

After the PhD: How to apply for postdocs

Rodrigo Nemmen

@nemmen

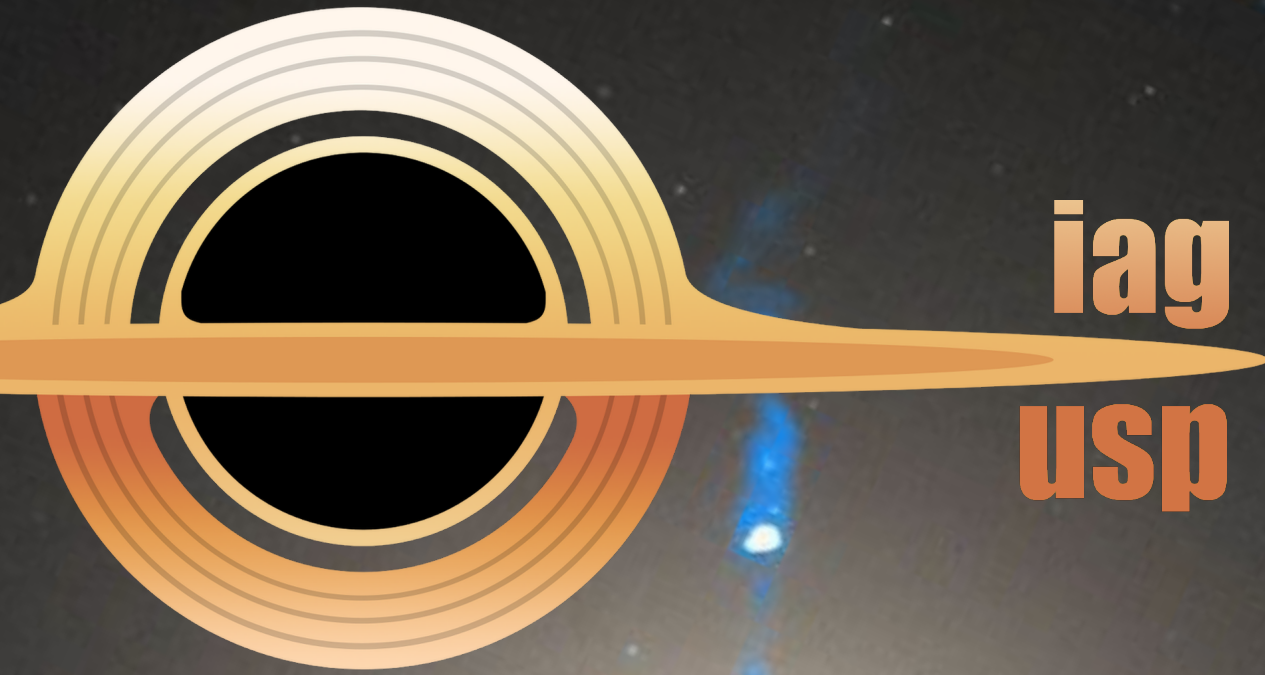
IAG USP

w/ input from Roderik Overzier, Alessandro Ederoclite
@dr_overhere



Black hole group

black
hole
group



iag
usp

observations

blackholegroup.org

theory

$$R_{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{2}g_{\mu\nu}R = \frac{8\pi G}{c^4}T_{\mu\nu}$$
$$\nabla_\nu(\rho u^\nu) = 0$$
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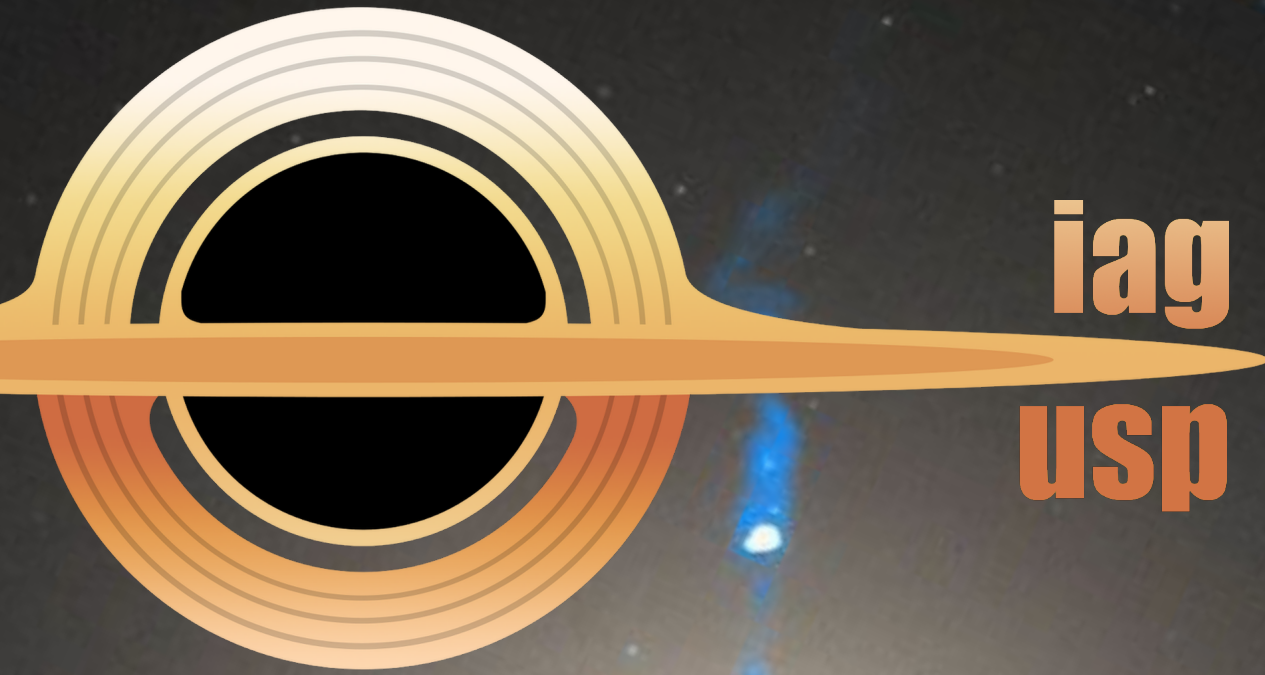
computation

An illustration of a hand holding a white pen, writing mathematical equations on a blackboard. The background of the blackboard is a swirling orange and yellow pattern, resembling a black hole's accretion disk. The equations are written in white ink. The word 'theory' is written in white, and 'computation' is written in red at the bottom.

