

UCSF POSTDOC MENTORING PROGRAM: GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY MENTORS

THE NEED FOR POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLAR MENTORING

- ❑ A good mentoring relationship can be crucial to the success of postdoctoral scholars as they develop original research ideas and move toward greater independence and maturity.
- ❑ Per the “*University of California Academic Personnel Policy 390 – Appointment and Promotion, Postdoctoral Scholar*” effective July 1, 2003:

“Faculty mentors are responsible for guiding and monitoring the advanced training of Postdoctoral Scholars. In that role, faculty mentors should make clear the goals, objectives, and expectations of the training program and the responsibilities of Postdoctoral Scholars. They should regularly and frequently communicate with Postdoctoral Scholars, provide regular and timely assessments of the Postdoctoral Scholar’s performance, and provide career advice and job placement assistance.” (390-6 – *Responsibility*)

BASIC OBLIGATIONS OF THE MENTOR

1. THE APPOINTMENT PROCESS

- ❑ Use the template appointment letter to ensure that you include all information required. Experience has shown that vague language and missing information can cause problems after the postdoc arrives on campus.
- ❑ Provide some sort of welcome activity; greet and introduce the postdoc to lab members on the first day and ensure that there is a designated workspace arranged.
- ❑ Ensure that the postdoc meets with the postdoc administrator to sign all appropriate documents and is informed about health benefits, “time off,” sick leave, etc.

2. ORIENTATION TO THE POSTDOC EXPERIENCE, TO UCSF, TO THE DISCIPLINARY PROFESSION, TO THE LAB, AND TO THE MENTOR/MENTEE RELATIONSHIP. For example,

- ❑ Discuss the source of funding for the postdoctoral salary. Is the postdoc expected to obtain an outside fellowship or is s/he to be paid by the PI’s research or training grants?
- ❑ Explicitly discuss with your postdoc the scientific and educational expectations of the fellowship, training grant, etc. and ask if s/he has questions.
- ❑ Explicitly discuss the postdoc’s expectations of the mentor/mentee relationship.
- ❑ Inform the postdoc of available resources in your lab and at UCSF that could facilitate the start-up period.
- ❑ Ideally, these first four items should be discussed and agreed upon by both the postdoc and the potential mentor before either commits to the appointment.

- ❑ Alert your postdoc to support from the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and procedures for conflict resolution per APM 390. (Contact Dr. Christine D. Des Jarlais, Assistant Dean for Postdoctoral Affairs; 476-1558 or desjarlais@saa.ucsf.edu).
- ❑ Encourage the postdoc to let you know right away should s/he ever feel treated unfairly or encounter any problems, and carefully follow up on any such concerns.
- ❑ Encourage the postdoc to become an active mentor to graduate students.

3. BUILDING TRUST

- ❑ A mentoring relationship takes time to build.
- ❑ Aim to be a wise and trusted counselor. Mentoring is a mindset, an opportunity to build a relationship through the research project and by doing simple joint activities (e.g., informal conversation over a cup of coffee; attending a lecture together).
- ❑ Ask your postdoc about his/her goals and respect and accept those goals.
- ❑ Don't try to "overdirect" the postdoc, but be direct and honest if a problem has arisen.
- ❑ Encourage feedback from the postdoc regarding his/her need for guidance in particular areas.
- ❑ Engage in a conversation when you are not distracted and can focus on the postdoc's concerns. Try arranging a regular meeting time (uninterrupted by phone calls, e-mails, etc.) to share your knowledge, personal experiences, and love for science with the postdoc.
- ❑ Watch for depression, fatigue, isolation, pessimism, and difficulty concentrating.
- ❑ Remember the goal: To help the postdoc gain the appropriate experience in order to advance his/her scientific abilities and to pursue a satisfying professional career.

4. EDUCATION/TRAINING

- ❑ Explicitly instruct the postdoc in rigorous experimental design, careful analysis of data, effective problem-solving strategies, and critical interpretation of the scientific literature.
- ❑ Inform the postdoc of available resources and be willing to refer him/her to someone else for help/information (e.g., materials, equipment and expertise in other labs).
- ❑ Discuss a timeline for progress in the research project.
- ❑ Encourage the postdoc to seek additional mentors.
- ❑ Involve the postdoc in establishing successful collaborations.
- ❑ Involve the postdoc in scientific discussions within lab meetings and/or on an individual basis.
- ❑ Participate in and encourage participation in talks/seminars/educational activities.
- ❑ Provide opportunities for the postdoc to participate in the writing and reviewing of papers and grants.
- ❑ Provide constructive feedback on oral and written communication skills (papers, fellowship/grant applications).

- ❑ Inform the postdoc of skills and procedures required for successful lab management (e.g., budgeting, recruitment strategies) and encourage participation in related seminars.
- ❑ Encourage creativity and independence.
- ❑ Strive to be a role model and foster an environment to ensure the postdoc serves as a role model to graduate students.
- ❑ Discuss scientific conduct in terms of individual and institutional integrity and ethics in scientific research, including intellectual property of the postdoc. For more information about intellectual property, go to the UCSF Office of Technology Management (<http://www.otm.ucsf.edu/>).

