My experience with the faculty job search

Tyler Kutz
JGU Mainz

Frontiers & Careers in Photonuclear Physics

November 26-27, 2025
Paphos, Cyprus

JOHANNES GUTENBERG
UNIVERSITÄT MAINZ

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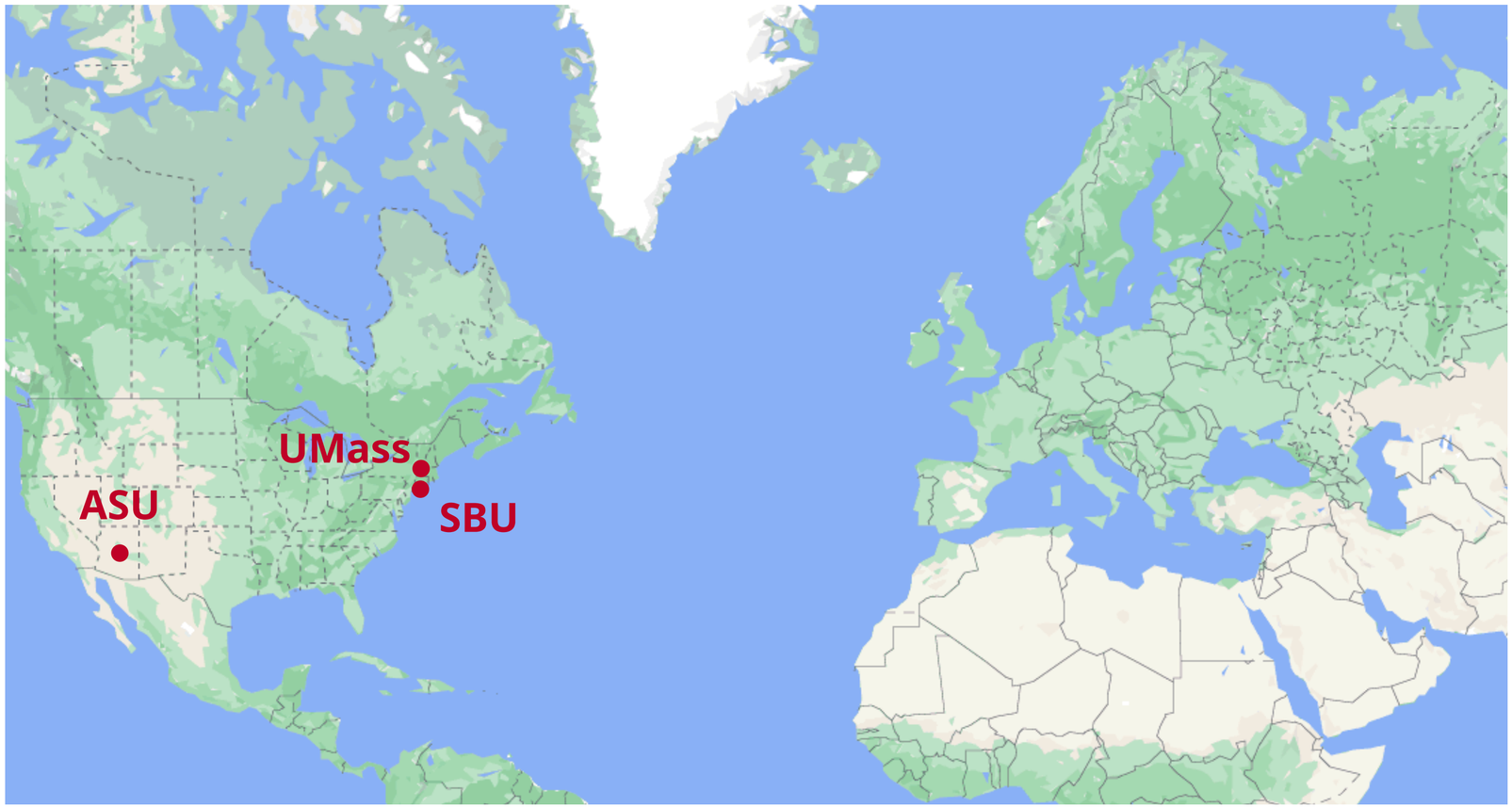

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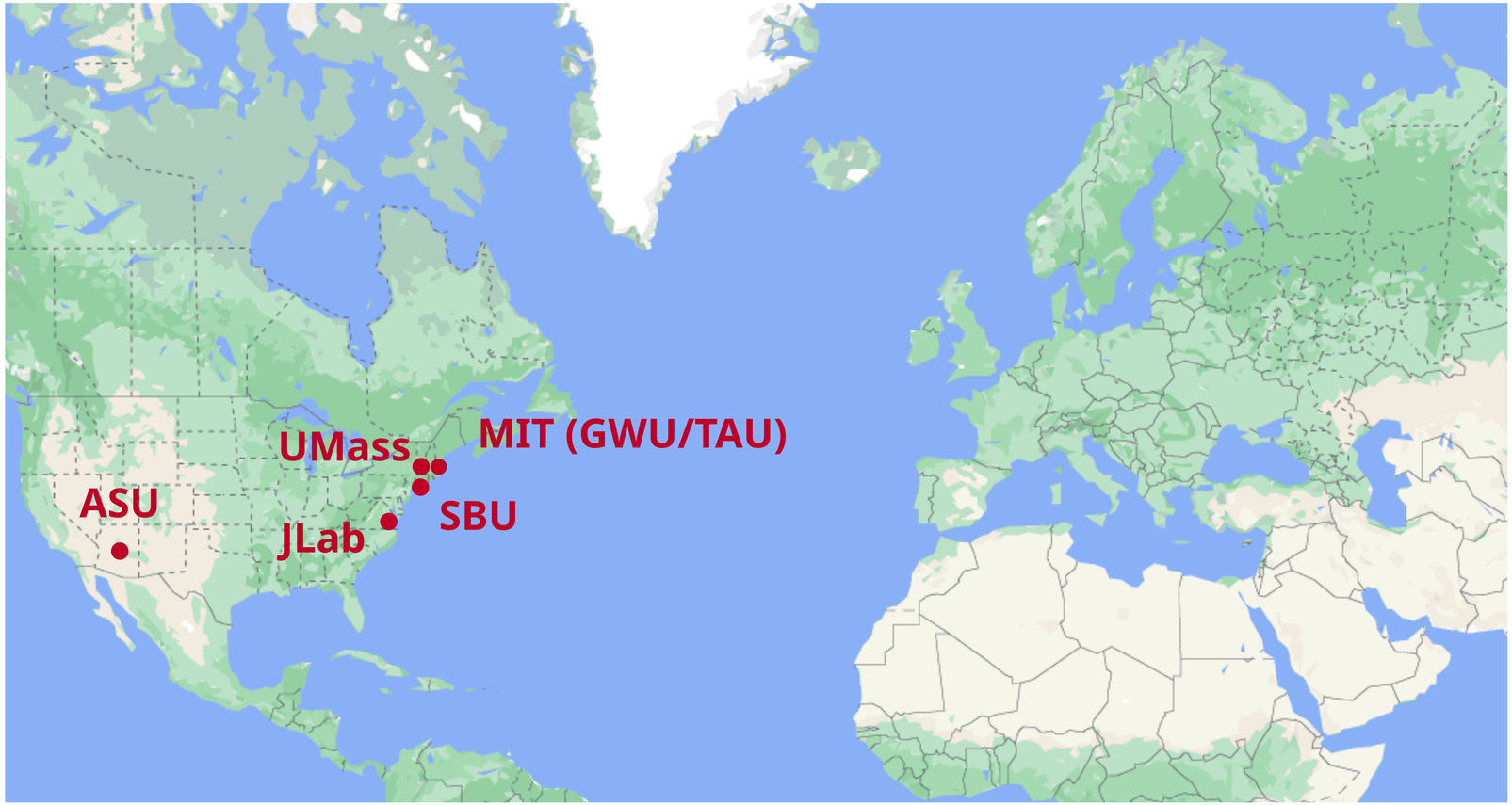

