

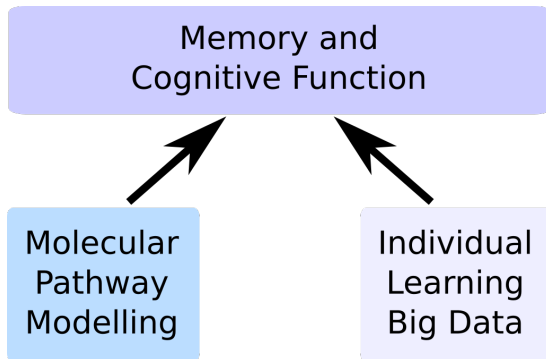
Postdoc to PI: Notes from a small experiment

Melanie I Stefan (n=1)

George Square Postdoc Society

13 April 2016

Who am I?



Who am I?



PhD, 2005-2009
EMBL-European Bioinformatics Institute



Postdoctoral Fellow, 2010-2013
California Institute of Technology



Curriculum Fellow, 2013-2014
Harvard Medical School



Edinburgh-Zhejiang Lecturer, since 2015
University of Edinburgh

But who am I really?

COLUMN

A CV of failures

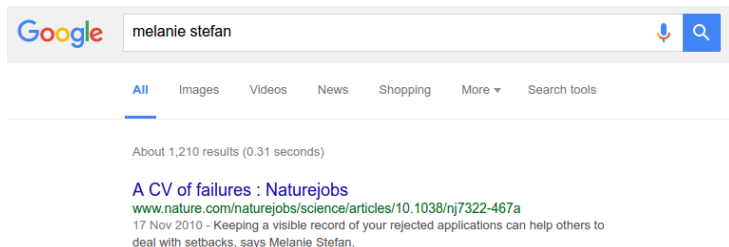
Keeping a visible record of your rejected applications can help others to deal with setbacks, says **Melanie Stefan**.

A couple of months ago, I received a letter informing me that my fellowship application had failed. On the same day, Brazil's World Cup squad announced that football phenomenon Ronaldinho had not been selected. "Cool," I thought. "I am like Ronaldinho." But that thought offered only little consolation. No scientist enjoys

that worked, not about the many that failed.

As scientists, we construct a narrative of success that renders our setbacks invisible both to ourselves and to others. Often, other scientists' careers seem to be a constant, streamlined series of triumphs. Therefore, whenever we experience an individual failure, we feel alone and dejected.

But who am I really?



A screenshot of a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "melanie stefan". Below the search bar, the "All" tab is selected and underlined. Other tabs include "Images", "Videos", "News", "Shopping", "More", and "Search tools". The search results show "About 1,210 results (0.31 seconds)". The first result is titled "A CV of failures : Naturejobs" in blue, with a green URL "www.nature.com/naturejobs/science/articles/10.1038/nj7322-467a". Below the title, the text reads: "17 Nov 2010 - Keeping a visible record of your rejected applications can help others to deal with setbacks, says Melanie Stefan."

Google melanie stefan

All Images Videos News Shopping More Search tools

About 1,210 results (0.31 seconds)

A CV of failures : Naturejobs
www.nature.com/naturejobs/science/articles/10.1038/nj7322-467a
17 Nov 2010 - Keeping a visible record of your rejected applications can help others to deal with setbacks, says Melanie Stefan.

First postdoc: Caltech



Postdoctoral Fellow, 2010-2013
California Institute of Technology



First postdoc: Caltech

The Good

- Came with my own fellowship (EMBO)
- Interesting collaborations
- Learned new techniques
- Lots of lab space
- Undergrad research assistant
- Working in the US
- New networks
- Beautiful place, nice weather, awesome people

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- Fellowship ran out
- Small group
- Ready for more independence
- No teaching experience

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The Ugly



Applications: The spreadsheet of doom

- Looked for faculty (or transitional) positions
- Applied for everything that looked interesting
- Set time aside every day for applications
- Collected all applications in a spreadsheet

	A	B	C	D	E
	inst appls	insts	date	My list of appls	Completed applications
1	Robert and Rachel College Leadership	2/1/11	Applied		
2	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
3	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
4	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
5	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
6	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
7	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
8	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
9	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
10	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
11	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
12	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
13	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
14	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
15	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
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18	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
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47	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
48	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
49	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		
50	Robert Research Institute in computational biology	2/1/11	Applied		

Applications: Be a beaver

Caltech Snaps 310 Game Conference Losing Streak; Knocks Off Occidental

Posted: Feb 22, 2011



1K



PASADENA, Calif. – For the first time since Jan. 23, 1985 the Caltech men's basketball team posted a win in a conference game. On Tuesday evening the Beavers beat Occidental College 46-45 at the Braun Athletic Center.

