Engaging, Connecting, and Developing the Rutgers Postdoc Community

ANNUAL REPORT | 2019-2020

RUTGERS
Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
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YEAR AT A GLANCE

2019 – 2020

1 LEADERSHIP AWARD

7,866 Website Sessions/Engaged Visits

16% increase from last year

2 COMMITTEES

• Executive Steering Committee
• Postdoctoral Advisory Council

16 MEMBERS

20+ COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

8 WELCOME AND INFORMATION SESSIONS
763 POSTDOCS UNIVERSITYWIDE
AS OF JANUARY 30, 2020

1,100+ MAILING LIST SUBSCRIBERS
10% increase from last year

4 CO-SPONSORED EVENTS

1 NATIONAL PRESENTATION
National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) Conference

120 ATTENDEES

7 CAREER DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

4.5/5 FEEDBACK SCORE

7 Meetings with BTAA Group
Postdoc Office Administrators

3 New Initiatives Launched
- PREP – A Career Preparation Program
- Grant Writing Support Groups
- Rutgers Individual Development Plan

40 Newsletters

“99% WOULD RECOMMEND WORKSHOP TO COLLEAGUE

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REPORTING TO THE OFFICE OF THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, THE OFFICE OF POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS SUPPORTS POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS AND THEIR FACULTY MENTORS BY PROVIDING A CENTRAL HUB FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION, KNOWLEDGE SHARING, AND COMMUNITY BUILDING.
ABOUT US

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) helps our nearly 800 postdocs make the most of their time at Rutgers by providing central coordination of information and opportunities relevant to the universitywide postdoctoral community. Specifically, we:

❖ Act as a main contact for postdocs, and help them navigate postdoc life at Rutgers by providing information through Welcome and Information Sessions and referrals to campus representatives and relevant institutional contacts across the university;

❖ Host career development workshops and other activities, open to all postdocs, and encourage them to take advantage of professional development opportunities offered within and outside of Rutgers;

❖ Offer individual career advising sessions to all postdocs interested in defining a career path and navigating their next career steps;

❖ Help postdocs build community and expand their professional networks, starting internally, by creating opportunities for postdocs to connect with their peers and faculty across the university.

MEET OUR STAFF

Our dedicated team is committed to providing high-quality services and resources to the postdoctoral community and their faculty mentors, and we value the opportunity to help enhance their experience at Rutgers.

ITZAMARIE CHÉVERE-TORRES, PHD
Director, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

CARMEN R. CASTRO
Senior Program Coordinator

YVONNE GONZALEZ
Director, Mentoring and Career Development

JILLIAN J. HANNA
Administrative Assistant
(October 7, 2019 – Present)

LYNNE FRUMKIN
Special Projects Assistant
(November 5, 2018 – November 4, 2019)
EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

The Executive Steering Committee (ESC) is chaired by Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, Barbara A. Lee. The committee is comprised of nine senior faculty and administrators who provide high-level oversight of the office and makes decisions on policy-related recommendations that impact Rutgers’ postdocs.

EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

BARBARA A. LEE, PH.D. (CHAIR)
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

JOSEPH A. BARONE, PHARMD, FCCP
Dean
Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy

LORI COVEY, PH.D.
Dean
Life Sciences, Professor of Cell Biology and Neuroscience
School of Arts and Sciences

JEROME J. KUKOR, PH.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies

CAROL S. LUTZ, PH.D.
Assistant Dean for Curriculum
School of Graduate Studies; Associate Professor of Microbiology, Biochemistry, and Molecular Genetics

JAMES H. MILLONIG, PH.D.
Senior Associate Dean
School of Graduate Studies; Associate Professor,
Department of Neuroscience and Cell Biology
Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

DENIS PARÉ, PH.D.
Acting Dean of Faculty of Arts and Sciences–Newark;
Director, Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience; and
Distinguished Professor

KATHLEEN W. SCOTTO, PH.D.
Vice Chancellor for Research
Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences;
Vice Dean
School of Graduate Studies

KAREN R. STUBAUS, PH.D.
Vice President for Academic Affairs and Administration
POSTDOCTORAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Chaired by the Director of the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, Dr. Itzamarie Chévere-Torres, the Postdoctoral Advisory Council (PAC) is a universitywide group of faculty, staff, and postdocs who have an interest in improving the culture, experience, and professional development of postdocs at the university.

POSTDOCTORAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

JANET ALDER, PH.D.
Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic and Student Affairs
School of Graduate Studies;
Associate Professor, Department of Neuroscience and Cell Biology
Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School;
iJOBS Program Executive Co-Director

JESSICA FELLMETH, PH.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Pathology
Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

CARLO SANTORO
International Faculty and Scholar Adviser, J-1 Visas
Rutgers Global–International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS)

JEFF BOYD, PH.D.
Professor of Cell Biology
School of Arts & Sciences–Newark

ELLEN TOWNES-ANDERSON, PH.D.
Professor of Pharmacology, Physiology, and Neuroscience; Associate Professor of Ophthalmology and Visual Science;
Director of Research Development and Initiatives
New Jersey Medical School

MICHELLE CHADWICK, PH.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow
Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey
INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

POSTDOCTORAL ASSOCIATION (PDA)

The OPA Director partners with the Rutgers Postdoctoral Association (PDA) to enrich the experiences of postdocs at Rutgers. The PDA announced Yvonne Gonzalez as the recipient of the 2019 Martha Soto Leadership Award, which is presented to individuals “who make significant contributions to improving postdoc life at Rutgers.”

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

The Office also partners with various units and programs across the university to deliver comprehensive programming and resources to our diverse postdoctoral community. Our key partnerships include:

- Center for Teaching Advancement and Assessment Research (CTAAR)
- iJOBS Program
- NRMN-CAN
- Office of Graduate Student External Grants and Fellowships | GradFund
- Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED)
- Office of STEM Education – School of Arts and Sciences
- Rutgers Global—International Student and Scholar Services
- School of Graduate Studies
- University Human Resources

Dr. Doreen Badheka, Program Director for Special Projects, is a key partner in supporting the career advancement activities and community development efforts of both graduate students and postdocs at RBHS in Newark.
As of January 30, 2020, Rutgers was home to 763 postdoctoral researchers.

**BY UNIVERSITY AFFILIATION**
- Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences* (408)
- Rutgers University–New Brunswick (297)
- Rutgers University–Newark (48)
- Rutgers University–Camden (10)

The majority of postdocs were part of Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (408)*, followed by Rutgers University–New Brunswick (297), Rutgers University–Newark (48), and Rutgers University–Camden (10).

*includes 242 external postdocs from Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy

**BY GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION**
- Piscataway (471)
- New Brunswick (148)
- Newark (130)
- Camden (10)
- Off-Campus (4)

The majority of postdocs were geographically located in Piscataway (471), followed by New Brunswick (148), Newark (130), Camden (10), and Off-campus (4).
Nearly 92% (705) of postdocs were concentrated in 10 schools and institutes. The remaining 8% (58) were spread out across various units and campuses at Rutgers.

*The total number of postdocs reflects the number of active postdocs in the UHR system as of January 30, 2020.

As of January 30, 2020, nearly half of the postdoc population was international (48%), as defined by those holding J1, H-1B, F1 and other nonimmigrant visas. 52% were considered domestic, classified as either US citizens or green card holders.
During our third year, with the help of key stakeholders, we continued to work and develop in the following five strategic areas of focus:

**Strategic Area #1: Deliver Customized High-Quality Programming**

**MONTHLY CAREER DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS**

In its third year, the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs continued to offer monthly career development workshops to help postdocs strengthen their career preparedness. These workshops were also an opportunity to connect with other postdocs that shared similar interests and to increase their networks.

In partnership with the **Office for the Promotion of Women in Science**, we co-sponsored the **Navigating Workplaces for STEM Women of Color Luncheon**, featuring engineer, feminist writer, and STEM advocate, Patricia Valoy, to help postdocs seek guidance on how to navigate male-dominated workplaces.

Relevant workshop topics this year included project management skills, public speaking and science communication, research computing and data analysis resources, networking and mentoring, and self-advocacy.

“This workshop gave some perspective on what’s important in carrying a project to completion that may not be readily apparent to someone in academia.”

