

Biological Sciences Division Postdoc Survey 2006 Executive Summary and Action Points

The University of Chicago Biological Sciences Division (BSD) Postdoctoral Association conducted a survey of postdocs between June 19 and July 3 2006 having recruited participants by email and through the association website. Approximately 50% of the total BSD postdoc population responded, represented by 140 unique responses. The survey focused on General Characteristics, Stipend, Living Costs, Seminar Series and Postdoc Concerns. Although not as detailed as the survey of 2001, some comparative analysis, as well as pertinent information on the current condition of the postdocs was retrieved from this survey.

Stipends:

Minimum - Gross stipends average around \$35,000-\$37,000 and the majority of postdocs receive no less than the NIH NRSA zero year level. These data suggest that the BSD adoption of the NIH NRSA minimum stipend is being successfully implemented.

Increase with experience - No correlation is observed between the level of compensation and sex or citizenship when postdoc stipends are considered according to years of experience. The disparity in stipend between the genders with up to two years of experience prevalent in 2001 is no longer evident in 2006. However, a significant number of postdocs with more than two years of experience receive smaller stipends than the 2006 NIH NRSA stipend scale.

Action Points:

- Determine why a few postdocs are receiving less than the minimum recommended stipend
- Request adoption of NIH NRSA pay scale based on years of postdoctoral experience

Benefits:

Supplementary Stipend - Approximately 50% of Postdoctoral Fellows report that they receive a supplementary stipend from their advisor. Since January 2004, all Fellows in the BSD should be provided an annual supplemental stipend to address the inequity in employee benefits between Postdoctoral Scholars and Fellows. The 50% of Fellows who responded that they did not receive a supplementary stipend may be unaware of the stipend or may not be receiving it.

Information – Comments from postdocs suggest that there is significant discontentment and confusion about postdoc benefits despite measures to standardize postdoc benefits since the 2001 survey.

Action Points:

- Confirm whether all fellows are receiving a supplemental stipend
- Provide better information for postdocs regarding their rights and benefits

Seminar Series:

The majority of postdocs consider the Postdoc Seminar series a success. Most respondents have attended between 1 and 5 seminars in the last year, and about 80% have attended at least one. The current day and time of the seminar is agreeable to most postdocs.

Action Points:

- Provide seminars on career guidance (academic, industry and alternative) and funding opportunities

General Postdoc Concerns:

2006 survey:

Childcare support or facility

Professional options for conflict resolution and discrimination

2001 survey:

Performance evaluation, either oral or written

Opportunities for postdocs to present their work or teach at the University

Action points:

- Liaise with university offices that are involved in childcare provision in order to provide better information for postdocs and advocate on behalf of postdocs
- Request an ombudsman and formal grievance policy for postdocs
- Create and distribute performance evaluation resources
- Investigate teaching opportunities for postdocs within and beyond the university

Survey Committee:

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