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In the Global Competition For Smart Minds, Germany Grows Its Catch

Ever since the European Council’s decision in 2000 to transform the European Union into “a competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy,” Germany’s federal government has been pumping money into research and development through various mechanisms. As a result, not only are German research institutions forging major changes in the way that researchers teach, collaborate, and advance in their careers, they are also creating more jobs. These jobs run the gamut from junior and senior researchers to support staff. With good long-term funding prospects and attractive salaries, Germany has become a major contender in the global competition among nations to draw in top talent. By Gunjan Sinha

In 2003, Barbara Conradt left the Max Planck Institute for Neurobiology in Martinsried, Germany to take a job in the United States—she thought it was for good. She had accepted a tenure-track position at the Geisel School of Medicine (formerly Dartmouth Medical School), in Hanover, New Hampshire. Not only did the position offer better long-term job prospects and a supportive research community, she much preferred the openness and diversity of the American academic environment.

“I was excited about the U.S. system,” says Conradt, which she had experienced first-hand having finished both her Ph.D. and a postdoc in the United States. “I thought I would never move back to Germany,” she recalls. So it was no wonder that when a recruiter approached her in 2010 with a job opportunity at the Center for Integrated Protein Science in Munich (CIPSM), Germany, she balked. But she soon reconsidered. If she were offered the job, she thought, she would merely use it as leverage to boost her standing at Dartmouth.

Things turned out quite differently, however. “I realized that a lot had happened in Munich,” Conradt explains. The campus had grown, the university environment had become more diverse, and there were more women. “I really felt like this was a place I wanted to come back to and make a difference,” she says. CIPSM offered her a full professorship and also offered to move her entire lab over. She accepted the offer with open arms.

CIPSM was established in 2006 through Germany’s Excellence Initiative—a program that invites institutes of higher education to apply for federal grant money to fund growth in three areas: graduate programs, clusters of excellence that focus on and accelerate hot research topics, and institutional strategies (also called future concepts) that improve the institution’s quality of research and teaching. Launched in 2005, the Excellence Initiative was a bold plan to push innovation at what was seen as Germany’s inertial university system. In addition to receiving lump sum state funding, universities could now compete for additional federal funding by submitting ideas for new educational strategies, research initiatives, or collaborations that span multiple research institutes. By fostering innovation, the goal was to create “elite universities” that could compete with the world’s best universities in drawing in top talent.

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Upcoming Features

Cancer Research Careers: Academia vs. Industry—March 29
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Otmar Wiestler

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money is flowing into the sciences. Since the European Council's decision in 2000 to transform the European Union into "a competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy" by 2010, Germany has increased spending on research and development dramatically—the results of which are already tangible. Between 2005 and 2010, the number of jobs in research and development grew by 15%.

Not only has industry contributed to this growth by increasing research and development expenditure by 21% during the same period, the federal government upped research and development investment from €9 billion in 2005 to approximately €13.8 billion in 2012—an increase of 53%, according to the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, or BMBF).

The result has been that regions around the country that have traditionally been hubs of research and development are expanding and innovating and in the process creating new job opportunities.

The South: Bavaria

Not only can the state of Bavaria lay claim to hosting two elite universities, the Technische Universität München (TUM) and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU), it can also boast winning the second highest share of award money through both Excellence Initiative rounds for a total of €370 million.

At the CIPS— an excellence cluster set up by the TUM, the LMU, and the Max Planck Institutes of Neurobiology and Biochemistry—the focus is on protein science. The CIPS includes three locations on the outskirts of the city of Munich—Großhadern/Martinsried, Garching, and Weihenstephan—and university physics and medicine departments in downtown Munich. The center enables scientists from LMU and TUM, as well as scientists from the neighboring Max Planck Institutes and the Helmholtz institutes, to come together and work on common research goals. Since 2007, CIPS has received about €45 million from the Excellence Initiative and funding of the cluster has been renewed for 2012 through 2017, with a budget of approximately €7 million per year.