Shiokawa

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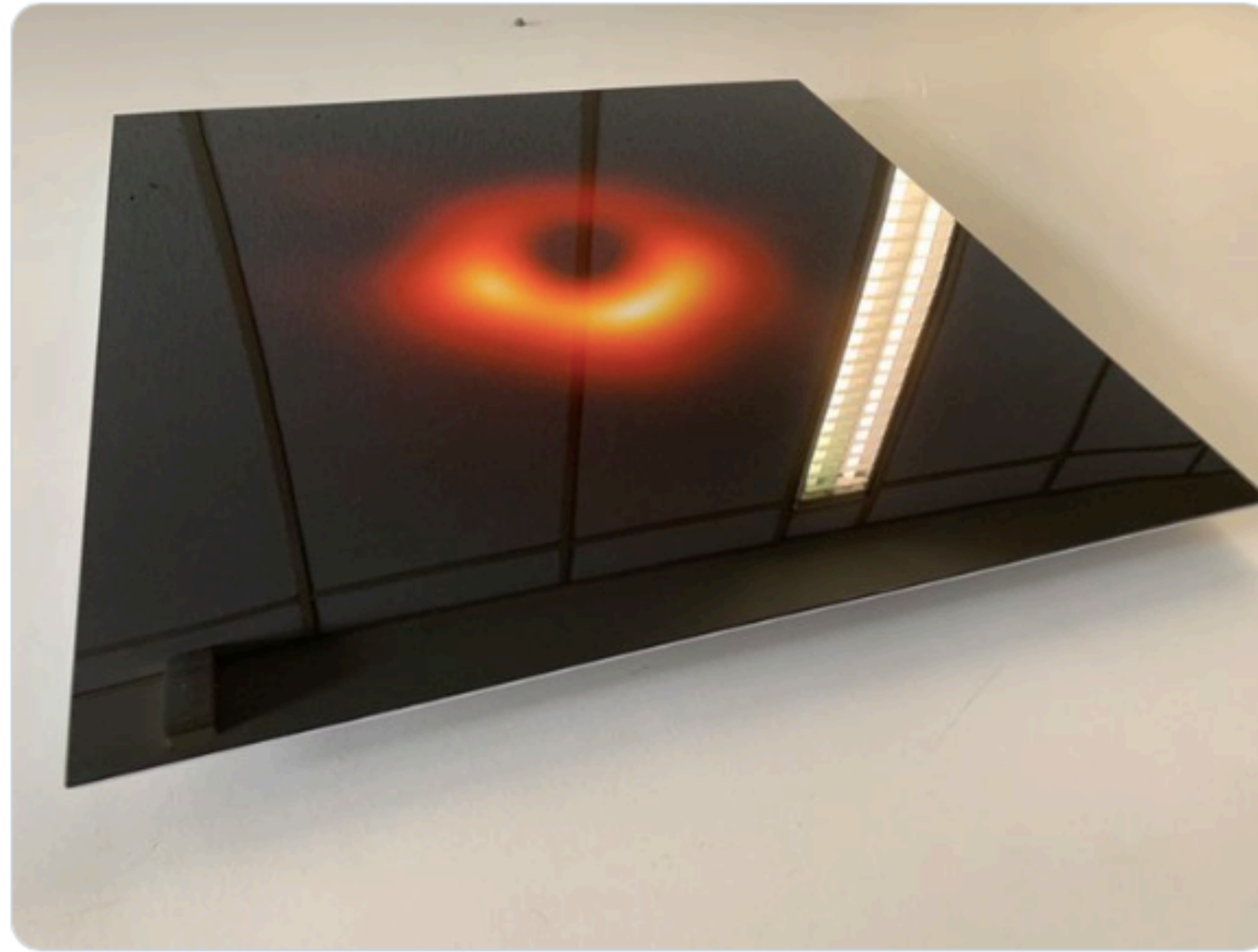
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Shiokawa

The first person to find this in the institute (and is not currently a (under)grad student at IAG) will get a prize. Need to tweet a selfie with the picture as proof!

[#firstlight19](#)



4:09 PM · Aug 1, 2019 from [Instituto de Astronomia, Geofísica e Ciências Atmosféricas \(IAG-USP\)](#) · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

Q/A and poll

1. Connect to wifi
2. Open browser
3. Go to slido.com
4. Code #f12019

Rede: iag net
User:
Senha: fl

slido

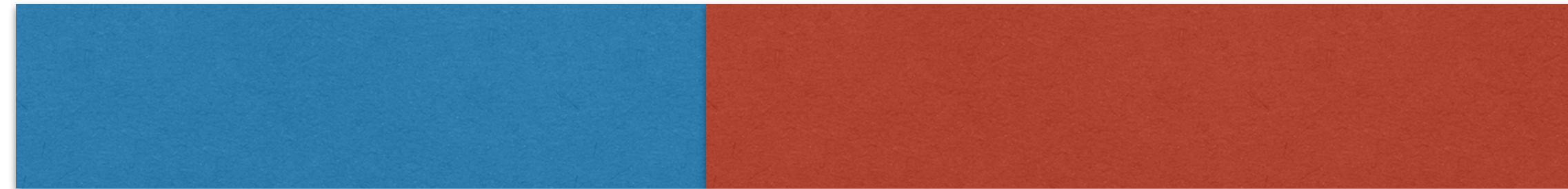
The academic path



undergraduate

4 yrs

The academic path



undergraduate

graduate

4 yrs

3-6 yrs

The academic path



undergraduate

graduate

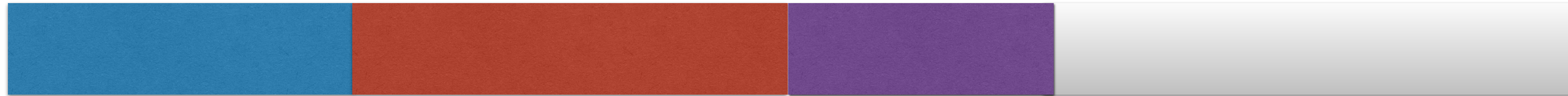
postdoc

4 yrs

3-6 yrs

>3 yrs

The academic path



undergraduate

4 yrs

graduate

3-6 yrs

postdoc

>3 yrs

“permanent position”

**tenure-track
professorship**

**There are many other options
besides academia and postdocs...**

<http://www.linkedin.com>



**... but today we will tell what
you should do if you want to
get a postdoc**

Disclaimers: Our own, biased, opinion on these matters

Our goal for this presentation:

advice on how to land the best possible postdoctoral job for you

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***Your* ultimate goal:**

**get a faculty job at the best possible institute/university
*for you***

Outline

Why give a talk like this?

Types of postdocs

Where? How? When?

After applying: interviews, rumor mill, negotiation

General advice / strategies

Group discussion

Why give this talk?