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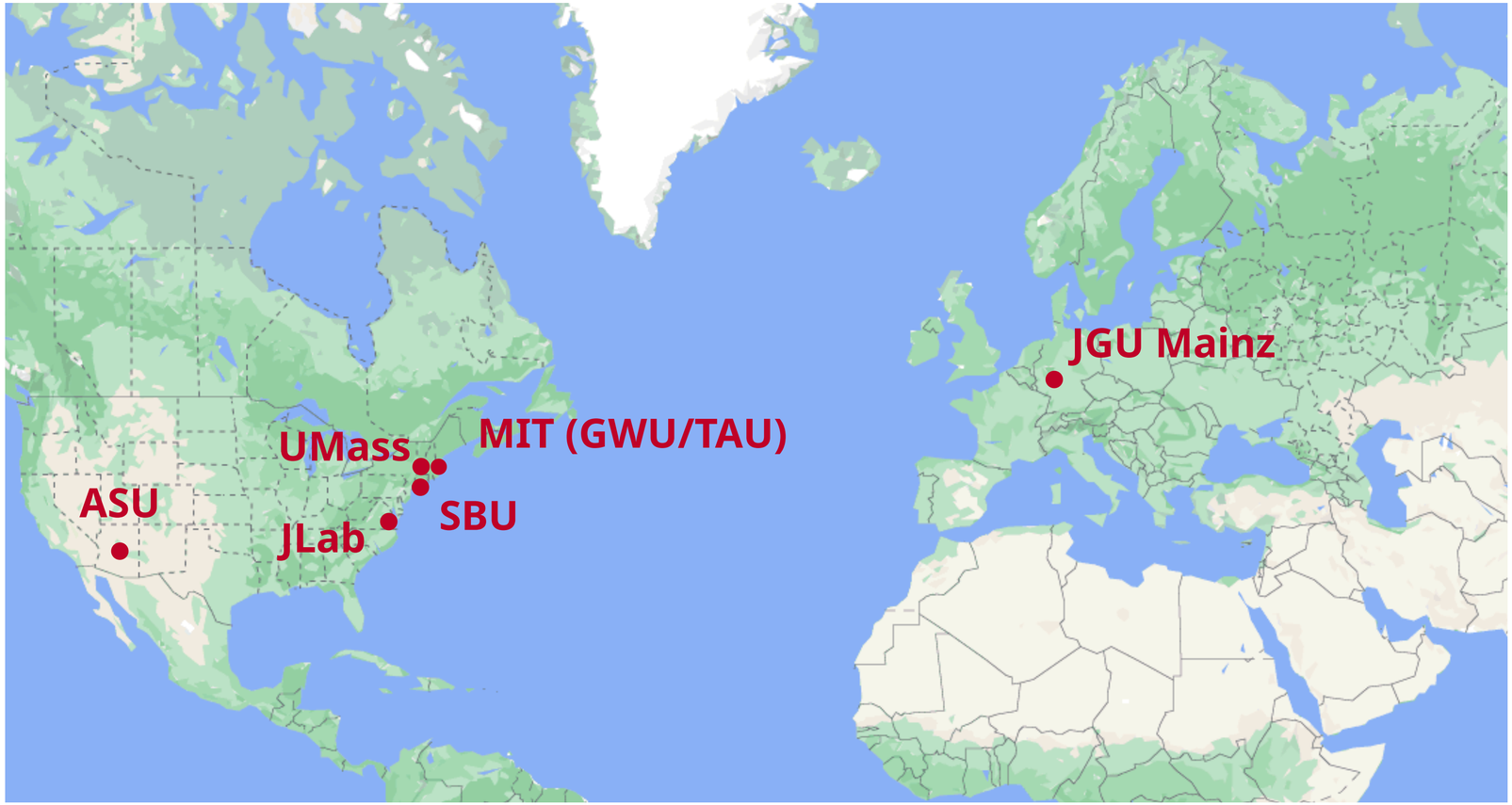

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- Circumstances (both good and bad) are different for everyone
- Response and takeaways depend on a persons perspective & goals
- Seek out multiple points of view and take with grain of salt!

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Bad reason for doing a postdoc

- A position was available

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- Supervisor’s track record

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Keep in mind…

- “Cold-calling” professors is intimidating, but can yield positive results
- Be prepared for rejection
- Even if there is interest, expect little commitment until defense is imminent

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- The best person to look out for *your* best interests is *you!*

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  - Few locations
- University:
  - Must fund your own research
  - Independent
  - Teaching responsibility
  - Many possible locations

Professor Professor
Curriculum Vitae

Since 1999	**Associate Professor, *Some Other University***
1992-1999	**Assistant Professor, *Some Other University***
1990-1992	**Postdoc, *Another University***
1990	**PhD, Physics *Some University***

