

CAREER CHOICES IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

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Embarking on a new career has always been challenging, and not just in the physical sciences. Some people find it exhilarating; some are more apprehensive; almost all will seek advice—or give it—along the way. Providing useful information on the employment landscape, potential career journeys, and community resources was the motivation in 2019 for PHYSICS TODAY's first annual careers issue.



Today, six years later, the challenges facing those entering the workforce—and many seeking to remain in it—are unprecedented in recent memory. As the *PT* editors began planning this careers issue, we knew it shouldn't be a typical one. We wrestled with what we could present now, amid the turmoil roiling the scientific community, that would be helpful to those trying to navigate it.

Our answer, ultimately, was a return to basics: the breadth of career options available and tools that can help along the way. Having a background in the physical sciences prepares you for much more than a career in academia. Starting on page 26, Toni Feder takes a “show, don't tell” approach: She has assembled a collection of short interviews, drawn from a new, recurring online series, featuring people whose jobs and career paths in nonacademic sectors illustrate how broad and varied the realm of possibilities is.

Survey data have shown that more than half the recipients of physics bachelor's degrees and a third of PhD earners find work in the private sector. To gain insights into that career step, Alex Lopatka talked with several people who work on the hiring side.

As he reports starting on page 38, the technical skills you may have learned as an undergraduate, grad student, or postdoc get you only so far as you embark on a path in the private sector; companies are looking just as much for flexible problem-solving ability and strong collaboration and communication skills.

Networking remains key to landing a new job, especially when just starting out. The physical sciences community features a valuable set of resources: professional societies that can help provide networking opportunities, cultivate a sense of belonging, and nurture individuals at the start of their careers. In the article beginning on page 46, Trevor Owens and Anne Marie Porter explore how four such individuals have benefited from their society memberships. The authors share tips not only for early-career professionals but also for their mentors.

A new careers home

For those of you who are reading this on the *PT* website, you have already experienced our recently debuted, modernized experience. For those reading this in print, I encourage you to go check us out at <https://physicstoday.org>. *PT*'s refreshed

and redesigned digital home makes it easy to stay abreast of the latest developments at the frontiers of science and at science's intersection with society, stay connected to the physical sciences community, follow topics of interest to you, and indulge your curiosity.

A dedicated section of *PT*'s new website gathers into a single place career resources from throughout *PT*'s extensive archives and from other parts of the American Institute of Physics (publisher of *PT*). The annual careers issues are just the start. In addition to seeing the latest in our interview series of what physicists can do, you can check out the latest employment trends, survey results, and interactive graphics from AIP's statistical research team. It's also an entry point into *PT*'s jobs board.

PT's collected careers-related content is but one segment of our new online experience. Let us know what you think at <https://contact.physicstoday.org>.

