

Coffee & Bagels with a Mentor

October 2, 2018

Speaker: Jesse Morris, PhD

University of Utah Research Development Office

**Speaker Bio:**

Dr. Morris has worked as a postdoctoral researcher and taught at higher education institutions in the US, Europe, and Australia. He has authored more than 20 scholarly publications and has given research and workshop presentations in 15 countries. He currently serves on the steering committee for two international research coordination networks based in Switzerland and continues to build new research projects in the western US. Earlier this year, he transitioned from a teaching faculty position at Weber State University to the newly minted Research Development Office at the University of Utah. Dr. Morris will join us to discuss his experiences in navigating the postdoc landscape and academic employment, among others. Additionally, Dr. Morris will provide a brief overview of the new resources available to postdocs through the Research Development Office.

**Event Recap:**

Jesse detailed his academic career beginning with a PhD in Geography from the University of Utah, to a Postdoctoral Fellowship in Finland, to a second Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Idaho, to teaching faculty at Weber State, and to his current position with the newly established Research Development Officer at the University of Utah. He discussed his experiences on the tenure track job market, his reasons for exiting a postdoctoral position that was transitioning to another university, his willingness to leave a teaching faculty position, and his ultimate decision to embark upon a career in grant support through the Office of the VP for Research at the U. His role in the Research Development Office allows him to capitalize upon his scientific background and his strengths as a generalist.

With respect to the tenure track job market: Of specific interest was his discussion of the importance of the interview with the dean and the necessity to market yourself to a dean even after receiving good reviews from the department faculty.

Jesse also detailed the grant writing support services available through the Research Development Office. He stressed the importance of structuring a grant such that a person with a scientific background can follow the logic of the proposal and understand its significance, even without being a subject matter expert. Jesse also described the results of studies that track how NSF proposal documents are read and evaluated by reviewers, which show that reviewers tend to consume proposals in pieces rather than as a continuous narrative. He stressed the need for clarity in every sentence of a grant and the utility of sharp figures that can be absorbed easily for reviewers as they may be required to process numerous grants over a relatively short time period.