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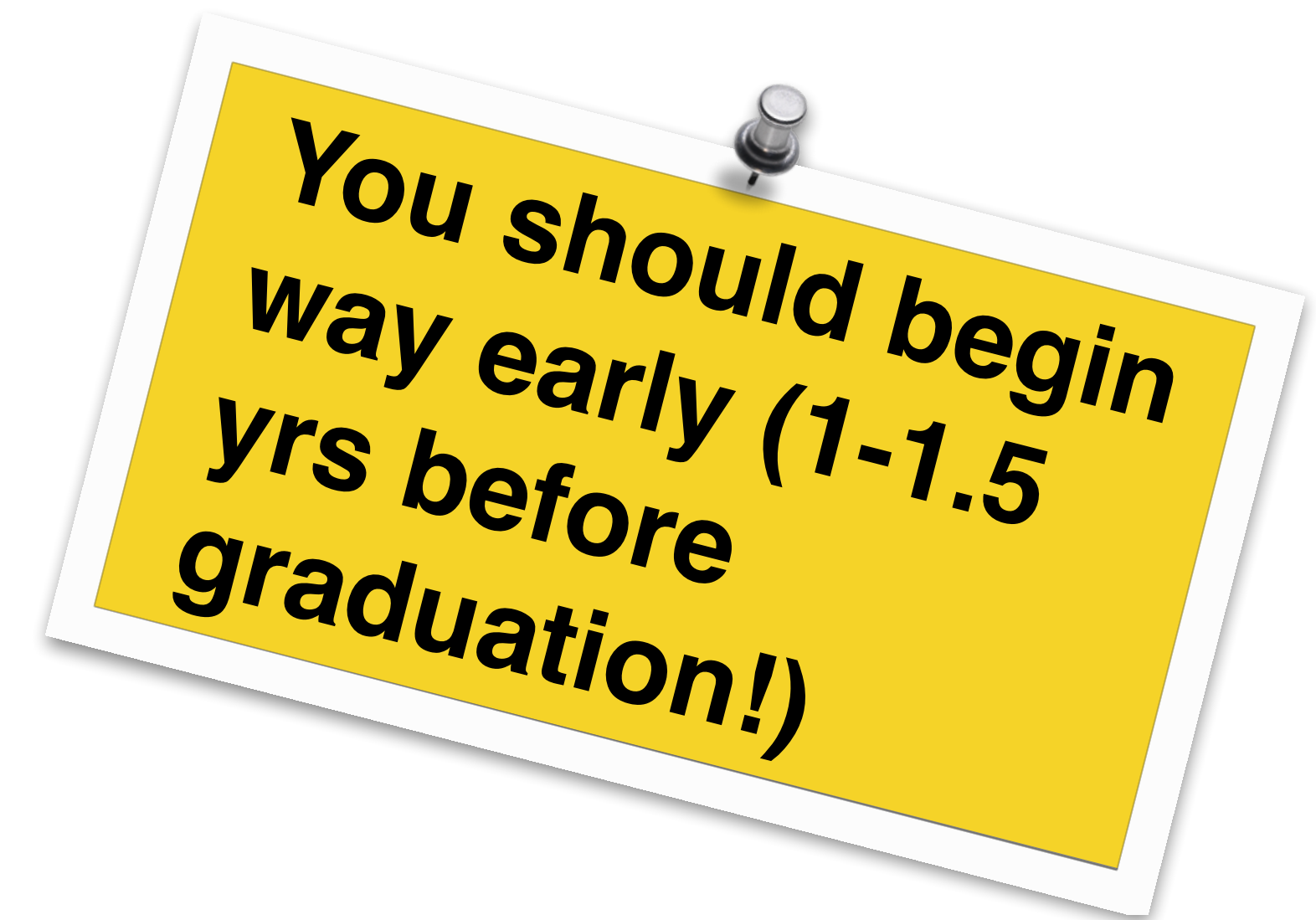
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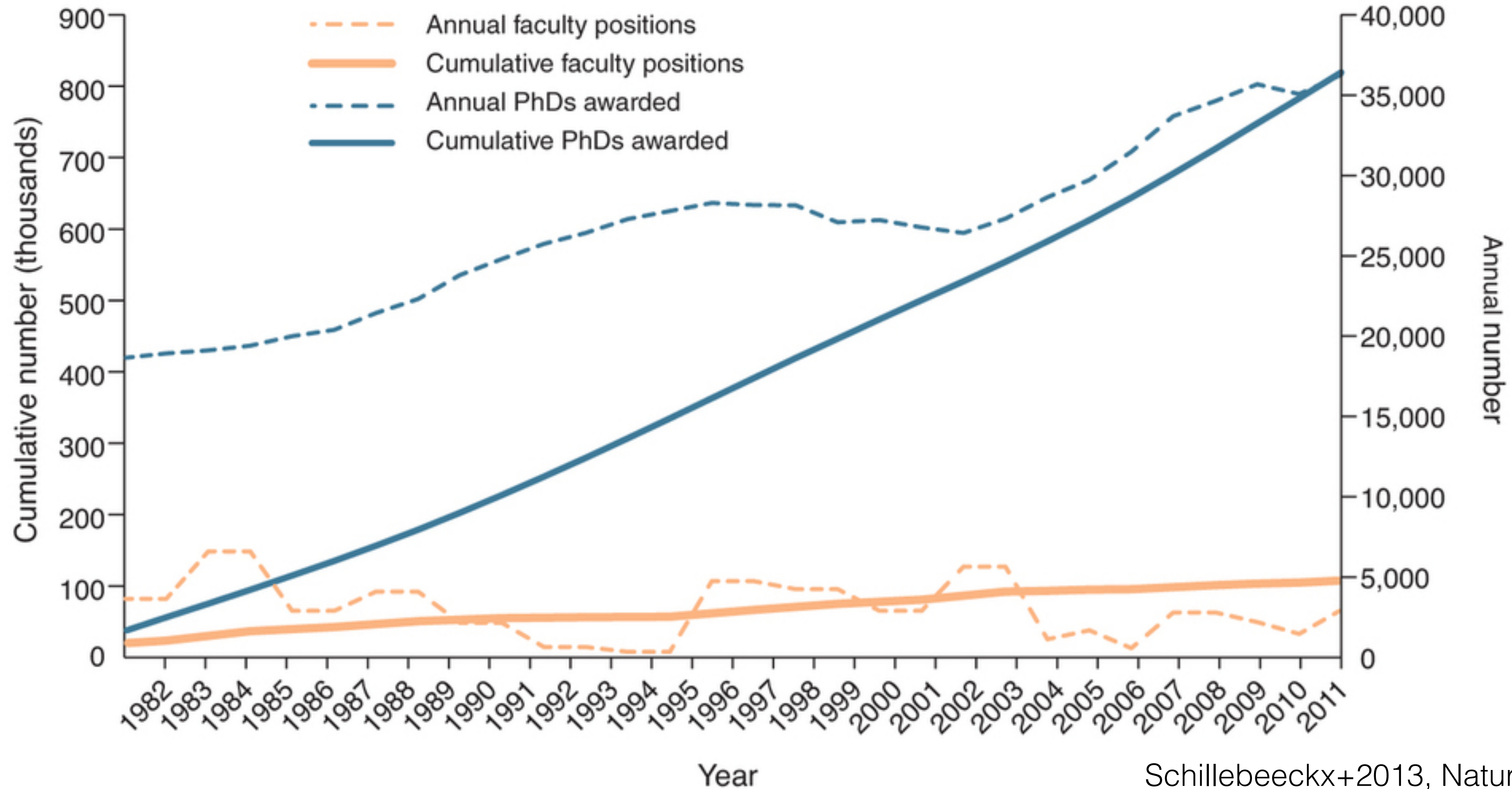