"I have not regretted leaving Dartmouth at all," says Conradt, who studies cell apoptosis and mitochondrial dynamics in Caenorhabditis elegans. Conradt moved to CISP M at a time when NIH funding had "really dropped," she says. Meanwhile in Germany, the federal and state governments continue to prioritize funding of research and development over the long-term, which is vital for scientific progress, she adds. Just as appealing, the academic environment in and around Munich continues to change in ways that promote diversity. For example, like most excellence clusters, CISP M’s official language is English. Teaching of the sciences at the Master’s level at CISP M's host universities is also now conducted in English, which has really helped draw people from all over the world, she says.

Baden-Württemberg

To the west, the state of Baden-Württemberg has been the most successful state in the Excellence Initiative competition. The state’s universities garnered a total of €545 million—the most of any state.

In 2008, Virginie Lecauden became the first junior professor at the Centre for Biological Signalling Studies (BI OSS)—a cluster of excellence at the University of Freiburg. At BIOUS S the focus is on combining analytical methods with synthetic biology approaches to characterize complex signaling pathways—a field of study that is unique in Germany. In landing the job, Lecauden feels "quite lucky," she says, because it is a tenure-track position. Once nonexistent in Germany, tenured-track positions are now being created by universities as part of the wave of on-going changes brought on by the Excellence Initiative.

Traditionally, universities have offered tenure professor positions only to academics outside of their institution; so junior researchers have had no path towards advancing their careers within the same institution. That’s because to become a tenured professor an academic must also earn Habilitation—a second more rigorous dissertation that qualifies academics to supervise dissertations and teach junior scholars. (While Habilitation is no longer required, it is still considered important.) At the same time, the university rule of Hausberufungsverbot prohibits academics from becoming professors at the same university at which they have earned Habilitation. This restriction combined with the fact that job openings are rare because turnover can...
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be slow, have made it difficult for junior researchers to advance. Therefore, the creation of tenure-track positions reflect a major change in the system.

Last year, the TUM established the Faculty Tenure-Track System, for example, that aims to create the first 100 tenure-track professorships between now and the year 2020. The plan is to recruit young researchers who have international experience and have demonstrated recognition in their fields, such as by publishing in high-impact journals or winning early-career prizes. Researchers can be hired as assistant professors on a six-year contract that lead to a tenure evaluation.

While the Excellence Initiative has helped forge change at universities, the government’s commitment to research and development in Germany isn’t stopping there. Just north of Freiburg, in the city of Heidelberg, the German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum or DFKZ) has been awarded government money to create additional comprehensive cancer care centers across Germany, says Otmar Wiestler, chairman and scientific director of the DFKZ. Last year, the DFKZ announced the launch of the German Consortium for Translational Cancer Research. DFKZ will partner with seven university hospitals to create translational centers at each university site. The consortium is a joint initiative of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, German Cancer Aid (Deutsche Krebshilfe), and the DFKZ. The BMBF and the participating states provided approximately €12 million for the consortium last year. The annual budget will be gradually raised to reach about €28 million by 2014. German Cancer Aid will provide additional funding upon request for defined research projects and after an evaluation.

To get the project running, DFKZ will be recruiting 21 physician scientists for full professorship positions. This is no easy task, Wiestler says. “People with medical training have lots of job options,” he says. “These people are precious. It is very important to provide attractive packages.” To that end, DFKZ offers competitive salaries and long-term funding, Wiestler adds.

The North: Berlin

While Baden-Württemberg is certainly the leader in terms of cash flowing into research, Berlin can now boast claim to being the only other German city, next to Munich, to host two “elite universities.” Early in 2012, Humboldt University became the second university in Berlin (after Freie University) to claim the “elite university” title. In addition to winning funding for three of its graduate schools and a strategy to strengthen its overall standing, Humboldt University’s NeuroCure Cluster of Excellence won follow-on funding.

