chance to contribute to the public good.

ACADEMIA

Q: What academic positions are available after graduation? And what are the educational requirements?
A: Academic positions include Postdoctoral Researcher, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor, Research Scientist, and Lecturer. Post-doc requirement- PhD, few papers. You don't need a postdoc to be an assistant professor. You need more research experience.

Q: What are the key responsibilities in academic roles?
A: Responsibilities in academia include conducting research, publishing findings, teaching, mentoring students, securing research funding, and participating in academic service.

Q: How do I secure a faculty position in academia?
A: To secure a faculty position, build a strong publication record, gain teaching experience, network with professionals in your field, and apply for positions through academic job boards and university websites.

Q: What are the career advancement opportunities in academia?
A: Career advancement in academia includes progressing from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor, then to Full Professor, and potentially to administrative roles such as Department Chair, Dean, or Provost.

Q: What are the benefits of working in academia?
A: Benefits include intellectual freedom, the opportunity to pursue your research interests, a flexible schedule, the chance to mentor the next generation of scientists, and potential for sabbaticals and academic leave.

Q. What was lacking in your academic career that made you feel to get more after/other than this career?
A. I wanted to build products which will make an impact in people's lives. Perhaps sustainable food processes are my passion. I am happy now; we built the pre-commercial system. I think building a business is challenging but also rewarding. I am also training my students in a similar way, doing something which makes an impact.

Q. When looking for jobs in industry, is it valuable to wait and search for referrals or just apply online? Academic experience like research in Ph.D. is sometimes overlooked by the HR or initial screening process, so how do I make my application stand out?
A. If it is the production line PhD candidates are not preferred. PhD is preferred in Research and Development and product formulation. Participate in other projects other than your own project. Write your resume as PhD experience, write something like product development, sensory expert etc.

Q. Required Skill Set to get the job in Academia?
A. Excellent in communication oral and writing, grant writing, passion for Research

Q. What steps can a new faculty member take during the initial years to establish a successful career path within academia?
A. Decide focus area, networking meetings are great, reach out to the people who are in industry and get the collaboration, establish the lab, Write a good grant quality over quantity. talk with your Mentor.

Q. Please highlight opportunities for Indian researchers to collaborate with US academicians in food safety research projects?
A. NIFA grants collaboration, Full- bright scholarship, ASM has a program for other nationals to do research in the US, or you can write your grant and get the opportunity to work in the US. https://www.education.gov.in/scholarships

Our Panelist:

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