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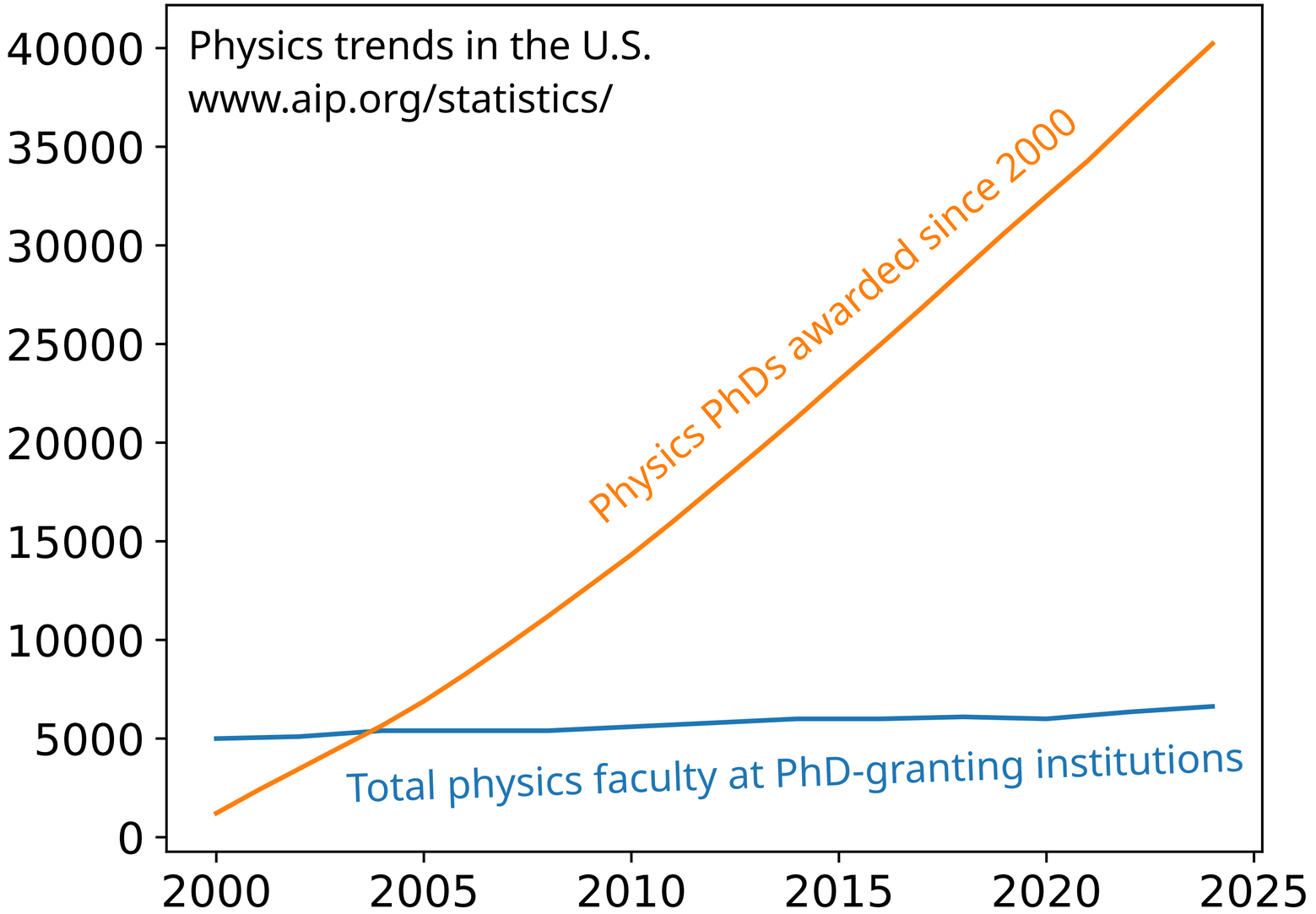
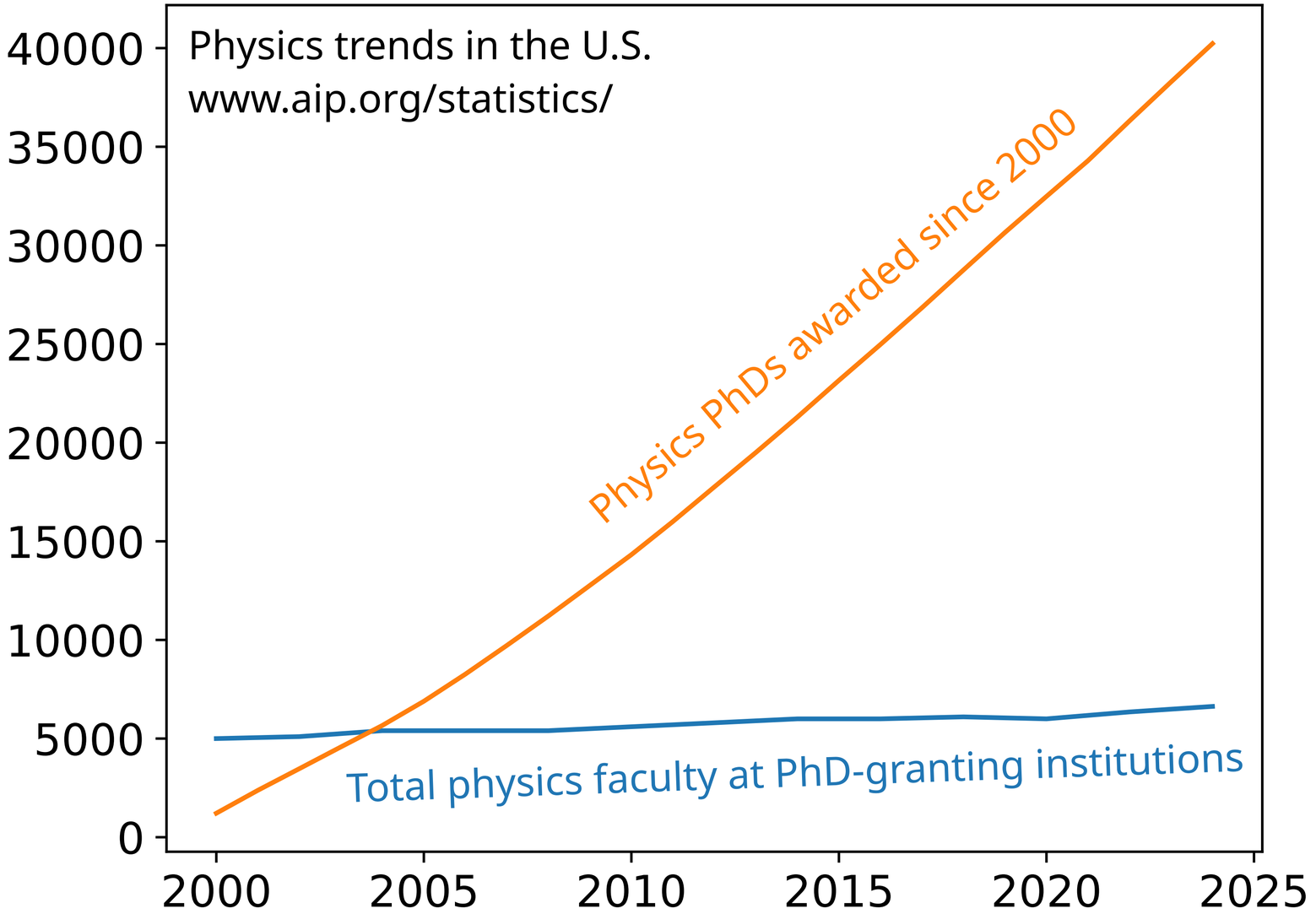