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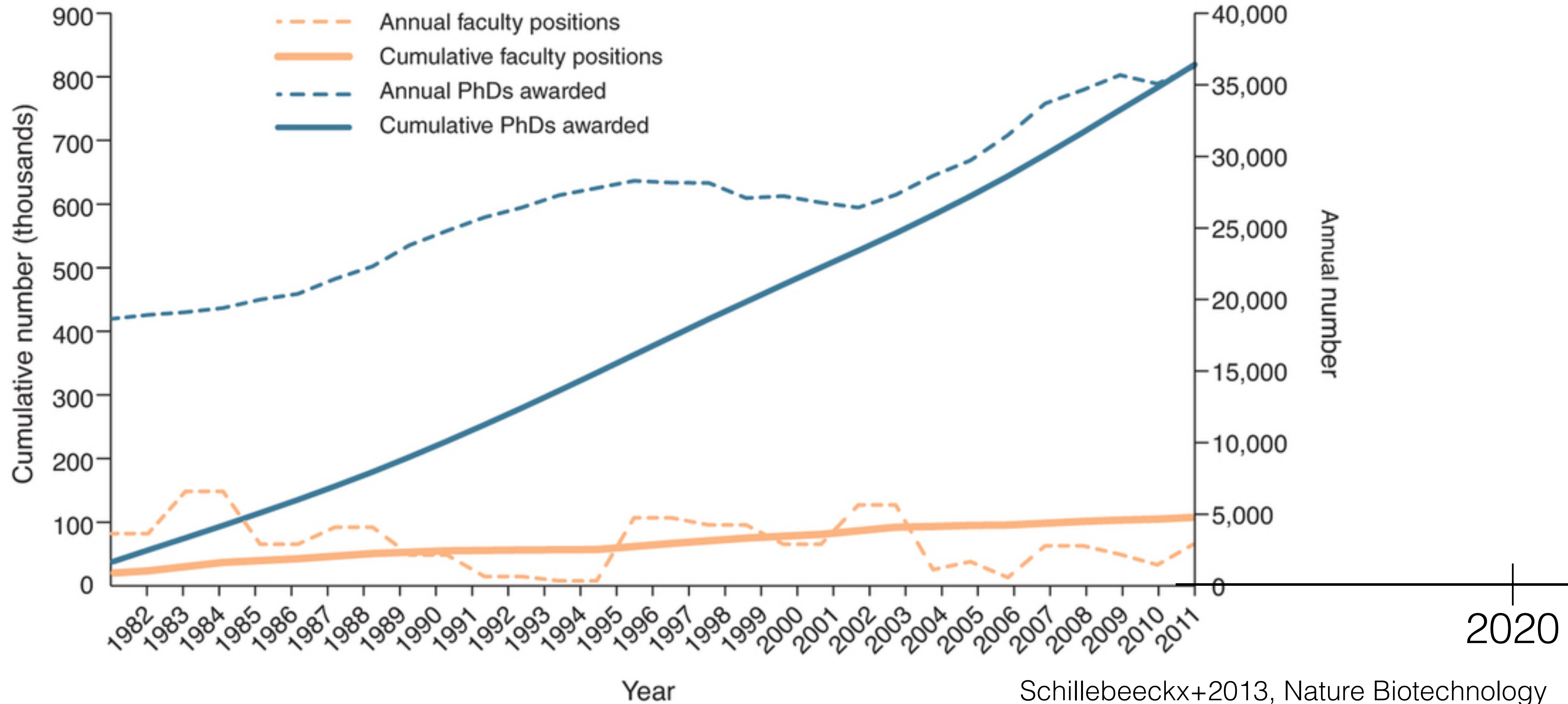
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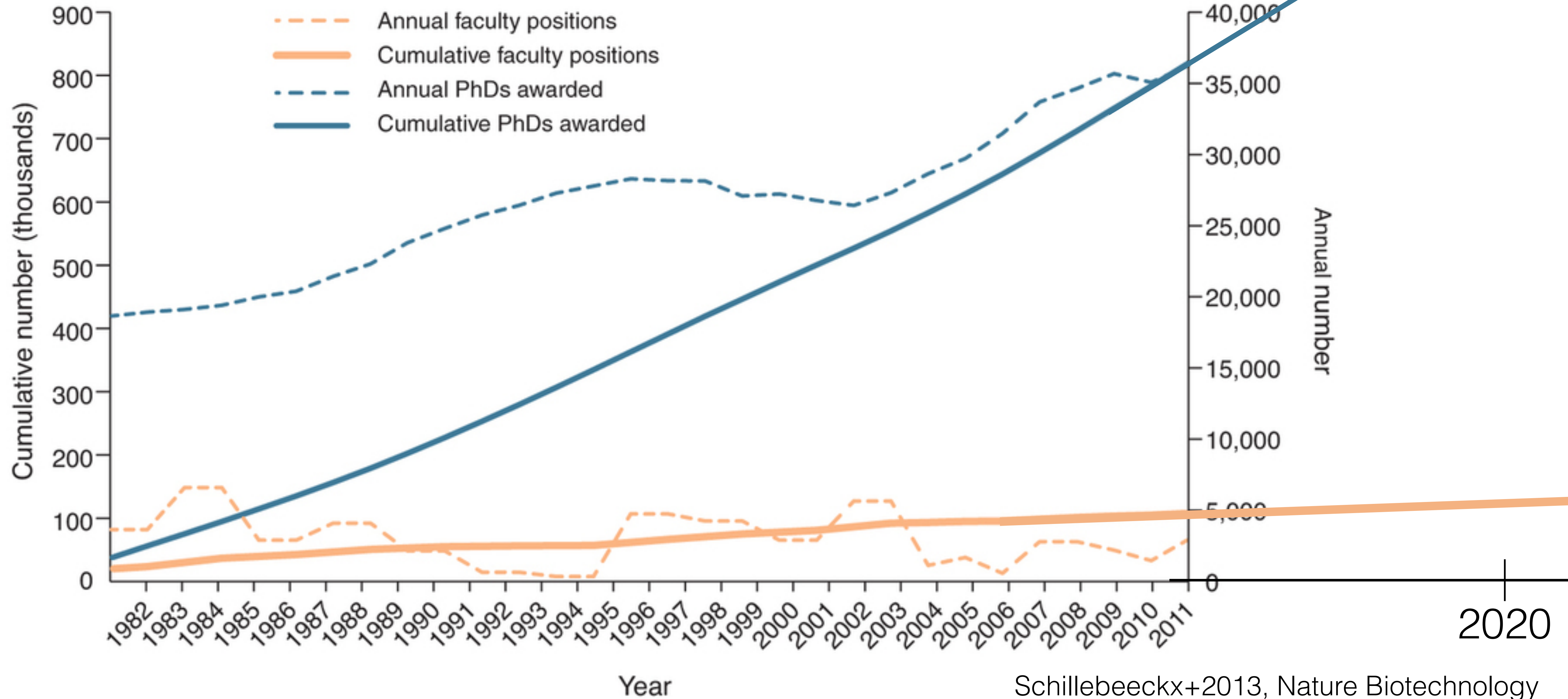
New faculty positions vs new PhDs in science & engineering