NeuroCure’s aim is to boost the prominence of neuroscience research in Berlin by forging collaboration among university scientists and researchers from the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine (MDC) in Berlin Buch, the Deutsche Rheuma-Forschungszentrum (German Rheumatic Disease Research Center), and the Leibniz-Institute for Molecular Pharmacology. The interdisciplinary research projects focus on the functions of the nervous system.

“What is special about NeuroCure isn’t the direction of the research but rather what we are doing with the money,” says Christian Rosenmund, coordinator of the cluster. Universities in Germany’s poorer states, such as Berlin, have been suffering from budget cuts for years (universities receive the bulk of their funding from state governments), he explains. Many professorships in Berlin have simply been left vacant. Under the previous coordinator, Dietmar Schmitz, NeuroCure spent a majority of the €5.4 million annual Excellence Initiative funding to establish new professorships and provide them with appropriate equipment, says Rosenmund. Since 2006, NeuroCure has recruited 20 new researchers. “This is unheard of,” says Rosenmund, “you’re lucky if you get three or four into a single department.”

With the additional funds, universities are also able to offer attractive financial packages, an important factor when recruiting scientists from the U.S. where salaries are typically higher. Schmitz recruited Rosenmund in 2009 from the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, U.S. In taking the job, Rosenmund accepted a salary cut. But after seeing his budget remain flat for five years in the U.S. and having to face the constant threat of cuts, the opportunity to build something new from the ground up and better long-term funding continued
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The Alexander von Humboldt Professorships are Germany’s way of creating a beacon effect and energising its research landscape. Every year, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation is offering ten of the world’s leading researchers up to five million EUR each to create new or consolidate existing internationally visible research focus areas at German universities.

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Closing dates for applications: 15 April and 15 October.
prospects in Germany were enough compensation, he says.

Further north in the Berlin suburb of Buch, an even larger influx of new talent will soon be moving in. In November of last year, the federal and state government of Berlin announced support for a cooperative venture between MDC and the Charité University Hospital to establish the Berlin Institute of Health (BIH). The aim is to quickly translate basic research into clinical applications. The MDC is one of 18 research institutions of the Helmholtz Association, all of which are funded 90% by the federal government and 10% by the states.

A major emphasis at the MDC is on systems medicine whereby researchers focus on characterizing molecules and biochemical pathways that are similar among different diseases. For example, certain proteins, such as NF-kappaB, are highly active at sites of inflammation. Since inflammation is involved in many diseases, these proteins can serve as a common therapeutic target. The BIH will function as a place for physicians and researchers to come together to study and correlate the clinical aspects of diseases with the molecular aspects and vice versa, says Walter Rosenthal, scientific director of the MDC. Beginning in 2013, the federal and state government will provide €300 million to the BIH over the next five years. An additional €40 million over a period of 10 years will also be donated by a private foundation. The BIH will ultimately occupy its own physical space and is expected to be fully operational by 2018 with an annual budget of €80 million. New hires will have joint appointments at either the Charité or MDC and the BIH.

“Germany is very research friendly right now,” Rosenthal says. “We can offer very attractive packages.”

Funding Isn’t Everything

But while the money is certainly flowing, some scientists continue to be frustrated by obstacles that money alone can’t overcome. Language, for example, can still be a barrier. While many institutions hold English as the official language, life outside of the academic environment can be challenging without basic German skills, says Lecaudy, a native of France. And while institutions have made huge strides in recruiting female scientists and in supporting families, the culture at large hasn’t kept pace. It can be difficult to place children under three years of age in daycare in West Germany, for example, in part because it has been culturally frowned upon for mothers to leave care of such young children to someone else. Schools have also traditionally only been open until early afternoon. However, these aspects are slowly changing. There are major government efforts towards keeping schools open for full days and towards building more daycare centers with guaranteed availability, regardless of a child’s age.

More pressing is the question of whether the funding flood will last, particularly for those supported by the Excellence Initiative, which ends in 2017. State governments and universities are expected to pick up the tab, but in poorer states, such as Berlin, junior researchers may lose their jobs and support staff and core facilities may wither. For his part, Rosenmund encourages all researchers at NeuroCure to seek out as much third-party funding as possible; this sentiment was echoed by Conradt and Lecaudy.

