

# **University of Alabama at Birmingham**

## **Office of Postdoctoral Education**

### **2011-2012 Handbook**

**Office of Postdoctoral Education  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome to the UAB Office of Postdoctoral Education!.....	1
THE POSTDOCTORAL EXPERIENCE.....	2
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES .....	3
Postdoctoral Dispute Resolution Procedure.....	3
Postdoctoral Part-Time Positions Policy .....	5
APPOINTMENT INFORMATION .....	6
Definition .....	6
Types of Appointments.....	7
The Appointment Process .....	8
Length of Appointment.....	10
Re-Appointments .....	10
Change in Status .....	10
Appointment Protection .....	10
Compensation .....	11
Orientation .....	11
International Scholar & Student Services (ISSS) .....	11
Postdoc Obligations .....	12
Mentor Obligations * .....	13
Postdoctoral Scholar Tracking System .....	13
UAB Postdoctoral Association .....	13
GETTING STARTED INFORMATION .....	14
Alabama Driver’s License .....	14
Social Security Office .....	14
Voter Registration.....	14
Off Campus Housing .....	14
Student Housing.....	14
Child Care .....	14
BENEFITS AND SERVICES .....	15
Benefits .....	15
Benefits Eligibility Table.....	15
University Paid Benefits .....	16
Voluntary Employee Paid Benefits.....	17
Other Benefits .....	17
Professional Development Classes .....	18
Career Enhancement Awards.....	18
Legacy Community Federal Credit Union.....	18
Credit Card.....	18
Loan .....	19
Vacation Leave .....	19
Sick Leave.....	19
Maternity/Paternity Leave .....	19
Counseling .....	20
M.A.R.S. ....	20

## **Welcome to the UAB Office of Postdoctoral Education!**

The University of Alabama at Birmingham is committed to the development and success of outstanding postdoctoral scientists. Here at UAB, our 230+ postdoctoral scholars are training currently in a variety of disciplines, including dentistry, engineering, health professions, medicine, natural sciences and mathematics, public health, optometry, and social and behavioral sciences. Career development opportunities to enhance and define the training experience are available to all postdoctoral scholars. Because of its commitment to the success of postdoctoral scholars, *UAB ranks consistently as one of the top ten locations among US universities for training postdoctoral scholars.*

The UAB Office of Postdoctoral Education (OPE) was established in 1999 and was one of the first postdoctoral offices in the country. Since its inception, the OPE has instrumental in establishing and maintaining competitive terms, benefits and training programs for all postdoctoral scholars. It works closely with the University's academic administration, the UAB Council on Postdoctoral Education and the UAB Postdoctoral Association to address the needs and concerns of postdoctoral scholars in a timely and professional manner.

The goal of the OPE is to provide postdoctoral scholars with the opportunities and skills they need to be successful in their chosen careers. The possibilities for academic and research-related careers are ever changing; as such, we strive to prepare postdoctoral scholars for these possibilities. In doing so, the OPE is dedicated to making UAB the first choice among postdoctoral scholars as a place to work, live and succeed!

If you are considering a postdoctoral position here at UAB or are already in residence, we welcome your suggestions and look forward to working with you!

Best regards,

Lisa M. Schwiebert, PhD  
Associate Dean  
Office of Postdoctoral Education

## THE POSTDOCTORAL EXPERIENCE

Approximately 230 postdoctoral scholars are on the University of Alabama at Birmingham campus. They have received their terminal degree and are pursuing further training under the direction of a faculty member (mentor). The University of Alabama at Birmingham views the postdoctoral experience as one in which an environment is cultivated that will encourage research excellence, leadership qualities, and independent thinking.

The Office of Postdoctoral Education (OPE) was established in April 1999 to address the rising concerns of this unique and valued sector of the University's population, and falls under the stewardship of The Graduate School. Policies regarding postdoctoral training are the responsibility of the Associate Dean of the Office of Postdoctoral Education along with the Council of Postdoctoral Education (COPE), a committee of postdoctoral scholars and senior and junior faculty. Final authority for all postdoctoral decisions rests with the Graduate School Dean. The OPE at UAB is responsible for facilitating the goals of postdoctoral scholars and their mentors who arrange for training and offer terms of appointment in accordance with established policies.

The OPE will strive to identify primary responsibilities and clear expectations of both the postdoctoral scholar and the faculty mentor, to aid in transition to a postdoctoral environment, and to ensure a worthwhile postdoctoral experience that reflects the balanced interests of both postdoctoral scholar and faculty mentor. However, the ultimate responsibility for the success of a postdoctoral appointment rests with the research mentor. Periodic verbal and written evaluation of progress is strongly encouraged. Similarly, a major role of the OPE is to provide opportunities for identification and acquisition of skills needed for successful career development.

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## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

UAB establishes policies and procedures in order to provide an environment that is conducive to working, learning, and providing services to the public. Such policies include guidelines for employees, for the administration, for protecting employees' rights, and for providing an atmosphere in which one's best potential can be realized.