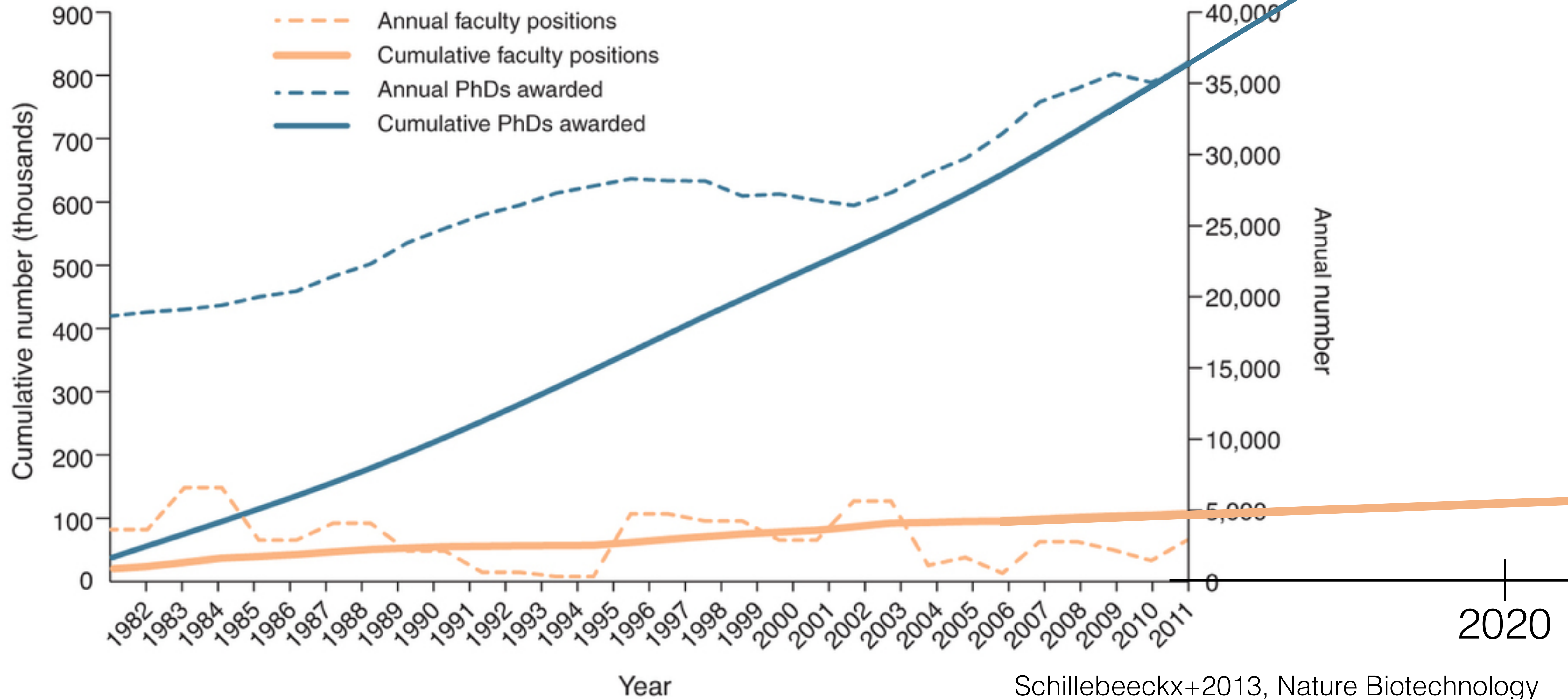
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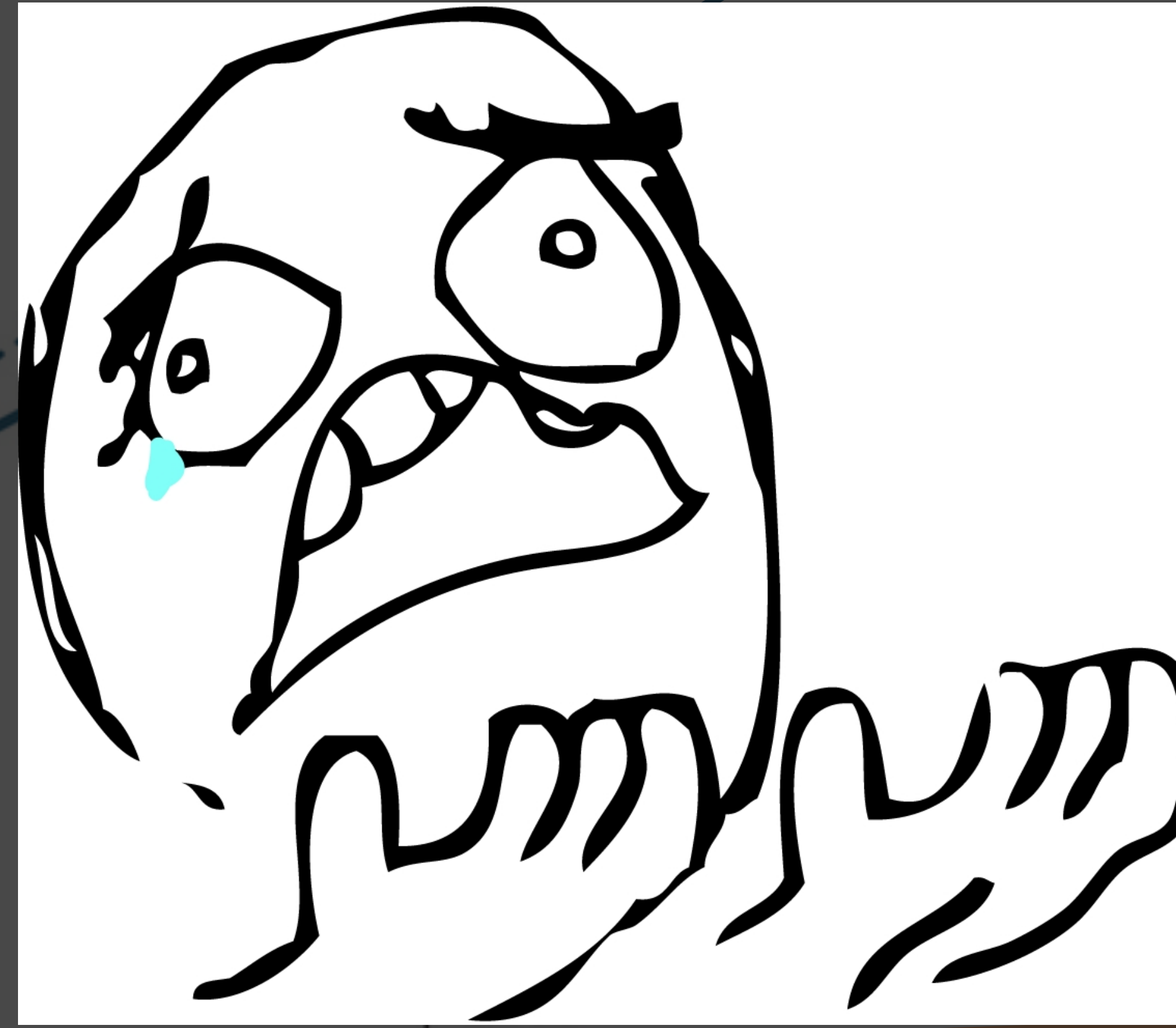
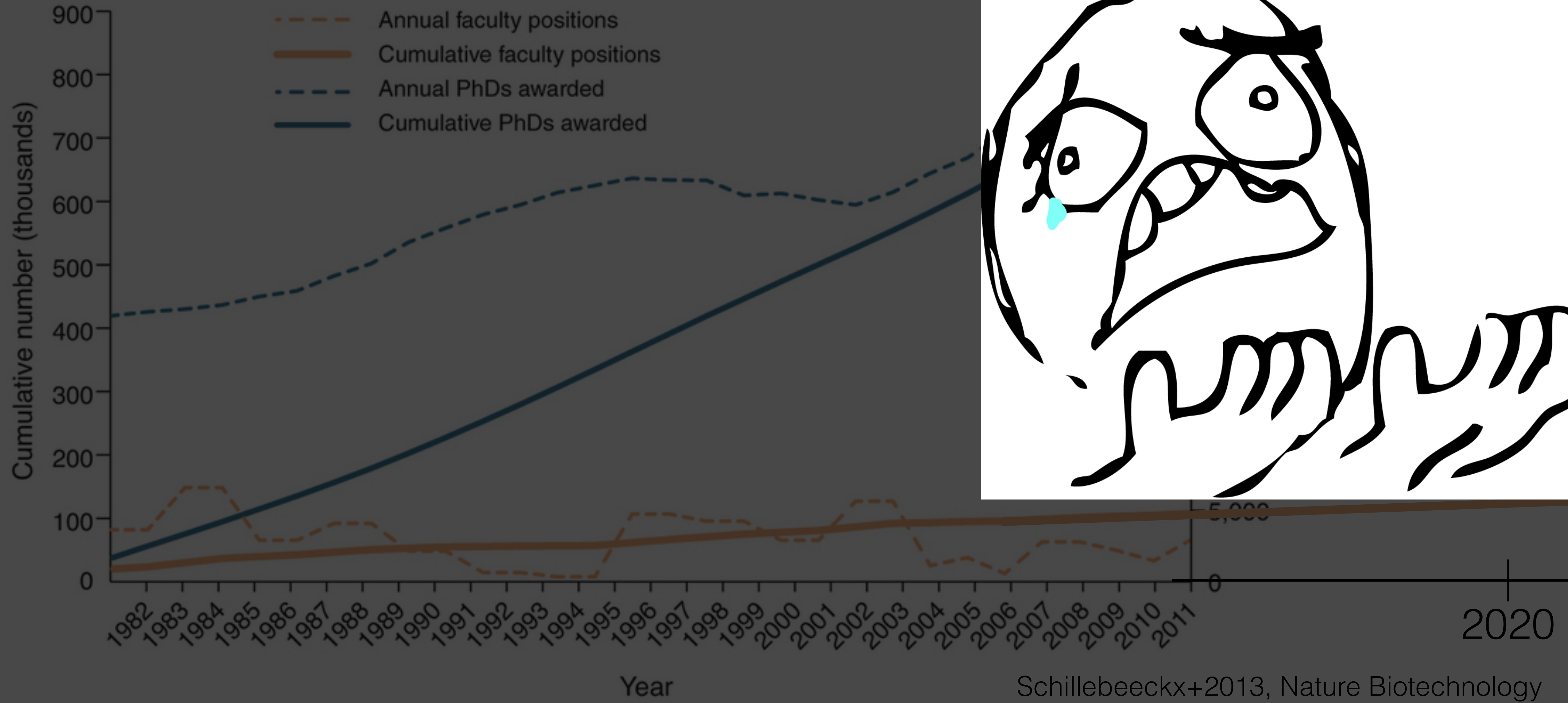
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Specific case: Brazilian scenario