There is one change that might help, however. Last year, Germany’s constitutional law was amended to allow the federal government to help finance universities, not only on a project basis, but also over the long-term.

In the meantime, one thing is clear: the work environment for scientists in Germany has changed and is still changing. The last 10 years has seen a switching of the guard, says Conradt, as younger scientists with international experience come to occupy positions of power. They are bringing back ideas and making the system more open and diverse, she says. Indeed, between 2005 and 2009 alone the number of non-German scientists working in Germany increased by one-third, according to the BMBF. The increase in government spending on research and development which, at 2.88% of GDP, is the highest percentage of any EU member state, combined with the political push from the very top to move science forward promise to continue to make Germany an enticing place for scientists to work and live.

Gunjan Sinha is a freelance writer living in Berlin, Germany.

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College of Humanities and Social Science

College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

College of Science and Engineering

Chancellor’s Fellowships

£37,382 - £44,607

The Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) is committed to world-class excellence in applications of agricultural and life sciences towards a sustained high quality of life for the citizens of Nebraska and a quickly growing global population. Reflecting this commitment, IANR has announced an immediate initiative to hire more than 30 new tenure-track faculty members to fill strategic needs in impact areas of Science Literacy, Stress Biology of Plants and Animals, Healthy Humans, Healthy Agro/Eco Systems, and Computational Sciences. To view a listing of all of these positions, and for details as positions are released, please see http://ianrhome.unl.edu/web/ianr/growingianr.

Within this growth initiative, IANR is seeking applicants for an academic year tenure-leading plant virology position (90% research/10% teaching) to develop a nationally and internationally recognized research program in the broad area of emerging viral diseases with a focus on economically important agricultural and bioenergy crops. The incumbent is expected to apply novel approaches to virus discovery as well as understand the impact of global climate change on the epidemiology of emerging plant diseases. The incumbent will also function as the State Virologist with responsibility for managing research results in refereed scientific journals and presentations at professional meetings. Collaboration with other virology programs in the Nebraska Center for Virology and in stress biology is expected. The incumbent will be expected to teach courses in virology, plant pathology or microbiology and advise undergraduate and graduate students as well as serve on graduate committees and contribute to curriculum development in the Plant Sciences. The tenure-home for the position will be the Department of Plant Pathology with an appointment in the Nebraska Center for Virology. The person will be housed in a laboratory in the Morrison building, which is home to the Nebraska Center for Virology.

A Ph.D. in plant biology, biochemistry, plant pathology or a closely related field is required. For the Assistant Professor level, preference will be given to candidates with at least two years of experience. For the Associate Professor level, an externally supported, nationally recognized research program in the broad area of plant virology is required. The successful candidate will have a strong commitment to education and research, excellent communication skills, and the desire and ability to work cooperatively on multi-disciplinary projects.

To view the complete position details and make application for this position, go to the UNL Employment web site: http://employment.unl.edu. Search for requisition number F_130088. Click on “Apply to this Job”. Complete the application and attach a letter of interest, curriculum vitae, contact information for three professional references, a 2-3 page description of research interests, and a brief statement of teaching philosophy. Review of applications will begin on May 1, 2013 and continue until the position is filled or the search is closed.

The University of Nebraska has an active National Science Foundation ADVANCE gender equity program, and is committed to a pluralistic campus community through Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity, work-life balance, and dual careers.
The University of Pennsylvania, School of Dental Medicine invites applications for tenured Professor and Chair of the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology. Candidates are sought who have a strong record in research and extramural funding, particularly in the areas of cellular and stem cell biology related to tissue development, regeneration and repair. Commitment to teaching and service is an important consideration.