Included in the packet of information for a new postdoc is a copy of Policy 22. Policy Concerning the Maintenance of High Ethical Standards in Research and Other Scholarly Activities. This is one of the guiding principals and core value for which postdoctoral scholars and all UAB researchers will adhere. Please take the time to read this policy and understand your obligation as a member of the UAB community of researchers.

In signing the letters of offer, the postdoctoral scholar agrees to abide by this policy and all UAB policies and standards of conduct. Other policies which affect a postdoctoral scholar can be found in published materials such as Faculty Handbook and Policies, You and UAB: Handbook for Administrative Professional and Support Personnel or the complete Policies and Procedures Manual located at the Human Resource Management website at <http://main.uab.edu/show.asp?durki=44370>.

### **Postdoctoral Dispute Resolution Procedure**

The Dispute Resolution Procedure for Postdoctoral Scholars of the University of Alabama at Birmingham is an internal mechanism designed to assure prompt and impartial consideration of complaints that may arise in the workplace. The Dispute Resolution Procedure is available to all Postdoctoral Scholars. UAB Postdoctoral Scholars may use this Procedure without penalty or fear of reprisal.

The Dispute Resolution Procedure is a two-step process. A formal grievance may be invoked only after the prospective grievant has first reported the basis for his/her dispute to the Associate Dean for Postdoctoral Education (Associate Dean). The Associate Dean shall have a reasonable opportunity to resolve the dispute informally before a grievance can be initiated. If the Associate Dean's effort to resolve the dispute is unsuccessful, he will notify the Postdoctoral Scholar of his/her right to initiate a formal grievance.

In order to initiate a grievance, a Postdoctoral Scholar must provide a written statement to the Associate Dean in which he/she states specifically the facts believed to support the charge and the desired outcome no later than thirty days following notification from the Associate Dean that a formal grievance may be initiated. After having determined that the facts stated by the Postdoctoral Scholar may be grieved, the Associate Dean shall notify the responding party that a grievance has been filed, shall provide a copy of the charge, and shall allow the responding party five (5) work days in which to provide to the Associate Dean his/her response to the allegation(s) made by the grievant.

Guidelines for assessment and monitoring the performance of Postdoctoral Scholars in all aspects of their position are defined in You and UAB Handbook for Administrative, Professional, and Support Personnel. Guidelines in respect of scientific conduct are defined in Faculty Handbook and Policies. Both documents can be found at <http://main.uab.edu/show.asp?durki=59601>.

Following receipt of the statement from the responding party, the Associate Dean will select a committee of three faculty members and two postdoctoral fellows to hear the grievance and shall provide to the Committee the written statements of the parties. The faculty members chosen to serve on the Committee shall not have had prior knowledge of the issue(s) grieved. After having chosen one of their number to be chairperson, the Committee shall determine the date of the grievance hearing and shall notify the parties of the date and time of the hearing, which shall not be sooner than five (5) work days from the date notification is sent to the parties by the Committee.

Each party shall be required to provide to the Committee a list of potential supporting witnesses, if any, and a brief statement describing what information each witness has regarding the facts at issue. A witness should be a person with first-hand knowledge of facts pertinent to the resolution of the issue(s) grieved.

The formal grievance hearing shall not be bound by formal rules of evidence or judicial rules of procedure. The Committee may hear any testimony or receive any supporting evidence that it deems to be pertinent to the issue(s) grieved. Both the grievant and the responding party may be present throughout the hearing. The grievant may also be accompanied by an advisor of his/her choosing, however, the advisor may not participate in the hearing, other than to advise the grievant.

The grievant shall be afforded a reasonable opportunity to be heard, to question witnesses indirectly through the Committee, to rebut adverse evidence, and to make a brief closing statement. Members of the Committee may ask any questions at any time during the hearing and may elect to disallow or to curtail testimony that the Committee determines to be unnecessarily redundant or not probative of the issue(s) being heard. Throughout the hearing, all persons present shall conduct themselves in an orderly manner.

The Committee shall be responsible for the conduct of the hearing at all times. Hearings before the Committee are confidential proceeding and only those persons determined by the Committee to have a need to be present shall be included. Except for the grievant, the responding party and the advisor of the grievant, if any, all other witnesses shall be excluded from the hearing room, except when testifying. No more than one witness shall be called to testify at a time.

All questioning of witnesses shall be by the Committee unless the Committee shall decide otherwise. Although the specific procedure for the conduct of the hearing may vary somewhat, the process shall generally include the following: (1) call to order by the Chair; (2) introduction of those present; (3) statement of the issue(s) grieved; (4) presentation of the evidence and testimony in support of the issue(s) grieved; (5) questioning of grievant's witnesses; (6) presentation of evidence and testimony in opposition to the charge; (7) questioning of responding party's witnesses; (8) closing statements.

