



Date: December 2008

From: [Kathryn Espiritu](#), Director of Postdoctoral Affairs
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To: Columbia University Research Community

Re: NSF Postdoc Mentoring Requirement

As of January 5, 2009, all NSF grant applications that include funding support for postdocs are **required** to include a mentoring plan. The specific language from NSF states:

*Each proposal that requests funding to support postdoctoral researchers must include, as a separate section within the 15-page Project Description, a description of the mentoring activities that will be provided for such individuals. Examples of mentoring activities include, but are not limited to: career counseling; training in preparation of grant proposals, publications and presentations; guidance on ways to improve teaching and mentoring skills; guidance on how to effectively collaborate with researchers from diverse backgrounds and disciplinary areas; and training in responsible professional practices. The proposed mentoring activities will be evaluated as part of the merit review process under the Foundation's broader impacts merit review criterion. **Proposals that do not include a separate section on mentoring activities within the Project Description will be returned without review.** (Chapter II, Section C. 2d(i))*

Below is information that will assist you in preparing this section. Please note that NSF recommends against the use of generic language and expects each PI to tailor a mentoring plan that best suits his/her laboratory and/or research center. We have provided key information including web links to facilitate this process. This memo along with active web links will be available on the OPA website (<http://postdocs.columbia.edu>).

1. Postdocs in your lab should be made familiar with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA). In addition to serving as an information repository and liaison among postdocs, faculty and administrators, OPA also helps to enhance the educational and training experiences of postdocs during their time at Columbia University.
2. A variety of activities and events are hosted every year to enhance a postdocs training experience. Below is a listing of some of the events available to postdocs over the past year, which can be incorporated into the project description for career enrichment:

- Working Effectively with Your Mentor
 - Writing Successful Fellowship Applications/Proposals
 - Publishing with a University Press
 - Working Effectively with Your Mentor
 - An Editor's Advice to Writers
 - Managing Conflict in Academic and Professional Relationships
 - Becoming a Mentor, Not a Tormentor
 - Strategic Planning for Your Academic Career
 - The Academic Job Search From Start to Finish: Part 1 (Application, Vita, Letters of Recommendation, Teaching/Research Statements and Portfolio)
 - The Academic Job Search From Start to Finish: Part 2 (Phone/Conference/Campus Interviews and the Job Talk)
 - The Academic Job Search From Start to Finish: Part 3 (The Waiting and Negotiating Part)
 - Untenured Faculty Life: Tenure Track and Adjunct Faculty Talk about the Job Search, First Year on the Job, and Teaching Expectations
 - Welcome to the Professoriate: Pedagogy, Power, Politics, and Pitfalls On Your Way to Tenure
3. The OPA website (<http://postdocs.columbia.edu/mentoring.html>) provides links to external resources that PIs should use as a model for good mentoring practices. Resources include:
- [The AAMC Compact between Postdoctoral Appointees and their Mentors](#)
 - [Nature's Guide for Mentors](#)
 - ["Making the Right Moves: A Practical Guide to Scientific Management for Postdocs and New Faculty" - Chapter 5: Mentoring and Being Mentored. Burroughs Welcome Fund/Howard Hughes Medical Institute, 2004](#)
 - [Mentoring Resources from the National Postdoctoral Association](#)
4. You should discuss how frequently you meet with your postdocs to address:
- a. Research results
 - b. Specific Career Goals
 - c. (Weekly, biweekly, monthly) lab meetings, in which, postdocs have the opportunity to present and discuss their research with the rest of the laboratory.
5. If appropriate, list the opportunities to network with visiting scholars when they participate in department's visiting speaker series.
6. Indicate if you provide travel support for postdocs to attend regional, national, and/or international scientific meetings to facilitate their training and to provide networking opportunities.

7. Specify the relevant “Responsible Conduct of Research” (RCR) seminars and workshops you require/encourage postdocs to attend. Lists of courses for both campuses can be found on the Research Compliance and Training website.

Morningside Campus:

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/compliance/trainings/morningside.html#Postdocs-and-Graduate-students>

Medical Center:

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/compliance/trainings/cumc.html#Postdocs-and-Graduate-students>