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Project Management Essentials Workshop
WORKSHOPS’ ATTENDANCE & DEMOGRAPHICS

Nearly 120 scholars attended workshops and events sponsored by the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. One of the highlights of the Fall semester included an NPA Postdoctoral Appreciation Week Luncheon which had the largest number of postdoc participation thus far.

RUTGERS CONNECTION NETWORK (RCN) MENTORING PROGRAM

The Rutgers Connection Network (RCN) Mentoring Program provides an opportunity for postdocs to be paired in a mentoring partnership with mentors outside of their department and engages them in a yearlong experience of monthly mentoring meetings, activities to network and build mentoring skills, and tools to facilitate effective mentoring beyond the department.

The 2019-20 RCN Mentoring Program accepted seven postdoctoral researchers universitywide to participate.

NEW INITIATIVES

During the 2019 Fall semester, the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs launched three pilot initiatives—the Grant Writing Support Group, the Rutgers Individual Development Plan for Postdocs, and the Proactive, Reflection, Empowered, Planning (PREP) Career Program.
GRANT WRITING SUPPORT GROUP

The office launched this initiative in New Brunswick following the guidelines provided by Rutgers’ Office of Research and Economic Development. The goal of this initiative was to bring together a small group of postdocs to apply a focused set of rules to improve their grant-writing skills. Eight postdocs were accepted into this program. Dr. Paul Copeland, Professor of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology at RWJMS and experienced grant writer, served as the faculty moderator.

“During this workshop, Dr. Copeland gave great advice and it was helpful to have other postdocs working on similar grants to help.”

PROACTIVE, REFLECTION, EMPOWERED, PLANNING (PREP) CAREER PROGRAM

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs launched a new career preparation program for postdocs in STEMM, Biomed, Humanities, and Social Sciences who needed guidance in formulating the next steps for a career plan.

The PREP career program provided participants with the infrastructure, training, and facilitation needed to increase self-awareness of their pillars of career satisfaction (Strengths, Values, Preferred Skills, Personality) and, as a result, increased their understanding of what a career fit looks like for them.

“The program gave me more confidence in making future decisions and made it easier to showcase myself. It was a good opportunity to put my head into the business world, without the anxiety and pressure associated with job searches.”

We asked participants, what career path are you interested in pursuing after completing your training at Rutgers?

- 5 Academic Career
- 1 Non-Academic Career
- 4 Not Sure
Strategic Area #2: Provide Comprehensive Services & Resources

WELCOME LETTERS & ORIENTATION

The Office sends monthly Welcome Letters to postdocs that have recently started their training at Rutgers as a way of welcoming them to the postdoctoral community and encouraging them to attend an upcoming Welcome & Information session to learn more about the services and resources provided by our office. These one-hour sessions occur on the last Friday of every month. During the sessions, postdocs meet with office staff to discuss any questions they might have related to resources and the postdoctoral experience at Rutgers.

In our third year, the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs facilitated a total of eight Welcome & Information sessions.

Postdoctoral researchers in Newark are also able to take advantage of this service. Dr. Doreen Badheka, Director of Special Projects at the School of Graduate Studies, Health Science Campus in Newark facilitates these sessions.

INDIVIDUAL ADVISING SESSIONS

Our Individual Advising Sessions are open to all postdoctoral researchers, research associates, and visiting scholars in the post-PhD research phase who are looking for perspective on how to navigate their career path. During its third year, the OPA offered a total of eight of these sessions. Topics of discussion included CV/resume and cover letter writing, preparing for job interviews, and helping to define and strategize a career path and plan.

Dr. Chévere-Torres facilitates these one-hour sessions for postdoctoral researchers located in the New Brunswick and Piscataway area. Postdoctoral researchers located in Newark may contact Dr. Doreen Badheka for an appointment.

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

The Office for the Promotion of Women in Science extended an invitation to all postdocs to take advantage of complimentary membership to the Association of Women in Science (AWIS). AWIS provides access to a range of professional development resources on topics including leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship, and advocacy.

Postdocs now have access to the resources offered through the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity (NCFDD), thanks to Rutgers Division of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement. The NCFDD is an independent professional development, training, and mentoring community of faculty, postdocs, and graduate students from more than 450 colleges and universities. Its resources are highly beneficial—not only for faculty and students of color, but for all in need of general mentoring and other resources to support transitions throughout their careers.

