



Enhancing the postdoctoral experience

Boston University Professional Development & Postdoctoral Affairs

Annual Report
FY2018

Overview

Boston University is committed to providing a supportive and competitive training environment for postdoctoral research and scholarship. Professional Development & Postdoctoral Affairs (PDPA) offers programs, resources, and services tailored to the specific needs of postdoctoral scholars (postdocs) and their faculty mentors.

In FY2018, we continued to expand the ways we serve our postdocs:

- Increased our support for postdocs as they begin their training through streamlining the appointment process, developing new onboarding resources, and establishing health insurance and MBTA benefits for non-employee postdocs
- Received over \$2M in grants from the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation to launch new professional development programs
- Continued to build our community through wellness programs, social events, and one-on-one advising appointments

Quick Stats

365

Number of postdocs
(64 non-employee, 301 employee)

102

New appointments
(BUSM)

13

Fall 2017 workshops

25

Spring 2018 workshops

63

Advising appointments

\$2.5M

Grant dollars

Bringing digital learning opportunities to postdocs

Our postdocs train across many campuses and remote locations, and also juggle a lot of responsibilities each day. Attending our events in person can sometimes be a challenge! Our newest program will make our professional development opportunities more flexible for postdocs, creating a Massive Open Online Course called the Postdoc Academy that they can access anywhere and at their own pace.



Sarah Hokanson,
Director

Supporting non-employee postdocs through our benefit program

Being awarded a fellowship is an honor, but the grant terms sometimes preclude postdocs access to our standard employee benefits. Meeting these basic needs is one more responsibility added to a postdoc's already full plate. This year I was pleased to oversee our new health insurance and transportation programs to our non-employee postdocs and their families, allowing them more time to focus on other priorities during their training at Boston University.



Kate Baker,
Program Manager

Postdocs: National landscape

Our Boston University postdoc community is part of a wider effort to support postdocs nationwide. PDPA contributes our leadership and voice through service on committees within the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA), the American Association of Medical Schools (AAMC) Postdoctoral Steering Committee within the Graduate Research, Education, and Training (GREAT) Group, and the Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL) Network.

The National Postdoctoral Association and Sigma Xi conducted a survey of 130 university postdoc offices to assess the needs of the community. Key recommendations from their 2017 *Supporting the Needs of Postdocs* report include:

- institutions that hire postdocs should increase the staff and budget for their offices that handle postdoc affairs;
- provide higher compensation and equality in benefits;
- increase parental leave policies and family-friendly benefits; and
- implement more tracking of postdocs after they leave an institution.

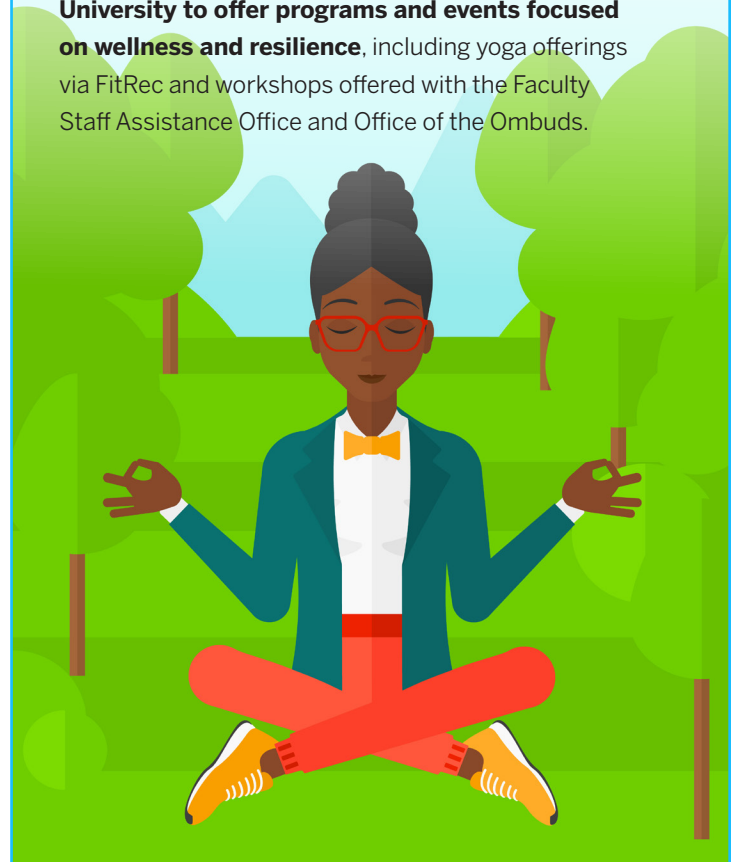
Boston University has transformed our training environment for our postdocs with competitive benefits and resources.

