Let's Talk About It!
Postdoc Recruitment Practices, Challenges, and Successes

Briana Mohan, UT MD Anderson Cancer Center; **Peter Myers, PhD**, Washington University in St. Louis; and members of the Graduate Career Consortium *From PhD to Postdoc* Community of Practice

01 Introduction

Since 2023, the Graduate Career Consortium's "**From PhD to Postdoc**" Community of Practice has been exploring the question "How do I get a good postdoc?" from multiple perspectives. As a group of professionals from non-profit institutions and organizations, we have delved into the range of needs implicit in this question, examining postdoctoral recruitment strategies and developing understanding around the different challenges and successes we have experienced.

02 Challenges

- Low pay, long hours, uncertain career path for postdocs
- Career options for PhDs in other employment sectors
- Absence of cross-institutional data about recruitment
- Disjointed, non-aligned efforts
- Funding for postdoc stipends comes from multiple sources and through individual faculty, sometimes impacting pay, benefits, classification, etc.
- Staff or offices tasked with recruiting have few or no additional resources
- Immigration-related/visa challenges for non-US citizens
- Bureaucracy

03 Successes

- A growing professional community of individuals engaged in postdoc recruitment
- Institutions who have been engaged in postdoc recruitment for a long time are generous with information and lessons learned
- Support, feedback, and publicity of each others' recruitment events, programs, and initiatives
- Recognition of individual and collective expertise
- Support and instruction for prospective postdocs about what to consider, ask, say, do
- Increased frequency of conversations within institutions about postdoc training and what it should entail
- Higher stipend levels

04 Definitions and Best Practices

Necessary Definitions

Postdoc
- an early-career scholar who has completed a terminal degree and is pursuing additional training
- a position within an institution that provides additional training
- the training program itself and related experiences

Recruitment
- a combination of activities that engages early career researchers who are considering their career options and next steps
- activities that are distinct from marketing, hiring, onboarding, orientation, retention, or operations

Best Practices

Plan Far Ahead
- 18-24 months is the average amount of time from first contact to start date
- Account for variation and timelines in funding cycles

Schedule Postdoc Interviews
- Virtual interview with key faculty and department members
- In-person interview with entire research group and additional mentors

Develop Equitable Practices
- Create a marketing plan and post on institution's job site
- Disseminate job posting across platforms to maximize accessibility
- Collaborate with HR to develop a hiring rubric

Establish Clear Communication, Processes, and Accountability
- Graduate students, early career postdocs
- Faculty member relationships and collaborations
- Human resources, hiring managers
- Employers

Attend Conferences
- Educational workshops/presentations
- Exhibit halls
- Career fairs

05 Next Steps

Postdoc Recruitment Table Topic at AAMC GREAT breakfast on Wednesday morning, Oct. 9, 7:30 - 8:15 AM.

During Fall 2024, the "From PhD to Postdoc" Community of Practice usually meets via zoom the third Tuesday of each month from 1 - 2 PM Central.

06 Who Can Participate?

Anyone who is involved in the recruitment of postdoctoral scholars and is willing to share information, insights, ideas, and resources with others is welcome.

The GCC's Communities of Practice are open to non-members of the organization.

07 Additional Informationn

"From PhD to Postdoc" Community of Practice Co-Leaders
- Briana Mohan, UT MD Anderson Cancer Center - blshay@mdanderson.org
- Peter Myers, Wash U in St. Louis - petersmyers@wustl.edu

The Graduate Career Consortium (GCC)
- gradcareerconsortium.org