The Department Chair will have the opportunity to build new and existing research areas. The School of Dental Medicine is situated on a walkable campus that includes the Schools of Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Nursing, Engineering, and the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, and has a vibrant and interdisciplinary research program. The School is committed to education of dental health professionals in order to prepare graduates to become leaders in the delivery of dental care and in oral health research. The Department is responsible for teaching physiology, anatomy and histology to 1st year dental students and for the ongoing development of these courses to meet the educational needs of new generations of oral health professionals. Responsibilities of the Chair include: recruitment and retention of faculty, provision of leadership in the areas of faculty research, teaching and service and oversight of departmental activities such as budget development and administration.

Applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. Applicants should apply online at:

http://facultysearches.provost.upenn.edu/applicants/Central?quickFind=51163

For further information regarding the above position, contact the Chair of the Search Committee: Robert Ricciardi, PhD, Chair, Dept. of Microbiology, University of Pennsylvania, School of Dental Medicine, 240 S. 40th St, Philadelphia, PA 19104 or ACBchair@dental.upenn.edu.

The University of Pennsylvania is an Equal Opportunity Affirmative Action Employer: women and minority candidates are strongly encouraged to apply.

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The Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology (http://neurobiology.umaryland.edu) is recruiting for tenured/tenure-track faculty positions in Neuroscience. We are particularly interested in candidates whose research will complement existing strengths in the Department, including: chemical senses, peptidergic circuits, sensorimotor systems, neurodegeneration and neural circuits subserving motivated behaviors and cortical functions. Candidates should have a strong record of scholarly activity and an independent funded research program that can catalyze multi-PI initiatives within the department.

We offer an outstanding intellectual and collaborative environment with highly competitive salary and recruitment packages. All department faculty are members of the Graduate Program in Life Sciences and the interdisciplinary Program in Neuroscience (http://neuroscience.umaryland.edu).

Candidates should submit the following as one single PDF file to facesearch@umaryland.edu: detailed curriculum vitae, a brief statement of research interests and goals, and names/contact information for three references. For best consideration candidates should submit their application by June 1, 2013 and should be addressed to the attention of: Dr. Joseph Cheer, Chair of Faculty Search Committee.

University of Maryland is an Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action Employer. Minorities, women, veterans, and individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply.
Founded in 1911, The University of Hong Kong is committed to the highest international standards of excellence in teaching and research, and has been at the international forefront of academic scholarship for many years. The University has a comprehensive range of study programmes and research disciplines spread across 10 faculties and about 100 sub-divisions of studies and learning. There are over 23,400 undergraduate and postgraduate students coming from 50 countries, and more than 1,800 members of academic and academic-related staff, many of whom are internationally renowned.

Post-doctoral Fellowships and Research Assistant Professorships

Applications are invited for a number of positions as Post-doctoral Fellow (PDF) and Research Assistant Professor (RAP), at the University of Hong Kong, on or before February 28, 2014. Appointments will be made for a period of 2 to 3 years.

PDF and RAP posts are created specifically to bring new impetus and vigour to the University’s research enterprise. Positions are available from time to time to meet the strategic research needs identified by the University. Positions are available in the following Faculties/Departments/Schools/Centres:

- Real Estate and Construction
- School of Humanities
- School of Modern Languages and Cultures
- Faculty of Dentistry
- Civil Engineering
- Electrical and Electronic Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Community Medicine
- Medicine
- Psychiatry
- Centre for Cancer Research
- Faculty of Chinese Medicine
- Research Centre of Heart, Brain, Hormone and Healthy Aging
- Research Centre of Infection and Immunology
- Public Health Research Centre
- Centre for Reproduction, Development and Growth
- School of Chemical Sciences
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Geography
- Psychology
- The Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences
- The State Key Laboratory for Liver Research
- The Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention

Post-doctoral Fellows

PDFs are expected to devote full-time to research. Applicants should be doctoral degree holders having undertaken original research that has contributed to the body of knowledge. A highly competitive salary commensurate with qualifications and experience will be offered. Annual leave and medical benefits will also be available.