5. EVALUATION

- ❑ The mentor shall conduct periodic reviews with the postdoctoral scholar at least once per year (per APM 390-25a).
- ❑ The Postdoctoral Scholar will be given a written evaluation upon his/her request (per APM 390-25a).
- ❑ The review will assess the postdoc's progress to date, strengths, areas needing improvement, and potential for a research career in the discipline.
- ❑ The review may include a set of activities/expectations for the following year.
- ❑ All written evaluations – should they be requested by the postdoctoral scholar – shall be signed by the faculty mentor and the postdoc and kept on file in the postdoc administrator's office.
- ❑ If the mentor anticipates or recognizes a serious problem with the postdoc's work performance or conduct, then the mentor should review "*APM 390-50 – Corrective Action and Dismissal*" for proper procedures and contact the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs at 476-1558.
- ❑ Maintain open communication with the postdoc regarding career goals and options. Include a periodic review of mutual expectations.
- ❑ Offer frank and candid assessment of the postdoc's potential to become an independent investigator.
- ❑ Ask the postdoc periodically if there is anything you can do to further improve the experience.

6. CAREER PREPARATION

- ❑ Since the postdoc appointment is assumed to be a stepping stone to a career, postdocs and their mentors should discuss career plans and job search strategies.
- ❑ Support/encourage the postdoc to present their work at scientific meetings.
- ❑ Help the postdoc engage in networking (e.g., introduce him/her to colleagues at meetings or by phone/email).
- ❑ Play an active role in the postdoc's job search (e.g., advice on application letters, CVs, interviews, presentations).
- ❑ Consider asking the postdoc to be a co-author of invited book chapters/review articles, when time permits.
- ❑ Offer opportunities for the postdoc to develop supervisory skills through training students and other research staff.

- ❑ Encourage the postdoc to participate in career development seminars and activities sponsored by the UCSF Career Center: <http://saawwww.ucsf.edu/career/> and Academic Enrichment Program: <http://student.ucsf.edu/enrich/home.jsp>.
- ❑ Encourage the postdoc to actively seek opportunities for professional experience and advancement (e.g., volunteer on committees, help organize scientific meetings/retreats).

7. AREAS REQUIRING SENSITIVITY

- ❑ Minority issues. Promote inclusiveness.
- ❑ Cultural issues (especially pertaining to international postdocs): If the mentor is not familiar with a particular culture, it is of great importance to demonstrate willingness to communicate with and to understand each postdoc as a unique individual.
- ❑ Gender issues.
- ❑ Sexual Orientation issues.
- ❑ Disability issues.
- ❑ Family responsibilities. Both women and men can face challenging family issues; mentors should be alert to postdocs who need extra support when having a child, raising a child alone, returning to school after child-rearing, caring for an elderly parent, etc.
- ❑ For Childbearing, Parental, and Family & Medical Leave policies, please refer to APM 390-62, which in turn refers to “APM 715-Family and Medical Leave,” “APM 760-25, Childbearing Leave,” and “APM 760-27, Parental Leave Without Pay.” (<http://www.ucop.edu/acadadv/acadpers/apm/welcome.html>).
- ❑ Sexual Harassment. Inappropriate closeness between mentors and postdocs will produce personal, ethical, and legal consequences not only for the persons involved but also for the programs or institutions of which they are part. Be guided by common sense. Even consensual relationships between a mentor and postdoc are highly inappropriate. For the UCSF policy on sexual harassment, go to: <http://www.ucsf.edu/oshpr/policies/policy.html>
- ❑ Be careful that friendship with a postdoc doesn’t turn into favoritism. Resolve to treat postdocs in your lab as equitably as possible.

TIPS ON WRITING LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

- ❑ Make sure you have a current CV and a description of the desired position before you write the letter.
- ❑ Be relevant. Describe qualities or achievements related to the position under consideration.
- ❑ Be honest in your assessment of the postdoc.
- ❑ Be honest with readers about the extent of your knowledge based on personal interaction with the postdoc.
- ❑ Be specific about skills, abilities, potential, etc. Be quantitative when possible. Give specific examples or anecdotes to support your general statements.
- ❑ Keep copies of previous letters to serve as starting points for future letters.

BENEFITS TO THE MENTOR

- ❑ Personal and professional satisfaction.
- ❑ Reputation as a good mentor will attract high quality postdocs.
- ❑ Good mentoring facilitates staying on top of your field.
- ❑ Being a mentor extends your network.
- ❑ Being a mentor extends your contribution to the scientific enterprise.

LINKS TO POSTDOC MENTORING RESOURCES:

UCSF Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
Dr. Christine D. Des Jarlais
Assistant Dean for Postdoctoral Affairs
Woods Building, Lower Level, Box 0523
100 Medical Center Way
tel: 476-1558
fax: 514-0844
desjarlais@saa.ucsf.edu

UCSF Postdoc Affairs Website
<http://postodcs.ucsf.edu>

UCSF Postdoctoral Scholars Association (PSA)
<http://saa49.ucsf.edu/psa/>

UCSF Career Center
<http://saawww.ucsf.edu/career/>

UCSF Office of Student Academic Enrichment (for postdocs too)
<http://student.ucsf.edu/enrich/home.jsp>

UCSF Office of Sexual Harassment, Prevention & Resolution
<http://www.ucsf.edu/oshpr/>

National Postdoc Association
<http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/>

UC Academic Personnel Manual Policy 390, Appointment and Promotion, Postdoctoral Scholars
<http://www.ucop.edu/acadadv/acadpers/apm/apm-390.pdf>

Postdoc Jobs
<http://www.post-docs.com/>

Website listings of American Universities (with links to international universities, Canadian universities and community colleges)
<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/CLAS/american-universities.html>

Writing Letters of Recommendation for Academic Jobs
http://www.mla.org/Job_counseling/125044.htm

Form for Individual Development Plan for Postdocs
<http://www.faseb.org/opar/ppp/educ/idp.html>

Postdoc Annual Review Form
http://www.faseb.org/opar/ppp/educ/idp_annrev.html