Physics trends in the U.S.
www.aip.org/statistics/
Physics PhDs awarded since 2000
Total physics faculty at PhD-granting institutions
40000
35000
30000
25000
20000
15000
10000
5000
0
2000
2005
2010
2015
2020
2025

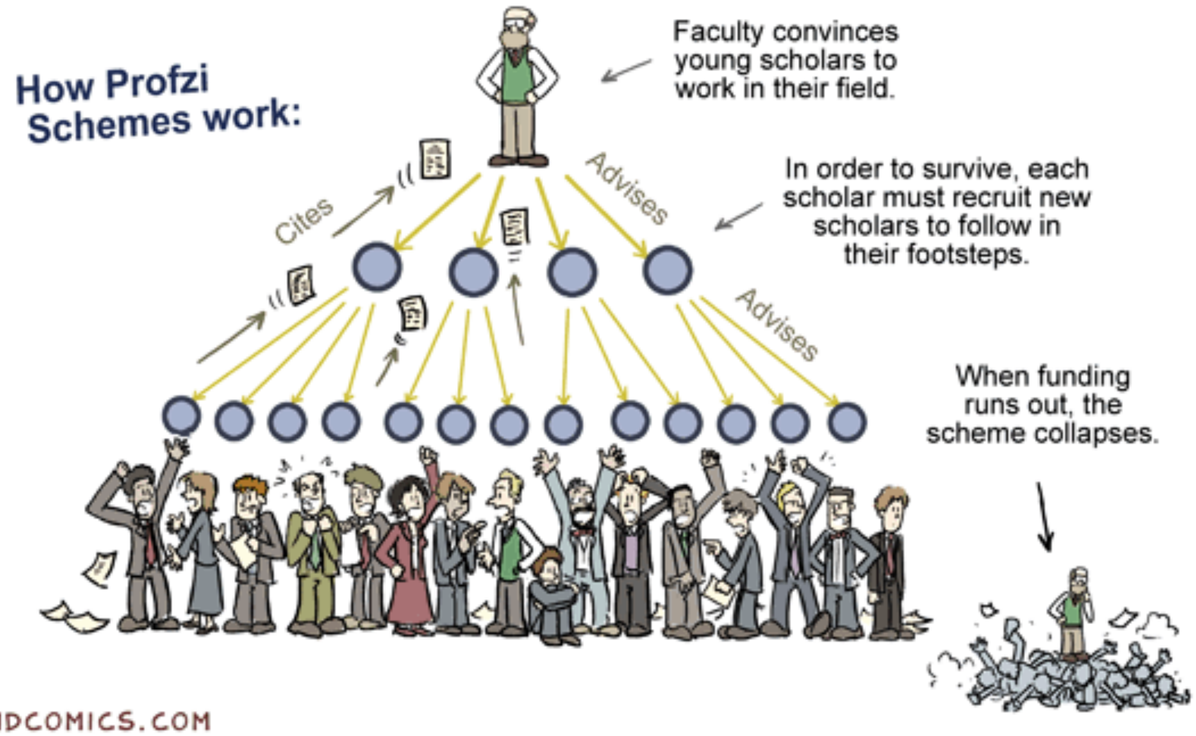


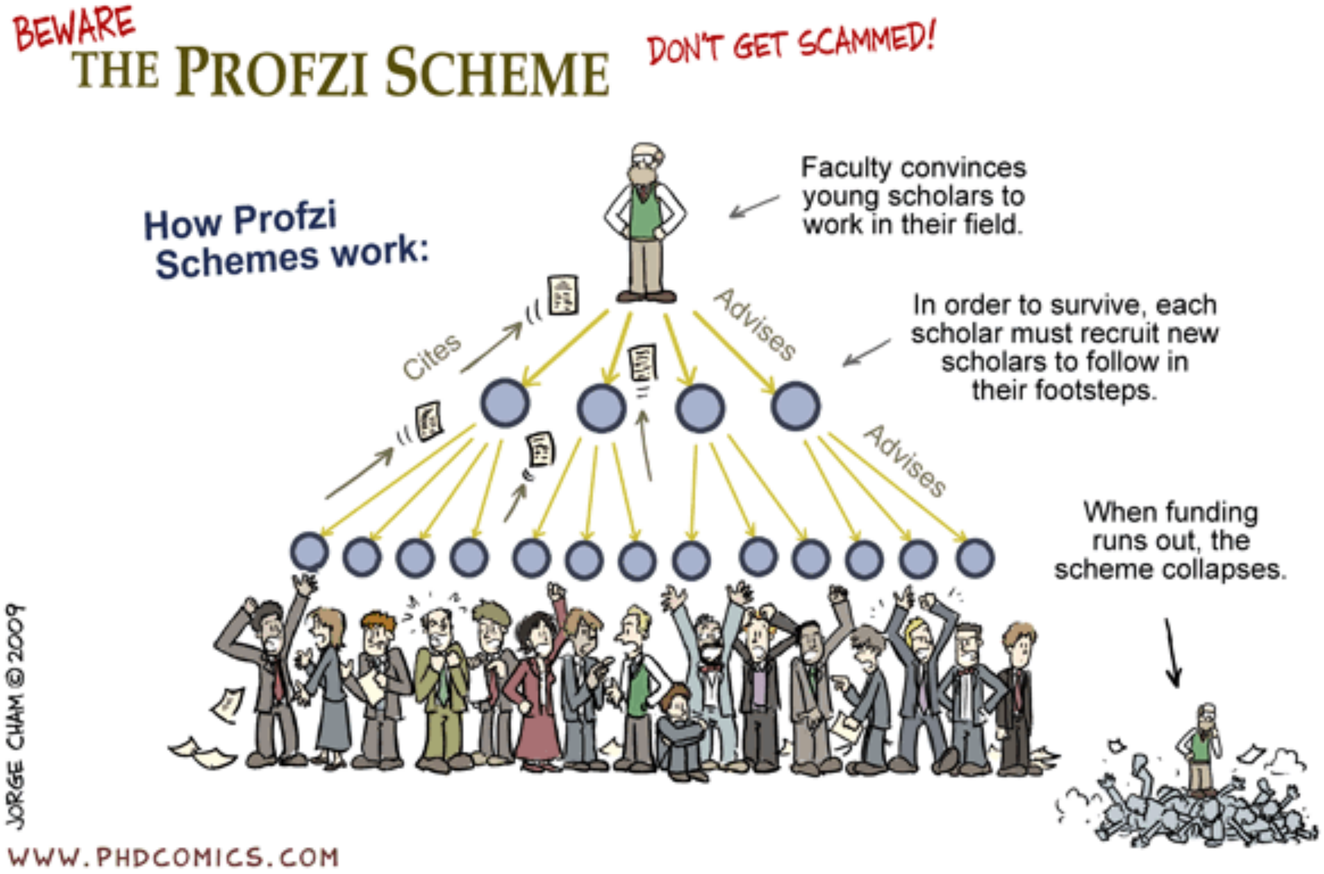
Faculty turnover is <300 positions/year

BEWARE

THE PROFZI SCHEME

DON'T GET SCAMMED!





