

 **MU Postdoctoral Association**

Postdoctoral scholars are an indispensable part of the research enterprise and community at academic institutions like the University of Missouri, Columbia. As such, postdoctoral scholars are entitled to basic rights during their employment. The following rights were assembled based on recommendations from the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) and feedback received from an online survey conducted by the University of Missouri Postdoctoral Association (MUPA) of the current postdoctoral community at MU in August and September 2014.

As defined by a recent study conducted by the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine¹, a postdoctoral scholar (postdoc) is “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.” In this document, “University” or “MU” refers to the University of Missouri, Columbia and covers any postdoc employed at the University.

MU Postdoctoral Scholar Bill of Rights

- 1) Postdocs should have open lines of communication with the administration, through a postdoctoral office or academic position with the responsibility to oversee postdoctoral scholars, and a postdoctoral association comprised of current MU postdocs.
- 2) The postdoctoral office and postdoctoral association should have access to contact information for all current and active postdocs employed at MU, so that important information can be communicated to the entire postdoctoral community (though individual postdocs may opt out). Toward this end, MU should be able to list all currently active and employed postdocs.
- 3) MU should adopt a clear definition of “postdoc” and ascribe to each postdoc the appropriate employment category (*e.g.*, fellow, scholar, employee, etc.).
- 4) MU should provide a central handbook, website, or document that details all University policies relevant to postdocs. Among other resources, this should include information on available services, programs, and benefits; the implications of funding support from training grants (individual and institutional) versus research grants; authorship and intellectual property policies; and an overview of conflict resolution and misconduct policies. New postdoctoral scholars should be sent or linked to this handbook, at the latest, when their appointment begins.

¹National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine. *The Postdoctoral Experience Revisited*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2014.

- 5) MU should establish a minimum salary or stipend for all postdocs that scales with postdoctoral experience.
- 6) MU should provide postdocs with a benefits package comparable to the package received by other employees at the University, including family-friendly benefits such as parental leave. Benefits and related expectations, such as holidays and vacation time, should be clearly stated in the postdoc's contract.
- 7) MU, in collaboration with the postdoctoral association, should conduct exit surveys of postdocs who have completed or are about to complete their postdoctoral training. Postdocs who complete the exit survey can request a certificate of completion of postdoctoral work from the University. These actions will enable the University and postdoctoral association to gain feedback about the effectiveness of the postdoctoral experience at MU and track the careers of postdoctoral alumni.
- 8) Postdocs should have access to clearly-defined conflict resolution policies and resources for issues including misconduct, grievances, authorship, and intellectual property disputes.
- 9) Postdocs should be represented on institutional committees, such as search committees for the hiring of administrators where graduate and/or professional student representation is sought (*e.g.* hires in the Offices of Research or Graduate Studies). Postdocs should also have the opportunity to serve on relevant departmental committees.
- 10) MU should ensure that all grants that are used to support postdocs include funds to support the professional development of the postdoc, in addition to salary and benefits. At a minimum this should include travel and lodging funds to attend at least one national meeting per year.
- 11) MU and the postdoctoral association should together provide an environment conducive for the proper mentoring of postdocs. This includes training programs for mentors, a list of guidelines/expectations for mentors and postdocs, career development opportunities specific to postdocs, programs or mechanisms that promote mentoring from other MU faculty and professionals apart from the postdoc's immediate adviser.
- 12) Postdocs should have access to university facilities and services at faculty or student levels, as appropriate for the service provided. Examples include the fitness center, career center, international center, and diversity offices.