PhDs/(faculty positions)

<PhDs produced / yr> = 20

not counting people that got PhDs abroad

Faculty positions in 2017 = 4

2017 was a *good* year for faculty positions
also note that retirement age is increasing

(New PhDs)/(faculty positions) \geq 5

Types of postdocs in Brasil

Federal

**CNPq
CAPES PNPD
MCTI-PCI (ON, INPE, LNA,
CBPF, etc)**

State

**FAPESP (pós-
doutorado, JP ou
num temático)
FAPERJ, FAPEMIG ...**

Need: supervisor + Lattes (+project)

Types of postdocs elsewhere

Named fellowships (countrywide)

freedom, prestige, best salaries

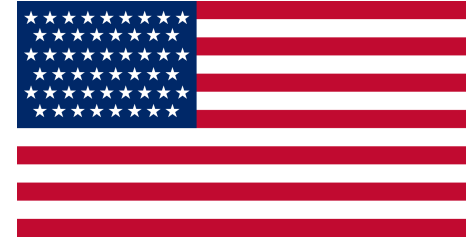
Named fellowships (institute specific)

Positions funded off grant money (project specific)

“Created” fellowships (institute specific, often based off specific projects but recast as fellowships)

Also: postdocs funded by your home country to go abroad

Named Fellowships, countrywide



NASA Hubble Program
(Hubble/Einstein/Sagan)
Jansky (radio)

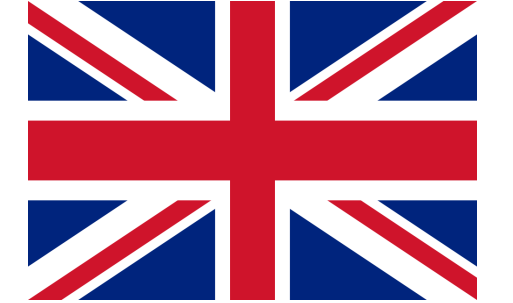
Deadlines: Nov. 1st

Salaries: >US\$69k / year

Travel: US\$16.5k / year



Marie Curie (all EU)
ESA Fellowship (all EU)
NWO Veni 🇳🇱
Juan de La Cierva, Ramon
y Cajal 🇪🇸
January deadlines



STFC (UK)

Named Fellowships, institute-specific



NASA Postdoctoral Program (NPP)

Deadlines: March 1st,
July 1st, Nov. 1st

Caltech

MIT: Pappalardo

Harvard: CfA / ITC

Fellowships

Yale

Berkeley

Princeton



ESO (Germany or Chile)

Max Planck Institutes

CITA

Perimeter

JAXA, NAOJ, IPMU (Japan)

Shanghai

Taiwan

Genérico (IAC)

Salaries: ~\$60-67k / year

Fellowships from personal or project grants

- ❖ The majority of positions out there will involve working for someone off their personal grant. Generally gives you less control over the research, but will be equally productive if...
 1. You like the person/get along with them (very important!)
 2. You like the research topic and you can *demonstrate initiative*!
 3. You are at a good institute with other people to interact with
 4. There are sufficient resources (decent office/computer/facilities)
 5. Travel budget-- very important!! Ask for specifics
 6. You have some percentage (usually ~40% of the time IF you fulfill your other duties) to do your own research