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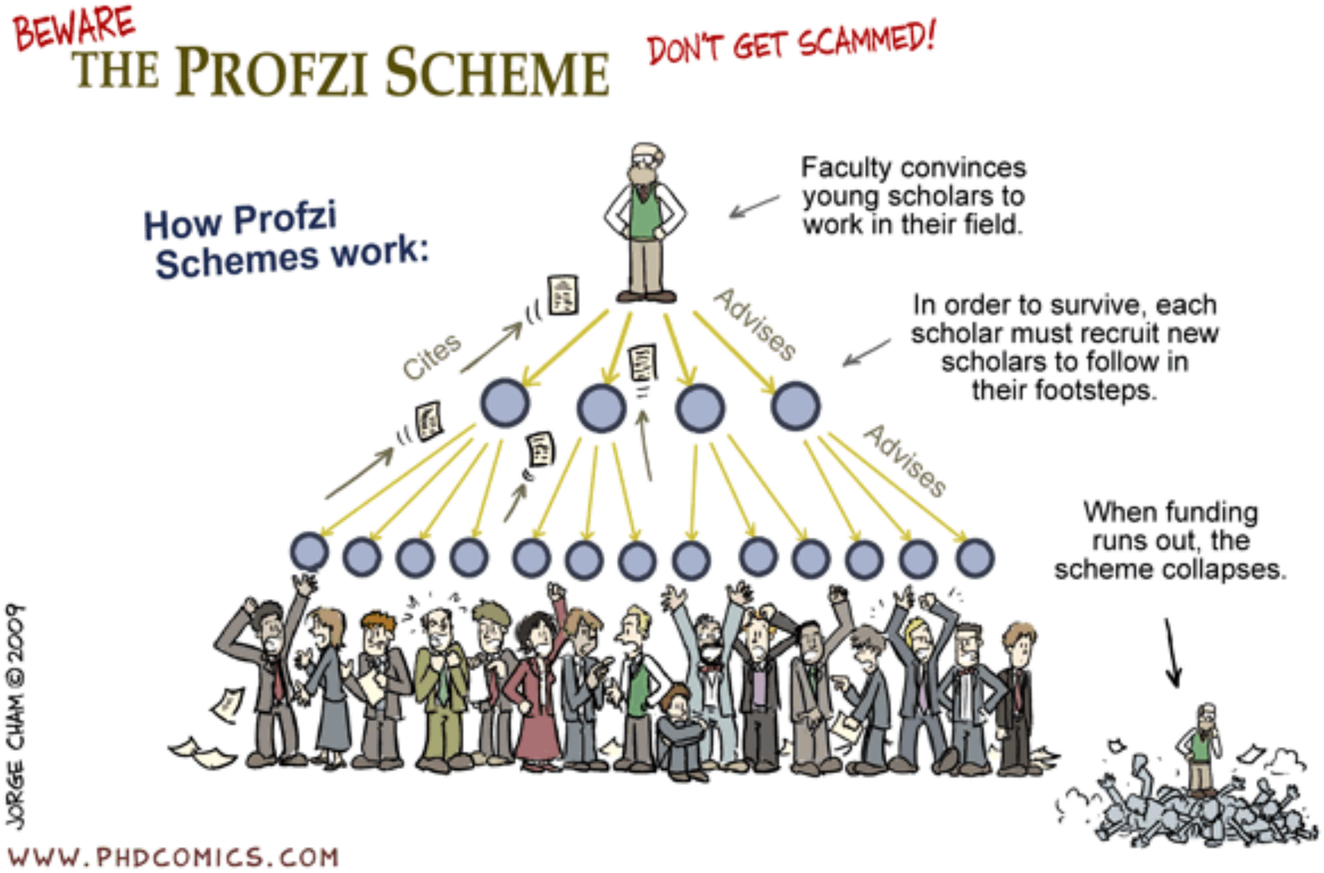

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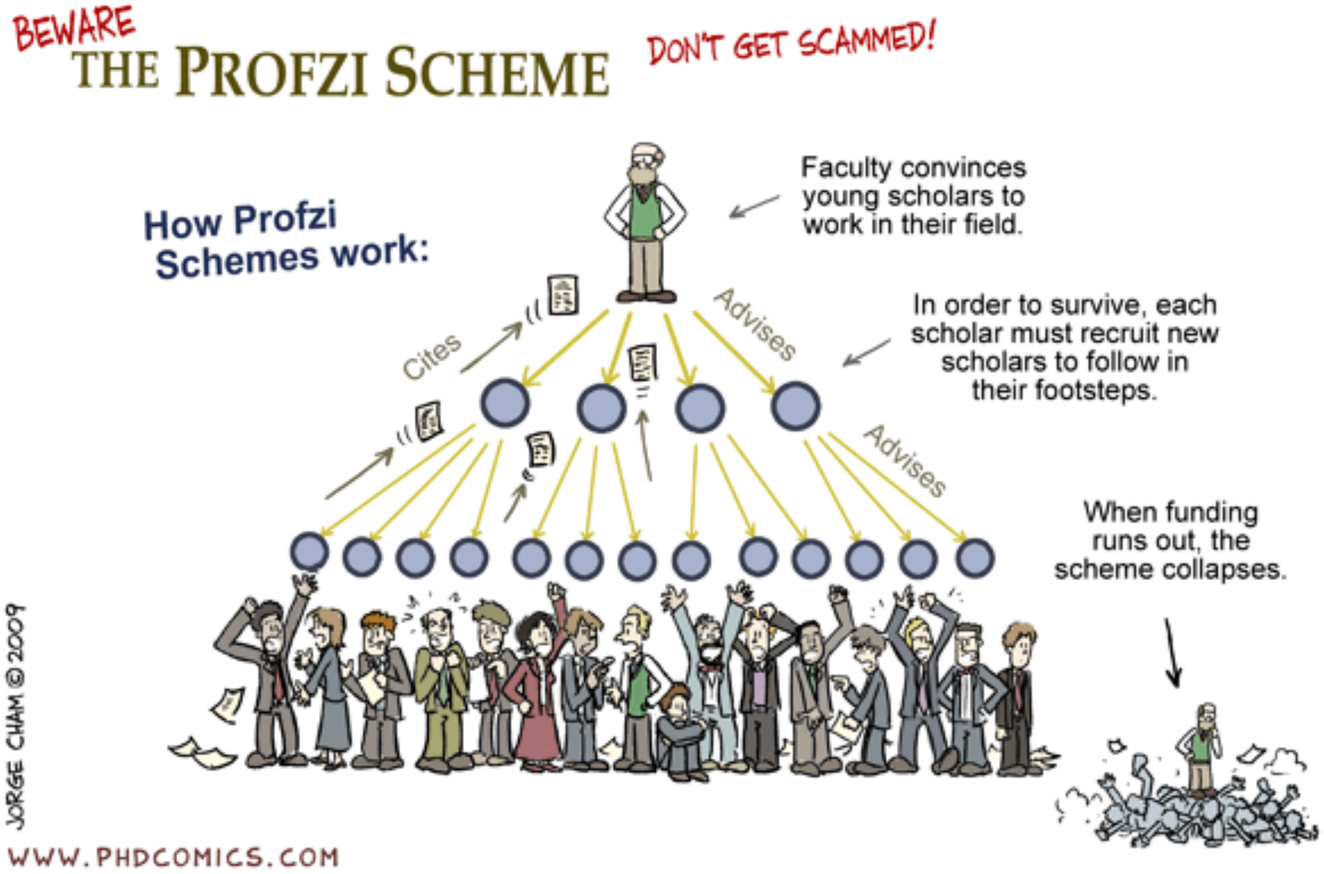

