

**MUSC Postdoctoral Researcher**  
**Town Hall**  
**February 12, 2007**  
**Edward Krug, PhD**  
**Associate Professor of Cell Biology & Anatomy**  
**Assistant Dean for Postdoctoral Affairs**  
**College of Graduate Studies**

**Minutes:**

The meeting came to order at noon with 32 postdocs in attendance. Dr. Krug opened with an acknowledgement of those working behind the scene on post doctoral affairs:

**Human Resources**

Stewart Mixon  
Philippe Gresle  
Patricia Kelly  
Wendy Littlejohn  
Rhonda Richardson  
Velma Stamp  
Dana Tumbleston  
David Welch

**University**

Beth Gladden  
Joe Gough  
Susan Mappus  
Debbie Shoemaker  
Dodie Weise

Today's meeting will be a progress report covering the following points (see attached slides):

- Adopting a definition of "postdoc"
- Standardization of appointment process
- Clarification of fellow tax obligations
- MUSC postdoctoral statistics
- Benefits for postdocs
- Aids for improving the postdoc-PI relationship
- Creation of a "staff scientist" classification
- Career resources on the web

**What is a Postdoc?**

The NIH & NSF defines a postdoctoral research as "an individual who has received a doctoral degree (or equivalent) and is engaged in a temporary and defined period of mentored advanced training to enhance the professional skills and research independence needed to pursue his or her chosen career path."

Key points in this definition are "temporary", "mentored", and "his or her chosen career path".

Temporary: The average length of a post doc is 8 years and goes up a month or so each year.

Mentored: There should be a person with some sort of obligation for the postdoc's training – to help them become indoctrinated into the profession. It is important that postdocs know administrative structure – to know the right person to go to with specific questions.

His or Her chosen career path: Whatever the postdoc wants to do – ex; industry, academics...

In the past thirty years the postdoc population has exploded and the largest growth has been with international postdocs. As of last week, MUSC has 230 postdocs. The average stay is 3 years, 90% have been at MUSC for up to 5 years, but the range goes up to 16 years. There is a 20-25% turnover every 3 months or so.

### **The Appointment Process and Clarification of Fellow Tax Obligations**

The appointment process has been standardized (see slide). In addition the postdoctoral classifications have been changed. A postdoctoral scholar is considered an MUSC employee on a temporary grant position. A postdoctoral fellow is not considered an MUSC employee. Fellows receive stipends through accounts payable. There is no official notification of the amount of the stipend – the postdoc should go to their business manager and ask for a letter with the stipend amount for their records. Postdoctoral Fellows must pay estimated quarterly taxes – both federal and state. They are not considered Self-Employed. The stipend amount goes on line 7 of form 1040 as other income and should be denoted as SCH. They do not pay FICA or Medicare taxes.

### **MUSC Postdoctoral statistics**

- Currently 218 postdocs across 4 colleges
  - 143 internationals
  - 75 US citizens or permanent residents
    - 32 supported by research grants
    - 42 supported by training grants
- Average age = 36 years (SD, 6 yrs; range, 25 to 65 yrs)
- Average duration at MUSC = 3.1 years (SD, 2.7 yrs)
  - 91% have been at MUSC for 5 or fewer years
  - Maximum duration at MUSC is 16 years
- Average salary
  - MUSC = \$39,162 (SD, \$5,434)
  - National = \$39,267 (SD, \$9,282)

A slide is attached showing how MUSC postdoc policies compare nationally.

### **Aids for improving the postdoc-PI relationship**

Every post doc should have an individual development plan (IDP). This is a written plan which outlines the training objectives and milestones of the postdoc. Studies show that postdocs with an IDP have greater productivity (as judged by number of papers published) and career satisfaction. Postdocs and their mentors should sit down together and review the IDP every 6 months to one year.

### **Career options for Postdocs (see attached slides)**

The majority of postdocs want faculty jobs; however, there has only been a 32% increase in tenure-track faculty positions since 1975 as opposed to a 400% increase in postdocs. Industry, on the other hand, has a greater need for postdocs. MUSC has proposed the following definition for an MUSC postdoc:

- The appointee was recently awarded a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate (e.g., Sc.D., M.D.) in an appropriate field; and

- The appointment is temporary (limited to 5 years at MUSC, with a 6<sup>th</sup> year by petition to the College of Graduate Studies); and
- The appointment involves substantially full-time research or scholarship; and
- The appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic and/or research career; and
- The appointment is not part of a clinical training program; and
- The appointee works under the supervision of a senior scholar; and
- The appointee has the freedom, and is expected, to publish the results of his or her research or scholarship during the period of the appointment.

(based on AAU, AAMC, and FASEB definition)

### **Creation of a Staff Scientist Classification**

To bridge the gap for postdocs who have reached the limit of their postdoctoral training period, new types of career options need to be made available. MUSC is currently working on a Staff Scientist position. (see slide for definition). This position would allow the postdoc to move into a position with benefits and an acceptable salary range. There would be no limit to the duration of such a position and the staff scientist would be eligible to apply for faculty positions further down the line.

There are additional Web Resources on the slides included with these minutes.

The meeting adjourned at 1:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Shoemaker