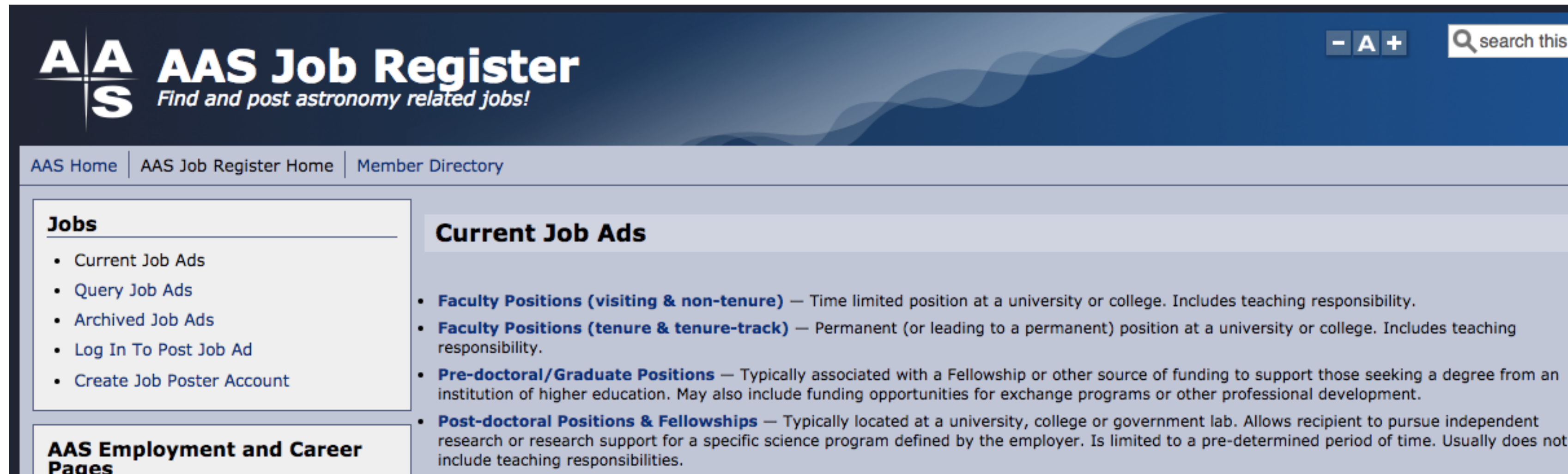


Sera Markoff

Where to find available opportunities

<http://jobregister.aas.org>

all astronomy positions from phd to faculty



The screenshot shows the AAS Job Register website. The header includes the AAS logo (A, A, S) and the text "AAS Job Register Find and post astronomy related jobs!". There is a search bar in the top right corner. Below the header, there are navigation links: "AAS Home", "AAS Job Register Home", and "Member Directory". The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column has a "Jobs" section with a list of links: "Current Job Ads", "Query Job Ads", "Archived Job Ads", "Log In To Post Job Ad", and "Create Job Poster Account". Below this is a section titled "AAS Employment and Career Pages". The right column has a "Current Job Ads" section with a list of job categories: "Faculty Positions (visiting & non-tenure)", "Faculty Positions (tenure & tenure-track)", "Pre-doctoral/Graduate Positions", and "Post-doctoral Positions & Fellowships". Each category has a brief description of the position type.

typically ~100 postdoc positions (all areas of astronomy) open for application with deadlines Sep-Jan!

How to apply

Applications usually consist of

- **Cover letter**
- **CV**
- **Research statement and/or project (for fellowships)**
- **2-3 recommendation letters**

Tone: be confident and reasonable, don't underplay your skills, *but also don't brag about experience that is not reflected by your CV*

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Typos, grammar mistakes, formatting errors are unforgivable!
Red flags which are reasons for disqualification

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Put more effort in if it is not obvious why you fit the job

Usually you also put the names/contact info of your letters of rec.

Sound enthusiastic and interested!

How to: CV

Basic info: Name, current position and contact info, citizenship

Education section: start with university degrees only. Write your degree name in native tongue, then translate to system where you are applying, i.e.: “Univ. Blah Blah, Diploma Churrascus Aopontus (equiv. to Bachelors Degree)”

List PhD **thesis title** and **advisor**

List all **awards/grants**

List all research **jobs/experience**

List invited **talks/colloquia** if you have any, **schools** etc. if you are MSc student

List all relevant **skills** (computer programming etc)

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Publications [• Obs. proposals accepted • Observing experience]

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“do not assume that the person reading your application works in your field”

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Get to know if they will write a good letter for you (just ask!)



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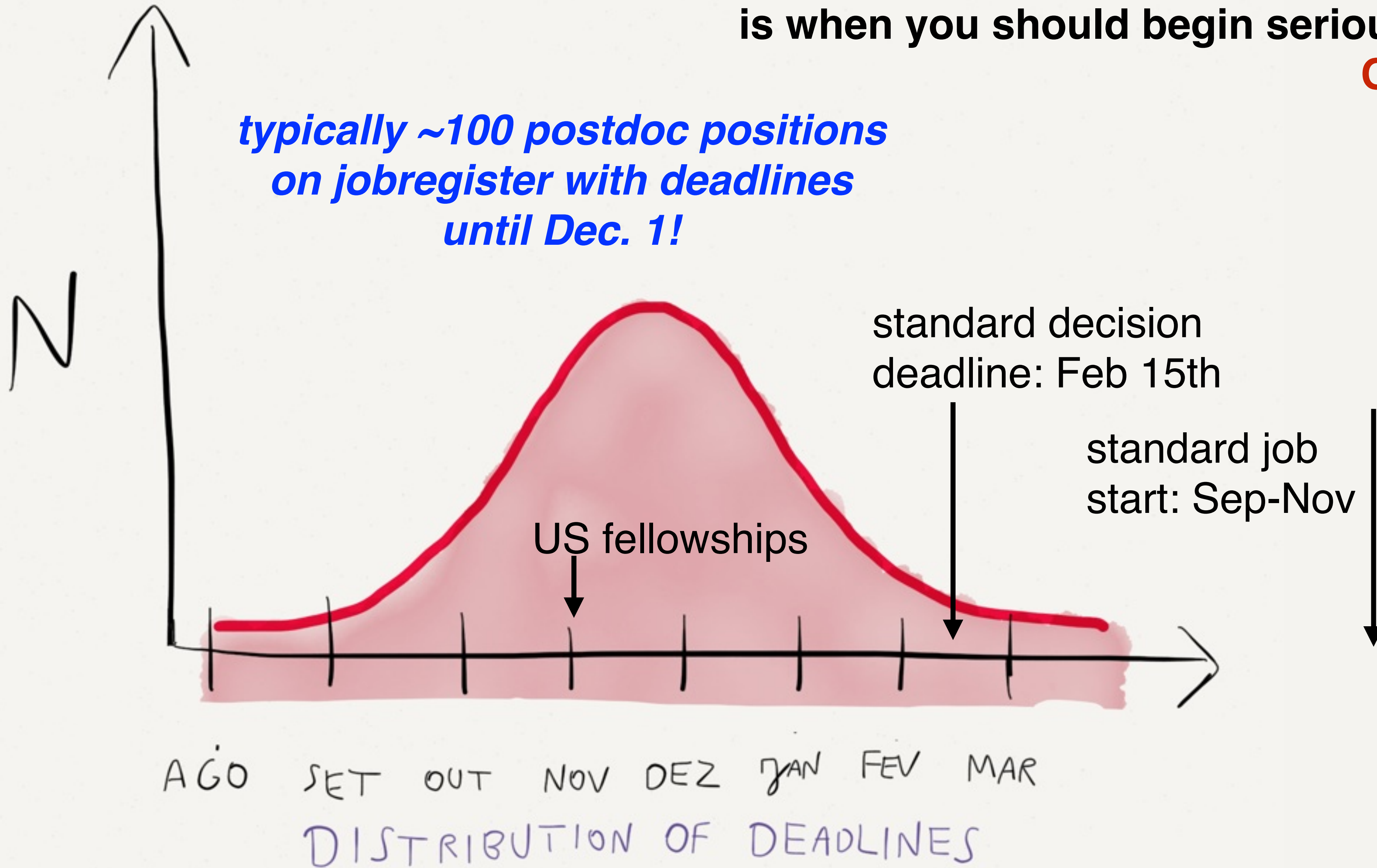
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Get feedback on your application material!

When to apply?

If you are finishing a PhD or postdoc in 2020, then **NOW** is when you should begin seriously applying, so **up to ONE YEAR in advance!**

typically ~100 postdoc positions on jobregister with deadlines until Dec. 1!