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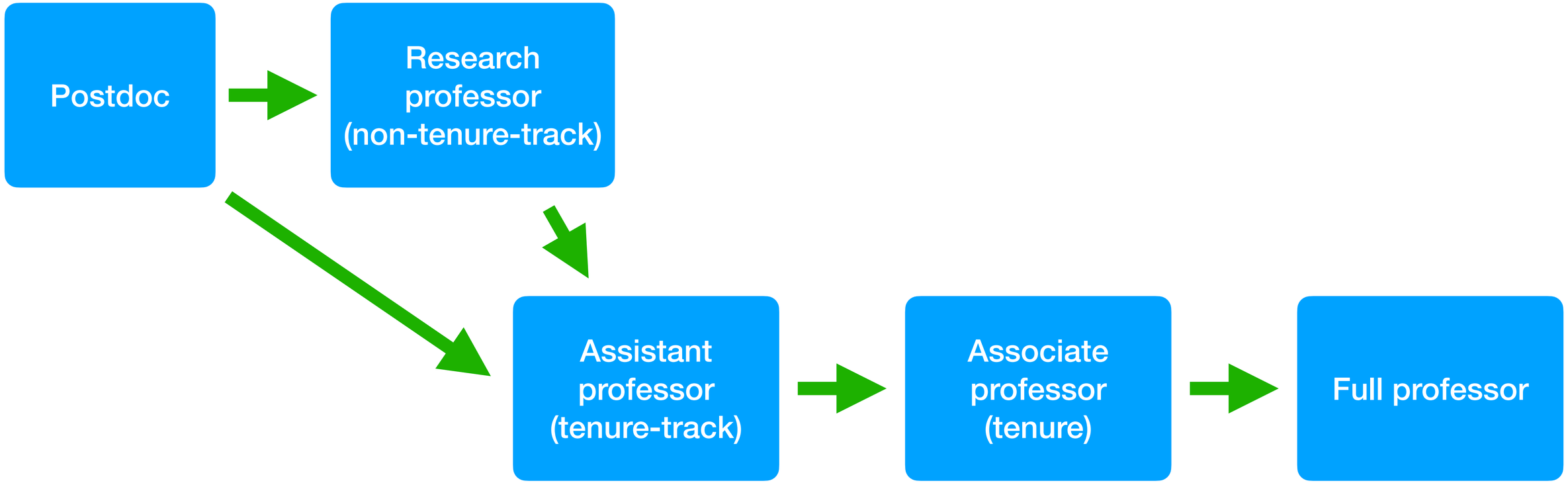
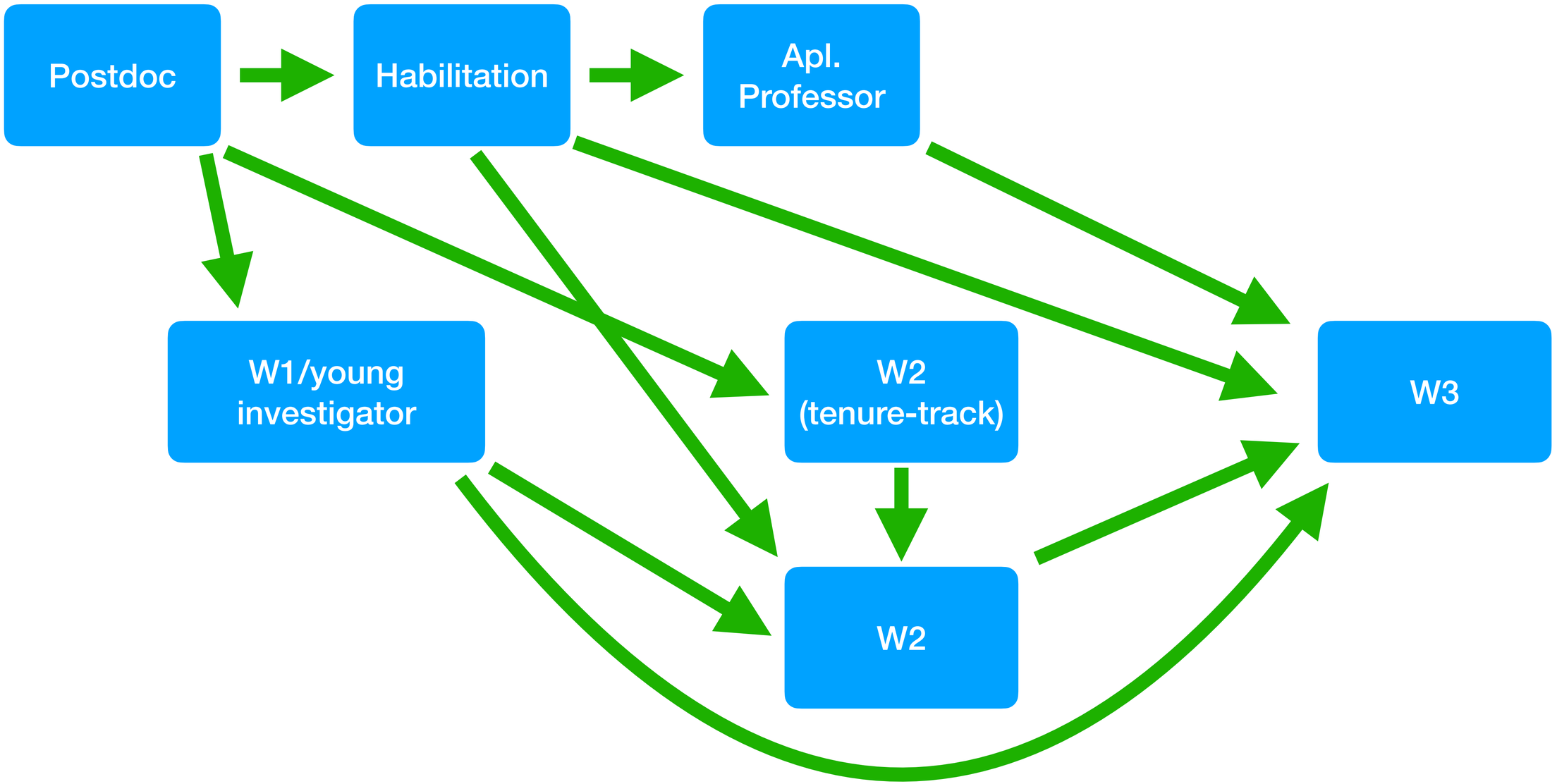
- Most PhDs leave academia and are happily employed

