

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND ACTION POINTS:

The 2000-2001 survey of the U. of Chicago Biological Sciences Division (BSD) Postdoctoral Association (PDA) received 66 unique responses by 2/14/2001 representing approximately 26% of the 255 total BSD postdoctoral fellows (or equivalent research associates without rank). This comprehensive survey asked questions about demographic/biographic information, the role of a Postdoctoral Scholars Association at U. of Chicago, postdoctoral training, career issues, and salary/benefits. These results were sufficient for an informative analysis of the BSD postdoctoral community.

I. ROLE OF THE PDA:

A majority of postdocs responded that the PDA should concentrate its functions on representing postdocs to the administration and in helping with career training. In addition, considerable interest remained for a broad PDA role in other areas supportive to postdoc development.

II. MAJOR ISSUE- SALARY/BENEFITS DISPARITIES:

a. The majority of BSD postdoc respondents reported salaries well below the NIH minimum salary levels based on years of cumulative postdoctoral experience (effective 07/01/2000).

b. A sex-related difference in salaries was also apparent. With 0-2 years of experience, men on average had higher salaries than women, but this difference was no longer evident with >2 years of experience.

c. A wide range of provided benefits were reported in regards to health or life insurance, retirement, child care leave. The benefits responses suggest an uneven distribution of benefits to BSD postdocs.

CONCLUSION: Given that the NIH standards for salary/benefits were never intended as more than a minimum level from which cost-of-living adjustments were to be made, the large proportion of current postdoc salaries below the NIH minimum levels may reflect a competitive disadvantage for the Division. The reasons for the salary and benefits shortcomings and their uneven distribution likely involve a complex set of factors involving policies and practices at the departmental, division, and granting agency levels. It may be useful to create a follow-up survey with a more limited and directed set of questions to understand salary differences by other factors such as appointment or visa status or gender.

ACTION POINTS FOR THE BSD:

- 1) Compile and maintain a database of all BSD postdocs with sufficient information on salary, benefits and other data to allow for informed decision-making and tracking of progress on postdoctoral issues.
- 2) Review BSD and BSD departments' policies regarding postdoc salaries and benefits:
 - a. do the NIH minimum standards for salary/benefits represent a reasonable and equitable compensation at a Chicago cost-of-living for BSD postdocs?
 - b. Are BSD salary and benefits policies applied equitably across departments?
 - c. What guidance about postdoc salary/benefits does BSD provide to faculty?
- 3) Ensure, at all levels of grant review, that budgets incorporate appropriate salary/benefits levels.
- 4) Provide administrative support and guidance to aid faculty in understanding and implementing BSD/University policies regarding postdocs.
- 5) Provide administrative support and guidance to aid postdocs in all aspects of the postdoctoral experience.

The BSD Postdoctoral Association Survey 2000-2001 Committee

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