We have invested significant resources into our postdoc office and postdoc association, not including the funding we have been able to obtain from external sources to enhance our work. The Policy for Postdoctoral Scholars established a minimum salary and stipend for postdocs across all disciplines and funding sources. Our term limit ensures that the postdoc position is no longer a career path in and of itself, but a short-term training experience designed to allow postdocs to advance further in their desired career pathways.

Prioritizing wellness and resilience

The postdoctoral training stage is one of the most difficult within the academic career ladder. A recent report commissioned by the Royal Society and Wellcome Trust, *Understanding Mental Health in the Research Environment*, has argued for more research on the prevalence of psychological distress in postdoctoral populations. The report pushes for the development of a standard model for assessing stress and psychological distress in research environments, with a view to developing better support structures.

To raise awareness of the wellness resources at BU available to our postdocs, **PDPA partnered across the University to offer programs and events focused on wellness and resilience**, including yoga offerings via FitRec and workshops offered with the Faculty Staff Assistance Office and Office of the Ombuds.



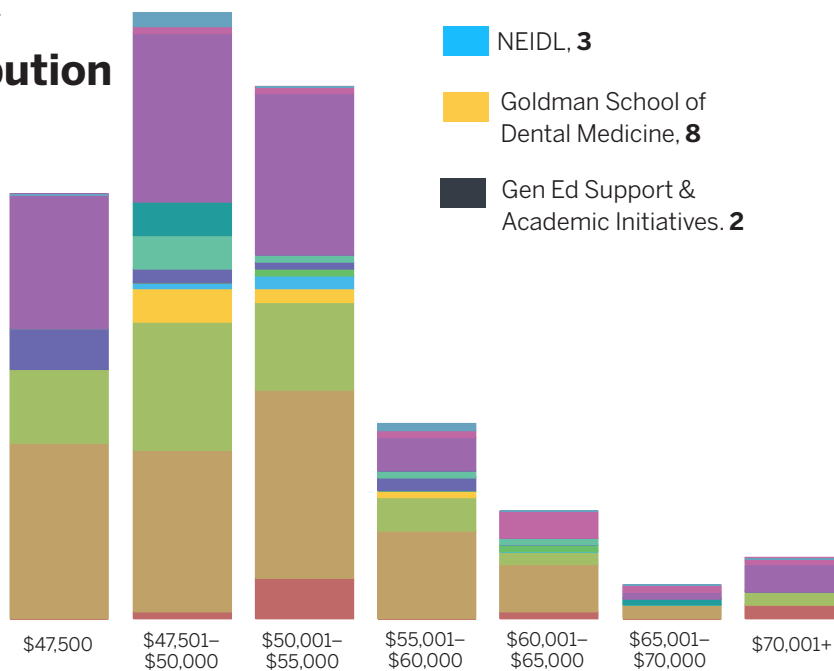
Our postdocs: at a glance

- School of Public Health, **10**
- School of Medicine, **126**
- School of Law, **8**
- Wheelock College of Education, **8**
- Sargent College, **15**
- Questrom School of Business, **2**



- Univ Professors-Honors, **3**
- Academic Insts & Centers, **12**
- College of Arts & Sciences, **108**
- College of Engineering, **60**

Salary distribution



BU postdocs represent 41 countries. The most common countries of citizenship are:

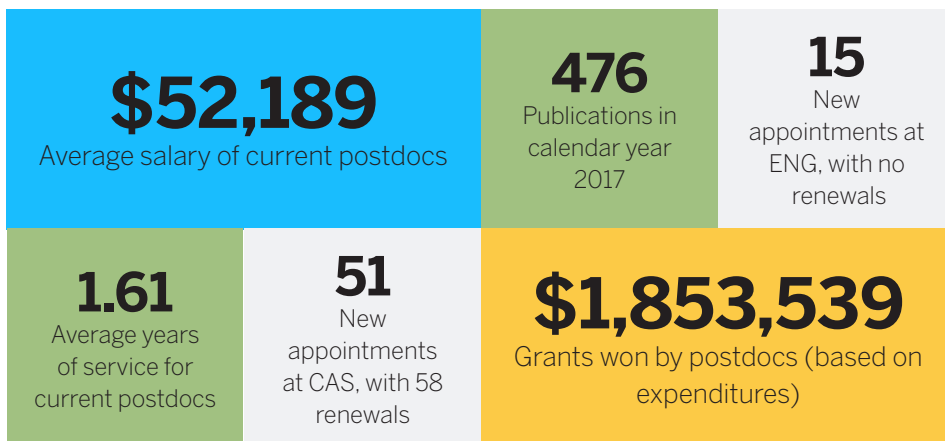
- United States (181/365, 49.5%)
- China (48/365, 13.2%)
- India (18/365, 4.9%)