Paths to professorship in the US



Paths to professorship in Germany



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Public universities in the US*

- Assistant professor (tenure-track)
  - $54k (17th percentile)
  - $71k (average)
  - $93k (83rd percentile)
- Associate professor (tenure)
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- Full professor (tenure)
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Universities in Rheinland-Pfalz†

- W1: 68.3k€ (gross), 51.8k€ (net)
- W2: 82.3k€ (gross), 59.7k€ (net)
- W3: 93.0k€ (gross), 65.3k€ (net)
- Negotiated post-tenure raise
- Can apply for merit-based raises (300€) every 3 years

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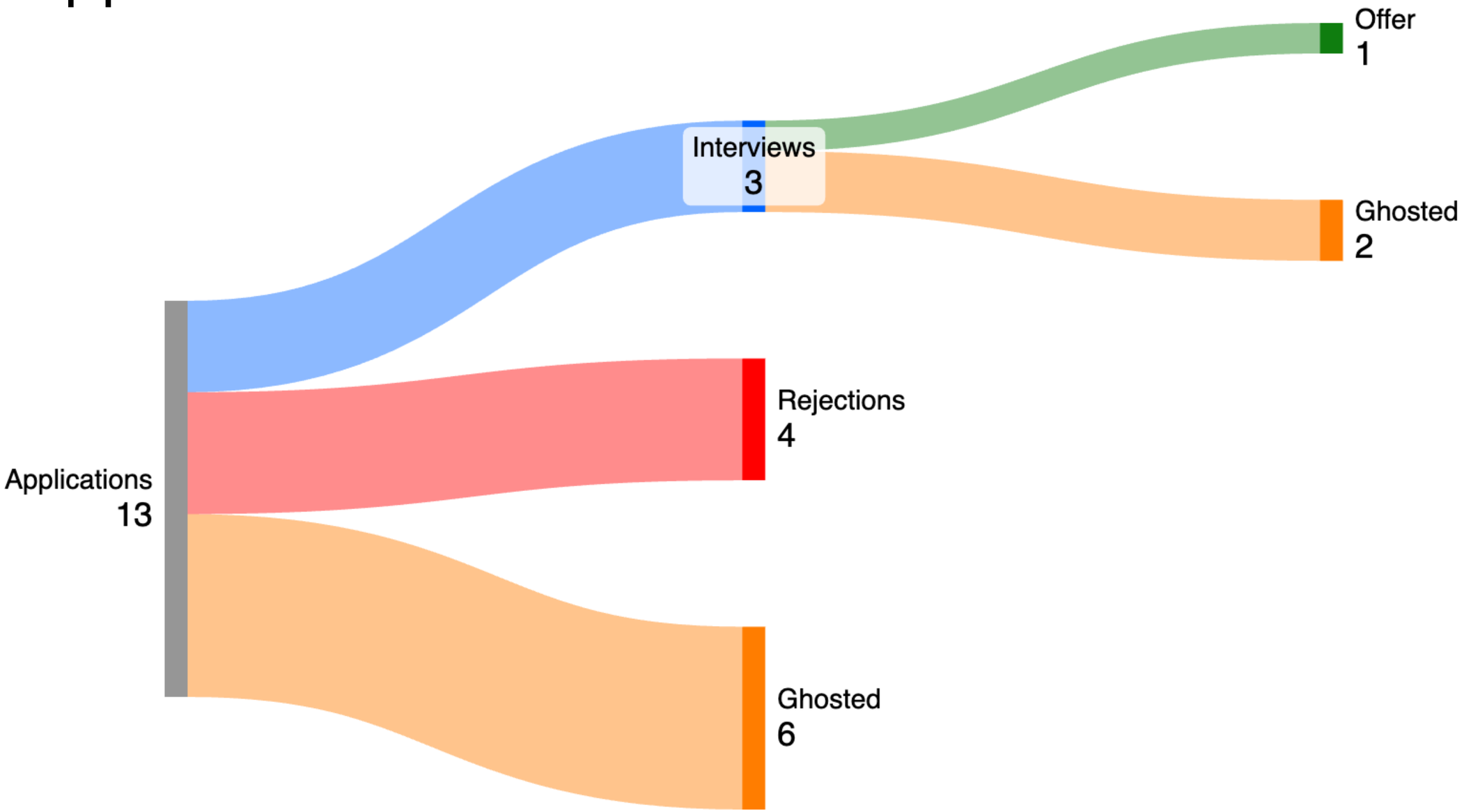
- How long are you willing to be a postdoc?

