

Class C Resolution concerning postdoctoral fellows.

WHEREAS, the National Science Foundation Survey¹ shows the University of Washington ranked 9th nationally out of 323 institutions by total numbers of postdoctoral appointees in science, engineering, and health in 2014; and

WHEREAS, several national bodies, including the NIH, NSF, the federal Office of Management and Budget, the National Postdoctoral Association, and the National Academies have defined the role of postdoctoral researcher as “a temporary position of advanced mentored training in research,” and recognize the “dual role” of postdocs as employees and trainees; and

WHEREAS, we must, as a university employing over one thousand post-doctoral researchers, commit to fulfilling our obligations toward these vital members of our research and learning ecosystem and align with national guidelines and peer institutions; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate urges the Provost’s Office to make the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs within the Graduate School a permanent part of the University organization with the responsibility of coordinating policies, practices, and procedures for postdocs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate urges the University to recognize the University of Washington Postdoctoral Association (UWPA) as an organization of interest for the postdoctoral research body of the University and for the University. The University should support, promote and respect the independence of the Association; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate urges the Provost’s Office to create a Task Force for Postdoctoral Affairs to include members from key units responsible for postdocs, such as: Academic HR, the Graduate School, the Office of Research, the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, the Faculty Senate, School of Medicine, and the UW Postdoctoral Association; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate urges the Provost’s Office to charge the Task Force for Postdoctoral Affairs to develop the policies and practices that would bring UW in line with national guidelines and peer institutions, including but not limited to the following issues:

- Limiting the years possible under the various job titles encompassing postdoctoral researcher training, with the goal of promoting postdocs into more independent and permanent positions in a timely manner;
- Enforcement for the dual role of postdoctoral researchers as both employees and trainees with reasonable release time and support for professional development including workshops, travel to conferences, or teaching opportunities.
- Commitment to faculty mentorship for postdocs, including advising on Individual Development Plans and diverse career trajectories;
- Identification of point people within each unit serving postdocs to serve as coordinators with the central Office of Postdoctoral Affairs;
- Consistency with offer letters extended to postdocs to include clear reference to salary, benefits, terms of appointment, grievance options, role expectations, and connections to university resources;
- Streamline the job classifications used for postdoctoral research fellows to facilitate tracking and accountability from first hiring to exit;
- Centralize data collection and tracking of postdocs, including the satisfaction with their training and tracking of employment after leaving in order to quantify the quality of research training received at the University;

¹ Data source: https://ncesdata.nsf.gov/gradpostdoc/2014/html/GSS2014_DST_46.html

- Through relevant policy, faculty code, or by-laws changes, include postdoc representation on relevant University bodies such as the Research Advisory Board, the Faculty Council on Research, and others.

Approved by:
Senate Executive Committee
February 13, 2017

Approved by:
Faculty Senate
March 2, 2017