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Panel: Collective Bargaining Issues Concerning Post-Doctorates

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Collective Bargaining Issues Concerning Post-Doctorates

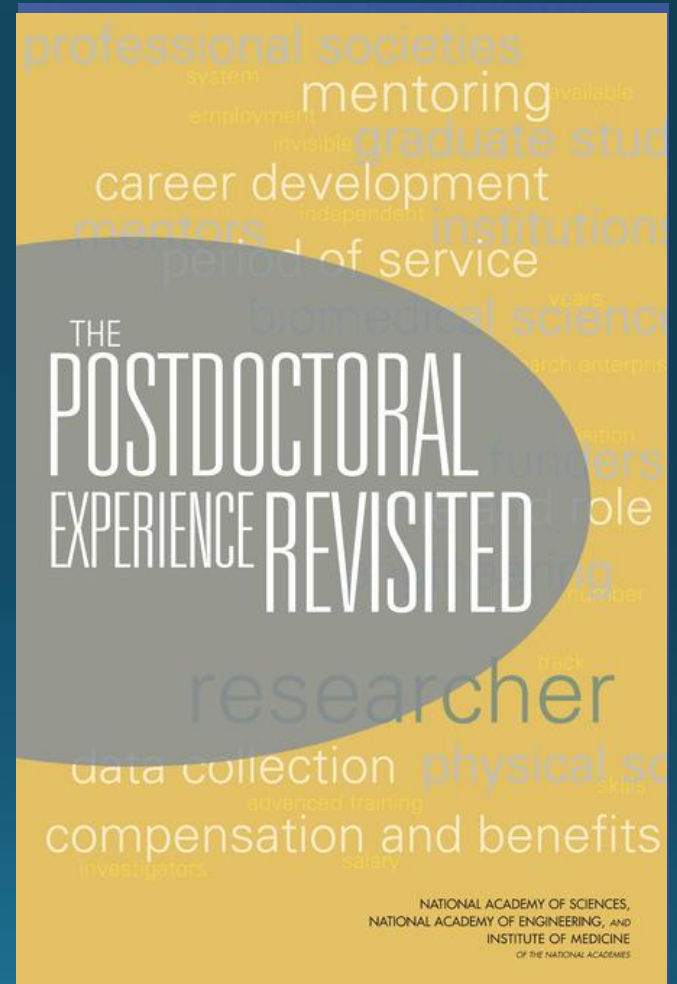
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Background

- Nature of postdoc position changed in 1980s
- Dramatic increase in postdoc population
- Stagnation in faculty positions
- Lack of central oversight
- Lack of standard definition of postdoc
- Report by National Academy of Sciences (2000) raised awareness and suggested solutions
- 2014 report measured progress and updated recommendations



Postdoctoral Experience Revisited

Report lists six specific recommendations:

1. Limit duration of postdoc to not more than five years
2. Title “Postdoctoral Researcher” used only for training
3. Make PhD students aware of career options, avoid postdoc as “default” step
4. NIH should increase postdoctoral salary to \$50,000 and adjust annually
5. Encourage good mentoring, evaluate effectiveness of mentors
6. NSF should collect data on all postdocs

Background

Two major responses to concern about sustainability of current system:

1. Increased number and complexity of Postdoctoral Affairs Offices
2. Increase in Postdoc Unions

Not mutually exclusive, each brings particular strengths and weaknesses to the situation

How does the presence or absence of a union impact:

1. Period of Service: Postdoctoral appointments for a given postdoctoral researcher should total no more than 5 years in duration, barring extraordinary circumstances.

How does the presence or absence of a union impact:

2. Title and Role: The title of “Postdoctoral Researcher” should be applied only to those people who are receiving advanced training in research.

How does the presence or absence of a union impact:

3. Career Development: Host institutions and mentors should, beginning at the first year of graduate school, make graduate students aware of the wide variety of career paths available for PhD recipients, and explain that postdoctoral positions are intended only for those seeking advanced research training.

*The postdoctoral position should not be viewed by graduate students or principal investigators as the default step after completion of doctoral training.

How does the presence or absence of a union impact:

4. Compensation and Benefits of Employment: The NIH should raise the NRSA postdoctoral starting salary to \$50,000 (2014 dollars), and adjust it annually for inflation.

*salaries should be higher where cost of living, disciplinary norms, and institutional scales dictate.

*institutions should provide benefits commensurate with benefits given to equivalent full-time employees.

How does the presence or absence of a union impact:

5. Mentoring: Host institutions should create provisions that encourage postdoctoral researchers to seek advice from multiple advisors. Host institutions and funding agencies should take responsibility for ensuring the quality of mentoring...

How does the presence or absence of a union impact:

6. Data Collection: The National Science Foundation should serve as the primary curator for establishing and updating a database system that tracks postdoctoral researcher, including non-academic and foreign-trained postdoctoral researchers.

Other issues not mentioned in report

- Presence of a postdoctoral affairs office
- Visa issues
- HR title changes
- Other benefits (day care, housing)
- Postdocs as vulnerable population
- Institutional mergers
- Lack of central administrative oversight
- Microaggression

Questions?