RUTGERS INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR POSTDOCS

The individual development plan (IDP) is a mentoring and career development tool that can help postdocs take ownership of their career goals and success. The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs strongly encourages postdoctoral researchers to complete an IDP with their faculty mentors once a year.

The new Rutgers IDP for Postdocs and its companion webpage were launched as a pilot initiative during the 2019 National Postdoctoral Appreciation week. The Rutgers IDP webpage contains recommended steps to complete the IDP and additional mentoring resources such as SMART goals, AAMC Compact, and Mosaic of Mentors Map.
Strategic Area #3: Create Effective Assessment Strategies to Understand Impact

WORKSHOP EVALUATIONS

In order to help us improve our offerings and help us adjust as needed to the professional development needs of our postdoctoral community, we administer evaluations at the end of each of our workshops.

“Overall, this workshop met my expectations.”

Average response from all post-workshop evaluations, ranging from 1-5 (disagree-agree) for the statement “Overall, this workshop met my expectations”.

4.5 average score

“Would you recommend this workshop to a colleague?”

Average response to the question “Would you recommend this workshop to a colleague?”

99% Yes 1% No

“I found the guidance we got regarding SMART goals and how to work on developing our mentoring relationship with our partners to be very helpful.”
Strategic Area #4: Maintain a Strong Presence

OPA WEBSITE

The OPA website is our main platform of communication and information-sharing with our postdoctoral community, faculty, and administrators. In its third year, we further developed our website by adding career development resources for postdocs and their faculty mentors, including the launch of a Rutgers Individual Development Plan (IDP) webpage.

In our third year, the OPA website continued to attract new visitors with a total of 7,866 active sessions (engaged visits) worldwide. The United States led the list of top five countries with the most active sessions, followed by India, South Korea, China, and Canada.

At the national level, New Jersey led the list of top five States with most active sessions, followed by Virginia, New York, Texas, and Wyoming.

NEWSLETTER

The weekly newsletter continued to have a standardized circulation on Thursday afternoons and disseminated information about events and resources to the larger postdoc community at Rutgers. Our mailing list consists of over a thousand subscribers. We received daily requests from institutional partners and external entities wanting to share their resources and job opportunities with our postdoc community.
ENGAGEMENT BEYOND RUTGERS

Strategic Area #5: Stimulate Engagement Beyond Rutgers

2019 NATIONAL POSTDOCTORAL ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

The OPA team raised national awareness of Rutgers’ mentoring initiatives and programs for faculty and postdocs at the 2019 National Postdoctoral Association Conference in Orlando, Florida. The OPA team facilitated a session titled Postdoc to Faculty: How Academic Career Mentoring is Preparing and Empowering Rutgers Postdocs to Stay in Academia. Attendees learned how the Rutgers Connection Network (RCN) Mentoring Program empowers postdoc mentees to be the “drivers” of their careers and mentoring partnerships, and serves as a model for faculty to engage in the career development of postdocs, increasing diversity and inclusion across these two groups, and increasing the academic job prospects for postdocs through effective mentoring.
ENGLISH ENGAGEMENT BEYOND RUTGERS

BIG TEN ACADEMIC ALLIANCE POSTDOC OFFICES’ ADMINISTRATORS GROUP

At the regional level, the OPA director serves as a liaison to our Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) counterparts to share information and best practices about policies, compliance, and administration. Since its inaugural meeting in June 2018, the BTAA Postdoc Offices’ administrators group has continued to meet bi-monthly to discuss career development and mentoring best-practices for postdocs. In 2019-2020, the group met seven times and decided to make the topic of mentoring its main priority for the year.
As we look ahead to our fourth year as an office, we will continue to focus on improving and expanding in our five strategic areas of focus: high-quality programming, comprehensive services and resources, effective assessment, strong presence, and engagement beyond Rutgers. We will prioritize career development workshops for postdocs, create social media platforms to communicate our offerings and announcements in a more effective and broad way, develop and implement a survey to assess the professional development needs of postdocs, and continue to play a leadership role in formalizing a Big Ten Group for Postdoc Office Directors.