Our population skews male (57%); there are nearly half as many males on the Medical Campus as there are on the Charles River Campus (66 males vs 137). Females are nearly evenly distributed across the campuses (71 vs 76). Males and females stay in their postdoctoral roles for about the same length of time, on average.

58.36% of all postdocs are on the Charles River Campus; 37.53% are on the Medical Campus, and 4.11% are off-campus.

47.40% are white; 29.59% are Asian, 2.74% are Black, 0.27% are American Indian. However, race data is missing for 20% of postdocs.

Quick Stats



Professional Development

Professional development is at the heart of helping our postdocs realize their professional goals. PDPA offers postdocs opportunities to build their skills through providing tools, resources, and workshop opportunities throughout the year.

Travel awards

Boston University is not the only source for professional development, and we encourage our postdocs to seek opportunities outside the University to network and enhance their skills. PDPA offers six travel awards per year to support postdocs to present their work at conferences or attend other professional development opportunities.

Business cards

Business cards are an essential networking tool for postdocs entering the job market or looking to expand their network of peers and mentors. To ensure all postdocs have access to this resource, PDPA works with postdocs to design and order one complimentary box of business cards.

Workshops

The programming that we provide is focused on skill-building, specifically on the core competencies identified by the NPA as being important for all postdocs – discipline-specific knowledge, research skill development, communication skills, professionalism, and leadership and management skills.

Seed funding

In collaboration with the Interdisciplinary Biomedical Research Office (IBRO), PDPA awarded a postdoc \$5,000 to develop research activities focused on developing interdisciplinary research skills beyond their primary area of expertise or training. In 2017, we supported Deanna Gagne (SAR) and her investigations into the cognitive skills of homesigners - deaf individuals who have not been exposed to a full natural language - within Nicaraguan populations.

Quick Stats

70

Business cards ordered in FY18

38

In-person and online workshops

69

Advising appointments

552

workshop attendees



Postdoc Onboarding & Benefits

29

Non-employee postdocs and their dependents receiving subsidized health insurance



28

non-employee postdocs receiving subsidized MBTA passes



Email is the preferred communication method

70%

Percentage of non-employee population reached by PDPA benefits program



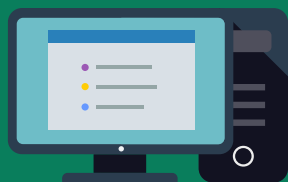
Postdocs tend to start work at BU in January or August

5

Average number of new postdocs that attend orientation each month

58%

Percentage of postdocs who prefer to access professional development programs online rather than in-person



20%

Percentage of postdocs who attend Orientation at some point during their BU stay



2

Number of years that 50% of incoming postdocs expect to be at BU

More than half (52%) of BU postdocs hope to stay in academia; about 1/3 lean toward industry

12

Number of orientations from August 2017 – July 2018

\$27,900

Amount reimbursed in non-employee postdoc health insurance



\$8,087

Amount reimbursed in non-employee postdoc MBTA passes



Grant-Funded Initiatives

Our vision for professional development programs is to create initiatives that address nationally identified priorities and needs of the postdoc training experience. We have been successful in expanding the work that we do by obtaining sponsored awards to support growth in our professional development opportunities. In FY2018, we obtained the following awards:

New initiatives supported by grants

The **National Institutes of Health Innovative Programs to Enhance Research and Training** (IPERT) program supports creative and innovative research educational activities designed to complement and/or enhance the training of a workforce to meet the nation's biomedical research needs. PDPA is funded to develop the Postdoc Academy, offering digital learning opportunities for postdocs to give them more flexibility in how they can access professional development focused on the NPA competencies.