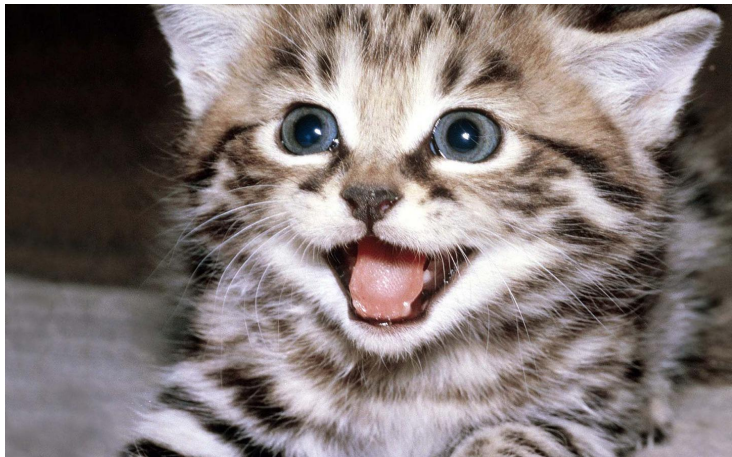
It was the first SCIAC win for the Caltech program since they beat La Verne 48-47 - 26 years ago. Caltech had lost its previous 310 SCIAC games.

"Tonight's win is a testament to the hard work each member of this team, the alumni and the supporters have put into this program. I hope that everyone who has participated in Caltech men's basketball is able to celebrate a little bit tonight," third year head coach Oliver Eslinger said. "We still have goals and aspirations that we want to accomplish as a program and this win is another step towards meeting these objectives."



Applications: Get good reference letters

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Curriculum Fellowship: Harvard Medical School



Curriculum Fellow, 2013-2014
Harvard Medical School

Curriculum Fellowship: Harvard Medical School



Curriculum Fellow, 2013-2014
Harvard Medical School



Melanie Stefan

January 9, 2014 · 🌐 ▼

(At the cafeteria)

- Student here?
- No.
- Not a postdoc or nobody?
- No, not a postdoc or nobody.
- Well ... you're somebody, you just don't get a discount.



Like



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Share



Kristina Hadzikaric, Ward G. Walkup IV and 10 others

A great mentor and a simple question

What do you want to do next and what experiences do you need to have now to make this happen?

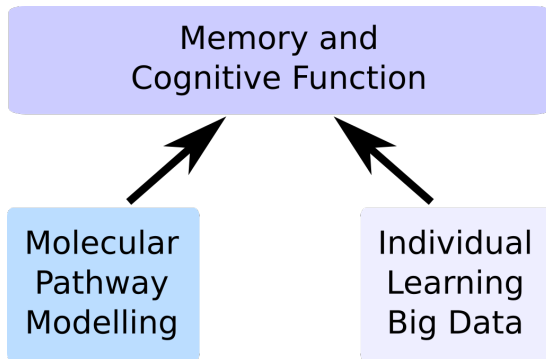
Johanna L. Gutlerner



Targeted activities

- Gained teaching and curriculum development experience
- Expanded my research portfolio
- Started new collaborations
- Acquired a small grant
- Supervised graduate research assistants

Who am I?



Applications: The spreadsheet of doom champagne

You get five interviews, you
get a job.

Caltech career talk

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Caltech career talk

You get 30 rejections, we
open a bottle of champagne.

My mum

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2014/2015 applications

- 15 applications
- 8 rejections
- 5 interview invitations
- 4 interviews
- 3 offers

... and here I am