My application record



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- Photonuclear physicists: expect to filter through *a lot* of RHIC/LHC-focussed advertisements
- Open searches are oftentimes less open than advertised
- Look at what others in the department are doing
- Huge element of luck: lifetime of a postdoc is very short compared to faculty turnover timescales

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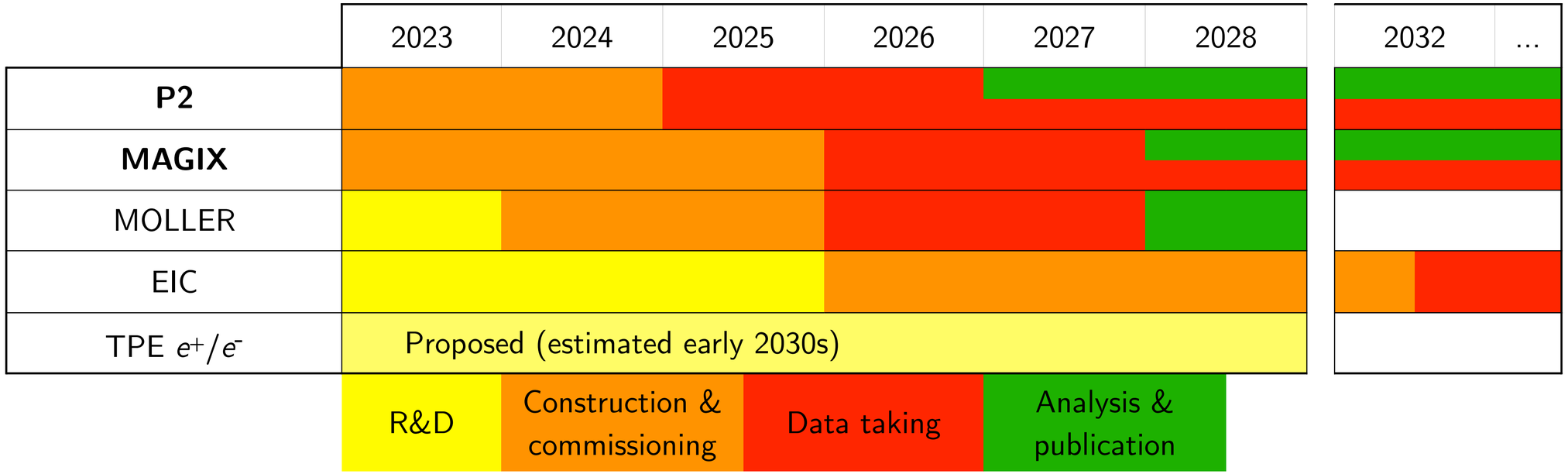
- May have to tailor research statement to each application
- Request recommendations that you think will make your application more competitive…they don't *have* to come from PhD advisor, postdoc supervisor
- Apply early and apply often!

Faculty applications are a good opportunity to formulate a 5-year plan



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- Introduction to search committee
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Second round interview (in-person)

- 1.5-2 days
- Research presentation
- Teaching demonstration
- Meeting with University research administration
- Meeting with graduate students
- Dinner
- Rest of schedule is 20-30 minute meetings with faculty

The interview process (Mainz)

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In-person interview only

- Half-day
- Research presentation
- Teaching demonstration
- Questions from hiring committee
- Dinner (with other candidates)

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- People love talking about themselves and their research…let them!
- Graduate students are a great litmus test for department health

Negotiating an offer

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- It takes the committee enormous time and effort to make an offer…*they want you to say yes!*
- Things to negotiate:
  - Start-up package (positions, lab/office space, technical support, funds…)
  - Salary
  - Dual-career
  - Remote work
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Process at JGU Mainz:

- Submitted concept document with requests
- Meeting with university, department administration
- Formal (written) offer based on discussion

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- Have spent considerable time developing funding proposals
- Only about 1/day week (estimated) actually working on physics

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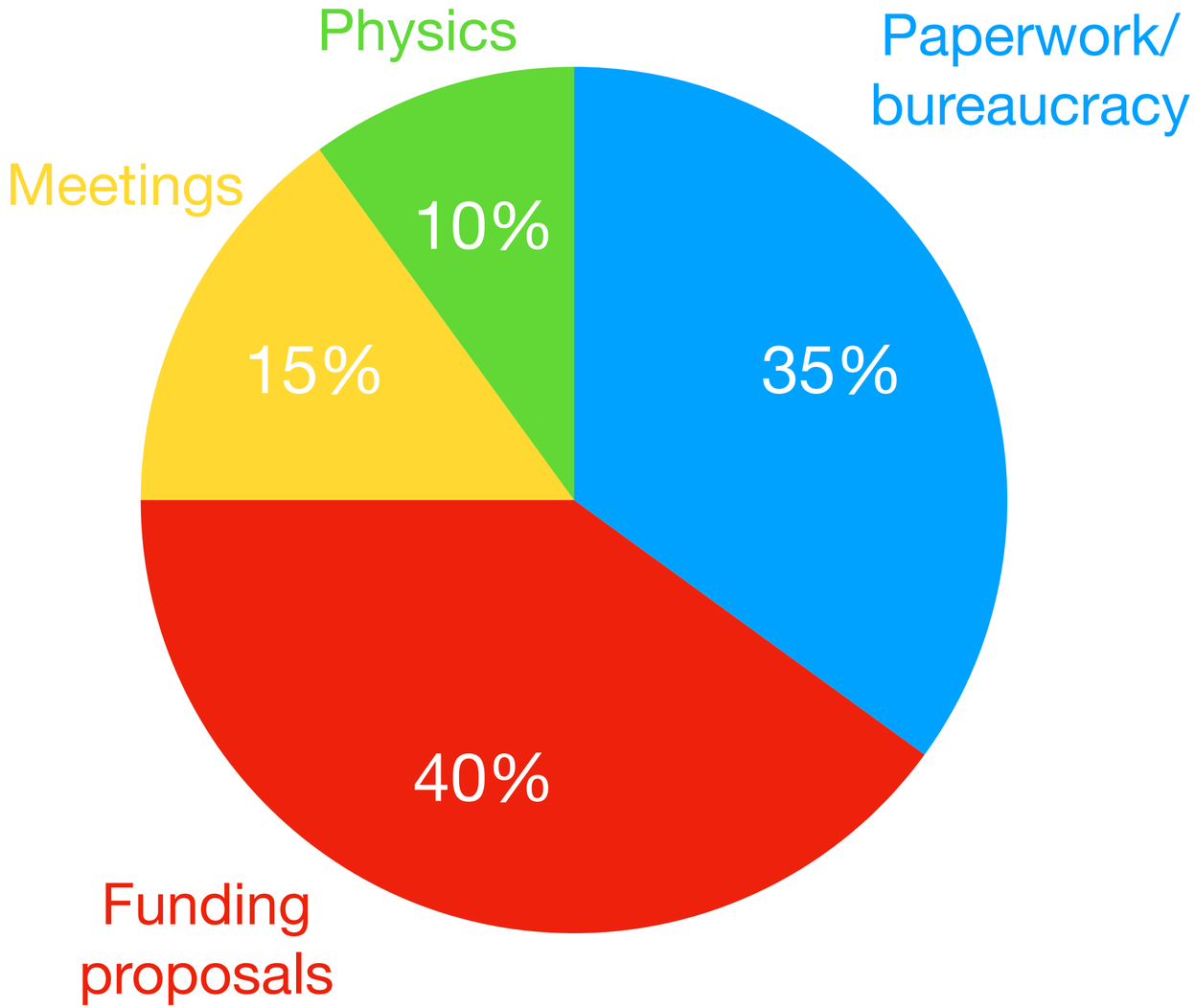

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