Total award amount: \$1.8M

The **National Science Foundation Alliances in Graduate Education and the Professoriate** (AGEP) program seeks to increase the number of historically underrepresented minority (URM) faculty in STEM disciplines and education research fields by advancing knowledge about pathways to faculty career success. PDPA is a part of the CIRTl AGEP Alliance, and the goal of our project is to create more inclusive research climates for URM PhD students and postdocs in STEM and SBE disciplines. Our research focus is on drivers – evidence-based elements of mentoring, academic expectations, and community – that affect URM persistence in faculty career pathways. Current CIRTl AGEP at BU initiatives include: workshops for graduate students, postdocs, and faculty covering social identity, bias literacy, and mentoring strategies; mentoring awards; and an annual climate survey.

Total award amount: \$182,365

The **National Science Foundation Engineering Research Centers** (ERCs) integrate engineering research and education with technological innovation to transform national prosperity, health, and security. ERCs create an innovative, inclusive culture in engineering to cultivate new ideas and pursue engineering discovery that achieves a significant science, technology, and societal outcome within the 10-year timeframe of NSF support. PDPA leads workforce development for CELL-MET, a new ERC awarded to Boston University in fall 2017.



The **National Science Foundation Improving in Undergraduate STEM Education** (IUSE) program seeks to improve the effectiveness of undergraduate STEM education for both majors and non-majors. PDPA is a part of the CIRTl IUSE program focused on training the next generation of future faculty to be excellent instructors, applying the best practices in teaching and learning in their classrooms. Our programs specifically focus on professional development opportunities tailored to postdocs, including in-person workshops and online learning communities.

Total award amount: \$113,327

Postdoc Association – BUPDA

LinkedIn Workshop and Professional Headshots

BUPDA members organized this workshop for 25 BU postdocs on how to use LinkedIn profiles effectively. The workshop was led by John Bray, a Senior Talent Acquisition Specialist in BU Human Resources. Postdocs also had the opportunity to get a professional headshot at the event.



Boston Postdoctoral Association (BPDA)

The BUPDA is actively involved in the Boston Postdoctoral Association (BPDA), which is a group that includes postdoctoral representatives from Boston and Cambridge institutions. Representatives from the BUPDA are co-chairs in the Career Development, Advocacy, and Social BPDA committees, and they participate actively in the organization of many events for all Boston postdocs. The BUPDA also provides a link between BU postdocs and BPDA through financial support and by advertising their events.



BU Postdoctoral Seminar Series

The BUPDA has been organizing a monthly lunch series in which two postdocs give a presentation on their research. As postdocs at BU often have minimal opportunity to present their research and receive feedback, improve their presentation skills, or see the research of other postdocs, it has filled a critical role for BU postdocs. It has also presented opportunities for postdocs to socialize and network. The series has been ongoing for approximately eight months and has had great participation (both by speakers and postdocs in attendance).

Pick-Up Sports

This Spring, the BUPDA members organized casual sport games (basketball, volleyball) that were held biweekly in the BU Fitrec Center, which were free for all BU postdocs who could attend. The BUPDA is looking to broaden these types of physical activities to encourage more participation.



BSOCCS 2018

Members of BPDA and BUPDA, together with other volunteers from the BU postdoc community, actively contributed in organizing the 2018 edition of **Boston Postdoctoral Association Symposium of Collaboration and Career in Science** (BSOCCS2018), including the Grant Writing and Research Statement workshops and Science Communication Panel.

Social Events

The BUPDA has organized numerous events to help BU postdocs meet each other and enjoy what Boston has to offer. Recently, postdocs had the opportunity to see a Red Sox game at Fenway, go to an improv show at Improv Asylum, enjoy candlepin bowling together with postdocs from Tufts, join BU postdoctoral basketball and volleyball leagues, and meet other BU postdocs to share a pint or two during many BPDA and BUPDA pub nights.

Summary

Our mission is to ensure that Boston University provides a supportive and competitive environment for postdoctoral scholarship and training.

Professional Development

- In-person and online workshops
- Travel awards
- Business cards
- One-on-one advising consultations

Postdoctoral Appointments and Onboarding

- Offer letters
- Postdoc guidebook resource
- In-person orientation sessions
- Non-employee / trainee benefits

Community

- Family-friendly events
- Social events
- Wellness programs
- Postdoc association



In FY 2019, we look forward to partnering with the Office of the Associate Provost of Graduate Affairs to develop new professional development opportunities for PhD students.

➤ Contact Information

Charles River Campus: 1 Silber Way, Room 909, Boston, MA 02215

Medical Campus: 72 E. Concord Street, Room L306, Boston, MA 02118



Annual Report FY2018

Boston University Professional Development & Postdoctoral Affairs

