AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellowship: A path forward

Carlos C. Faraco, Ph.D.
My career path

- **Undergraduate**
  - Psychology, B.A.; Philosophy Minor
  - Considered medical school, but pursued Clinical Psychology career

- **Graduate**
  - Neuroscience Ph.D.; Psychology, M.S.
  - Changed degree track after 2 yrs.
  - Research: Functional and structural MRI to map working memory systems in healthy adults and those with dementia.

- **Post-Doc**
  - Vanderbilt University Institute of Imaging Science (VUIIS); 3 yrs.
  - Research: Functional MRI blood flow and oxygenation mapping in patients with intracranial stenosis (i.e., at risk for stroke) and Parkinson’s disease

- **Present**
  - Voluntarily unemployed for 4.5 months and counting!

- **Future – Beginning Sept. 1**
  - AAAS Fellow at National Institute of Justice Office of Investigative and Forensic Science
The Job Hunt / Purgatory / Seriously...why is this taking so long?!

- **June/July 2015**
  - Firmly decided to pursue career options outside of traditional university setting
    - Current academic environment was too stressful
    - Desire to be involved in work that could have large scale impact on public health
  - NIH Program Specialist position
    - Interviewed in November, 2015; approx. 5 months after initial contact
    - The application and interview process can become extremely complicated and frustrating

- **August – December 2015**
  - Applied to various govt. positions of interest within NIH, CDC, & FDA
    - E.g., Health science policy analyst, Public health advisor, Public health analyst, Social science analyst
    - All through USA Jobs website. Not fruitful!
The light

- Vanderbilt Federal STEM Policy in Washington
  - 2-day event filled with career panel sessions
  - Speakers were current employees at federal agencies, private organizations, or staffers on the Hill.

- Quest for Science and Public Health Policy jobs
  - Applied for AAAS S&T Policy Fellowship following STEM Policy event
  - Volunteered with Life Science TN
    - Day on the Nashville Hill
  - Pursued other opportunities involving public health policy, e.g.:
    - OHSU – Center for Evidenced-based Policy
    - UW – Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation
AAAS S&T Policy Fellowships

- Designed to give scientists and engineers:
  - Opportunities to learn first-hand about policymaking
  - An understanding of government and policymaking, thereby preparing them to address key societal challenges
  - Opportunities to develop a large, collaborative network between current fellows, alumni, and other members within the federal system
Fellowship areas

- Big Data & Analytics
- Congressional Science & Engineering (work on the hill)
- Diplomacy, Security, and Development
- Energy, Environment, & Agriculture
- Health, Education, and Human Services

- Requiring 3 years professional post-doctoral experience
  - Judicial Branch (J.D. preferred)
  - Roger Revelle Global Stewardship
Choosing a program area

- You can choose two program areas during application.
- While areas are distinct, there is some overlap between agencies.

What to think about:
- Degree of involvement in actual policy work
- Potential for real-world impact
- Independence to choose projects of interest
- Ability to interact with other agencies or outside groups of interest
Application Materials

Candidate Data:
- Areas of scientific specialty (key words)
- Areas of policy interest
- Brief bio (200 words max)

Candidate Statement:
- Reasons for applying for a AAAS Fellowship
- Summary of background & expertise
- Areas of Interest
- Role as a fellow
- Career Goals
- 1,000 words max

Curriculum Vitae:
- Education, expertise, achievements, honors & publications
- 5 pgs.

Extracurricular activities:
- Brief examples of activities beyond the lab or classroom
- 500 words max

References:
- Three recommendation letters are required
Qualities of a successful candidate

- Involvement with extracurricular activities
  - Preferably demonstrating leadership or initiative
- Knowledge of key policy issues in area of interest
- Ability to CONCISELEY and EFFECTIVEVLY communicate
  - Critical for briefing memo
- Passionate, or at least highly motivated, to engage in policy work
  - Need to be more than just motivated to leave traditional academic setting
- Ability to think creatively and analytically
# Application and interview process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1st</td>
<td>Application Deadline:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Candidate Statement</em></td>
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<td>CV/Resume</td>
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<td>Extracurricular Activities</td>
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<td>3 Letters of Recommendation</td>
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<td>Nov. 14th</td>
<td>Eligibility verified</td>
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<td>Early Feb.</td>
<td>Notification of semi-finalist interview</td>
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<td>Asked to write briefing memo; due in ~10 days</td>
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<td>Late Feb. - Early Mar.</td>
<td>Semi-finalists interviewed by Selection Committees</td>
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<td>Mid April</td>
<td>Finalists participate in Placement Week interviews</td>
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<td>Late May – Early June</td>
<td>Placement offers made from Host Agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 1</td>
<td>Fellowship begins</td>
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# Application statistics

## 2012-13 SELECTION STATISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>APPS</th>
<th>APPS TO SCs</th>
<th>SEMI FINALISTS</th>
<th>INTERVIEWS (incl alts)</th>
<th>FINALISTS*</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Congressional</td>
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* Includes dual finalists
If you have further questions about the fellowship or application process, please email me:

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