Research Assistant Professors

The main focus of an RAP’s duty is research. RAPs can however be assigned some teaching duties, up to 50% of the normal teaching load. Applicants should be research active and have a proven publication record. A highly competitive salary commensurate with qualifications and experience will be offered, with a contract-end gratuity and University contribution to a retirement benefits scheme (totalling up to 15% of basic salary). Annual leave and medical benefits will also be offered.

Procedures

Prospective applicants are invited to visit our webpage at http://jobs.hku.hk to view the list of the Faculties/Departments/Schools/Centres and their research areas for which PDF/RAP positions are currently available. Before preparing an application, they should contact the Head of the appropriate academic unit to ascertain that their research expertise matches the research area for which a vacant PDF/RAP post is available.

Applicants must submit a completed University application form, which should clearly state which position they are applying for; and in which academic discipline. They should also provide further information such as details of their research experience, publications, research proposals, etc.

Application forms (341/1111) can be obtained at http://www.hku.hk/apptunit/form-ext.doc. Further particulars can be obtained at http://jobs.hku.hk/. Closes April 15, 2013. The University thanks applicants for their interest, but advises that only shortlisted applicants will be notified of the application result.

The University is an Equal Opportunity Employer and is committed to a No-Smoking Policy.
Born in 1564, Galileo Galilei once contemplated a career in the priesthood. It’s perhaps fortunate for science that upon the urging of his father, he instead decided to enroll at the University of Pisa. His career in science began with medicine and from there he subsequently went on to become a philosopher, physicist, mathematician, and astronomer, for which he is perhaps best known. His astronomical observations and subsequent improvements to telescopes built his reputation as a leading scientist of his time, but also led him to probe subject matter counter to prevailing dogma. His expressed views on the Earth’s movement around the sun caused him to be declared suspect of heresy, which for some time led to a ban on the reprinting of his works.

Galileo’s career changed science for all of us and he was without doubt a leading light in the scientific revolution, which is perhaps why Albert Einstein called him the father of modern science.

Want to challenge the status quo and make the Earth move? At Science we are here to help you in your own scientific career with expert career advice, forums, job postings, and more — all for free. For your career in science, there’s only one Science. Visit ScienceCareers.org today.

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A complete career resource, free to the public, Science Careers offers a suite of tools and services developed specifically for scientists. With hundreds of career development articles, webinars and downloadable booklets filled with practical advice, a community forum providing answers to career questions, and thousands of job listings in academia, government, and industry, Science Careers has helped countless individuals prepare themselves for successful careers.

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To learn more, visit aaas.org/plusyou/sciencecareers

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IAS 2013

The IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention is the world’s largest scientific meeting focused on HIV and AIDS.

IAS 2013 is a crucial opportunity to examine the latest developments in HIV-related research, and to explore how scientific advances can be translated quickly into effective interventions to prevent and treat HIV.

IAS 2013 KEY DATES:

1 April 2013:
Volunteer applications open

3 April 2013:
Late breaker submissions open

18 April 2013 - 24:00 CET:
Registrations late fee deadline

7 May 2013 - 24:00 CET:
Late breaker submissions close

For more information and to register: www.ias2013.org
POSITIONS OPEN
CENTER FOR VIROLOGY AND VACCINE RESEARCH
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
Boston, Massachusetts

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School are seeking faculty members at the INSTRUCTOR, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, or ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR level to lead independent research programs in the Center for Virology and Vaccine Research, Department of Medicine. The successful candidate will be a recognized basic, translational, or clinical investigator with a Ph.D. and/or M.D. and a research focus in virology, immunology, microbiology, vaccinology, or infectious diseases. Academic rank at Harvard Medical School will be based on qualifications. Preference will be given to candidates with a track record of independent funding.

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School are Equal Opportunity Employers. Women and minorities are particularly encouraged to apply.

Please submit application letter and current curriculum vitae to:
Dan H. Barouch, M.D., Ph.D.
Director, Center for Virology and Vaccine Research
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
Attn: Kathryn Kelly
E-mail: kkelley7@bidmc.harvard.edu
Telephone: 617-735-4574