After applying

Unfortunately, applying is only part of the work!

- **Interview**
- **Rumor mill**
- **Hopefully, some job offer(s)**
- **Negotiation**

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The interview

Interviewing:

- **at conferences (e.g. AAS)**
- **or they will fly you to the institute in some cases**
- **or Skype / phone (probably most cases)**

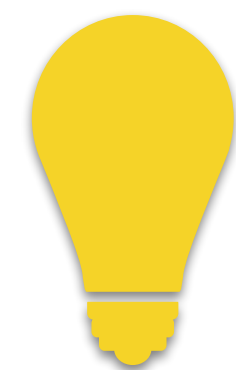
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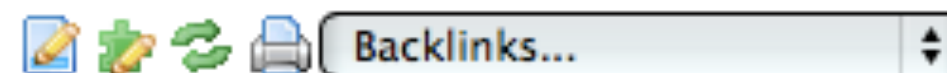
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Typical interview questions you need to prepare for:

- why do you want THIS job ?
- why do you want to work HERE, specifically ?
- why is YOUR research interesting to us ?
- why should we hire YOU, specifically ?
- do you need any special computers, lab, telescope ?
- where do you see yourself in *N* years ?



(Cached)



ASTROPHYSICS JOBS RUMOR MILL - POSTDOC & TERM

Recent revisions - Faculty & Staff Page - Previous Years

To edit the page anonymously, do not be logged in.

Recent revisions can be seen by clicking the [History](#) button at the bottom of the page. If you register for an account on the wiki and login, you can also Monitor the page by clicking on the eyeball in the upper right and receive email notifications of changes. (An RSS feed of recent changes is in progress.)

You can add new rows by right clicking within the table.

Please include a link to the job when adding it to the list.

If possible, include names and dates when offers are made and accepted, since this helps to differentiate wrong rumors from right ones. Use **boldface** to indicate when a position has been accepted.

An old revision should not be restored at any time! Unless, of course, you manage to make so many errors while editing the page that you can't fix them all one by one. Then you can go back by **one** revision. If you go back by more you've also erased other people's rumors inadvertently.

If a rumor you put on keeps getting removed by someone else (and that rumor is not about you) please respect that person's wishes—they might have reasons to keep it private and/or your rumor might be wrong.

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We have chosen to adopt a hands-off policy for the Rumor Mill; however, you may contact admin at astrobetter.com for technical difficulties.

Postdoc or term positions

Login

Log in as...

Username:

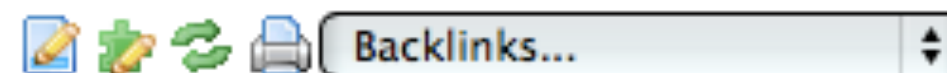
Password:

[[Register](#) | [I forgot my password](#)]

Last changes

1. [Rumor Mill Faculty-Staff](#)
 2. [Rumor Mill](#)
 3. [Long-Slit Spectra Reduction](#)
 4. [Setup a New Mac for Astronomy](#)
 5. [Simulations](#)
- ...more

(Cached)



ASTROPHYSICS JOBS RUMOR MILL - POSTDOC & TERM

[Recent revisions - Faculty & Staff Page - Previous Years](#)

To edit the page anonymously, do not be logged in.

Recent revisions can be seen by clicking the [History](#) button at the bottom of the page. If you register for an account on the wiki and login, you can also Monitor the page by clicking on the eyeball in the upper right and receive email notifications of changes. (An RSS feed of recent changes is in progress.)

You can add new rows by right clicking within the table.

Please include a link to the job when adding it to the list.

If possible, include names and dates when offers are made and accepted, since this helps to differentiate wrong rumors from right ones. Use **boldface** to indicate when a position has been accepted.

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“do not go to the rumor mill”

Postdoc or term positions

Place/Institution (alphabetical)	Matches (in boldface if accepted) Describe
Aachen (RWTH Aachen University), 1 postdoc in astroparticle physics (w/ P. Mertsch), 1 postdoc in cosmology (w/ J. Lesgourgues; ad)	Due December 17, 2016. 1 offer for Cosmology postdoc made and accepted .
AAO Research Astronomer & Public Outreach Officer (ad)	Due Jan 31, 2017. Shortlist notified, interviews scheduled. Offer made and accepted . Some rejections sent.
AAS John Bahcall Public Policy Fellowship	Due March 31, 2017. Longlist notified; virtual interviews scheduled.
Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Astronomical Observatory Institute (w/ Michalowski; ad)	Preference will be given to applications submitted before 30 June 2017, subsequent applications will be considered until the position is filled.
ALMA JAO Fellowship	Some interviews scheduled, including George Privon, Dominique Segura-Cox, Jorge Zavala. Offer made and declined. Roderik Overzier
AIP Leibniz Institute Cosmology Postdoctoral fellowship ad	Shortlist notified, interviews scheduled. Offer made to Edoardo Carlesi, Martin Sparre (w. Pfrommer).
Anton Pannekoek Inst. for Astronomy, Univ. of Amsterdam: 1-2 postdoctoral positions in computational stellar astrophysics in the BinCosmos group (w/ De Mink; ad)	Selection of candidates in progress, Long shortlist has been notified, first rejections sent.
Anton Pannekoek Inst. for Astronomy, Univ. of Amsterdam: postdoctoral position in theoretical astrophysics (w/Markoff, ad)	Shortlist notified, interviews scheduled. Offer made and accepted .
Arecibo Observatory, USRA postdoc position in radio astronomy group	Application review begins Feb. 1, 2017. Interviews being conducted (started May 1). Any offers?
APC Paris France, gravitational waves postdoc (ad)	Due March 15. Anyone heard anything?

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Initiative/resourcefulness/be proactive

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Just apply and see what happens

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Don't be too narrowly focused on passing a Concurso as soon as possible after the PhD

without having several independent and crucial formative years as a postdoc, you will probably not be able to lead the next generation of Brazilian astrophysicists even if you pass a Concurso

Marketing

introduce yourself always to visitors, seminar speakers, people in workshops, conferences, SCHOOLS... tell them briefly about your work

Always leave a good impression with everyone, you never know who they know or if they may be affecting your job search

Try to **spend some time abroad** during your MSc/PhD, if possible: great for networking

Attend conferences! Get your name out there.

Give talks and give good talks: very important

Consider going to the January AAS (US) or EWASS (EU) meetings of the year you are graduating

2-body system: start discussing well in advance

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The most productive students have ≥ 3 first author papers at the time they start applying



Keep that in mind during your MSc/PhD, because these folks will be your primary competition!

Be proactive

Initiative, resourcefulness

Before you decide on a project, try to investigate if there is a reasonable chance of success

Shortcut: check your advisor's CV, reputation, and the history of his/her past students

Do not just sit and wait for your advisor to tell you what to do

This is your MSc/PhD, so make sure that you are in control at all times

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- **Google yourself and be careful with what shows up**
- **Get noticed for your work, and not (only) as the one that drank too many Caipirinhas at #firstlight19 !**

Summary

Successful researchers have an international career

Initiative/resourcefulness/be proactive

You should begin the process early (1-1.5 yrs before graduation)

If you don't apply, you are automatically rejected El "no" ya lo tienes

Do not be scared to move to another country