As soon as practical following the conclusion of the hearing, the Committee shall meet in private session to consider all of the evidence presented, and shall decide on one of two outcomes. The outcome shall be determined by a “preponderance of the evidence” standard, that is, that the facts more likely than not either prove or disprove the issue(s) before the Committee. The decision of the Committee shall be that the issue(s) is either (1) proven by a preponderance of the evidence or (2) not proven by a preponderance of the evidence. Following their deliberations, the Committee shall provide a brief narrative statement explaining its finding(s) and a summary of the supporting facts. The Committee’s written decision shall be transmitted to the Associate Dean for appropriate action. The Associate Dean shall notify the grievant and the responding party of the committee’s decision and any action to be taken as a result of the Committee’s findings.

Upon notification to the grievant of an adverse outcome, the Associate Dean shall also advise the grievant of his/her right to appeal the Committee’s decision in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School. An appeal to the Graduate School Dean shall be limited to the presentation of new, previously unavailable evidence, and/or the identification of procedural error in the hearing process.

After a review of any new evidence presented on appeal and a review of the process afforded the grievant, the Graduate School Dean shall notify the grievant, the responding party and the Associate Dean of his/her decision, which shall be final.

### **Policy for Postdoctoral Part-Time Positions**

A postdoctoral position is a full-time position of one to four years, training scientists/researchers for career advancement. Only in rare cases should a postdoctoral position be part-time and usually for short periods of time. A postdoc may request his/her position be changed to part-time or enter a position as part-time because of a variety of reasons including the birth of a child, care for an ill or injured family member or his/her own physical impairments. A position cannot be part-time due to lack of funds to meet the NIH minimum salary/stipend standards.

Documentation from both the mentor and the postdoctoral scholar requesting a part-time position should include the reason for the request, number of hours, projected length of time, and salary. This information must be received before the letter of offer or reappointment letter will be issued.

## **APPOINTMENT INFORMATION**

### **Definition**

Because the term "fellow" is used to describe a large variety of positions, the designation of "Postdoctoral Scholar" is used at UAB to identify those individuals who have received their terminal degree (such as PhD, MD, DDS, DVM, OD), and who have opted to pursue further training. This period of training is a standard component in the preparation of performing research in the sciences. A postdoctoral position is a time-limited appointment, the primary purpose of which is to provide research and/or scholarly training for an academic or research career. Postdoctoral scholars may be funded by training grants, research grants, or institutional resources.

A postdoctoral scholar at UAB is expected to:

- participate in a full-time regimen of advanced training and research
- train under the supervision and direction of a faculty research mentor who will provide the opportunity for collaborative and independent research, as well as promote publication of findings as determined by mutual agreement between the postdoctoral scholar and the mentor
- training as a postdoc includes all relevant academic activities related to the preparation for a career in research or academia. These are typically; manuscript preparation of research findings, reading broadly the literature, manuscript reviewing, presentations at meetings, attendance and presentation at seminars, organization and attendance at training related activities (including Grantsmanship workshops) and limited training in teaching related activities. All these activities should have the objective of enhancing the performance of the postdoc in the pursuit of the research related projects from which they draw their support. In many cases the training component of a postdoctoral fellowship may involve the joint preparation and development of proposals for extramural funding
- have a temporary appointment, usually for a period of one year with the possibility of annual re-appointment for up to an additional three years, for a total not to exceed four years unless by exception of the Associate Dean of the Office of Postdoctoral Education
- have been awarded a Fellowship or Traineeship or equivalent support for studies at the postdoctoral level

It is strongly recommended that a person who falls into one of the following categories NOT be appointed as a postdoctoral scholar:

- registered students or candidates for a degree at UAB even if they already hold a doctoral degree
- registered Residents and Clinic Fellows
- individuals appointed for less than one year

## Types of Appointments

Upon appointment, a postdoctoral scholar is assigned to one of two distinct categories for payroll and taxation purposes:

**Status Code 20:** A Postdoctoral **Trainee** is an individual who is receiving a true fellowship, as defined by the IRS, and receives an amount to aid in the pursuit of research training. This amount cannot represent payment for the performance of any past, present, or future teaching, research, or other services. Postdoctoral trainees are provided health insurance with the opportunity to purchase dental options.

In accordance with IRS regulations, UAB does not withhold federal income taxes on status code 20 postdoc trainees, and the State of Alabama currently excludes fellowships from taxation in their entirety. Therefore, to the extent that a scholarship/fellowship is federally taxable to the individual, that individual will probably have to file federal quarterly estimated income tax returns and pay quarterly taxes in order to comply with individual income tax regulations. (For specific advice on an individual tax situation, a tax professional or the IRS should be contacted. Non-resident aliens should direct their tax questions to the International Scholar and Student Services (ISSS) at (205) 934-3328. Postdoctoral trainees receive benefits as shown under the Benefits section.

In accordance with regulations, federal and state income taxes are not withheld from stipend amount IF YOU ARE A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES. You may be required to file federal quarterly estimated income tax returns and pay quarterly taxes to comply with individual income tax regulations.

It is important to consult an income tax professional or the IRS for advice on this matter.

The IRS booklet, Publication 970, Tax Benefits for Education, can be viewed on-line at: <http://www.irs.gov>. In the Search For field type: Publication 970 and in the Search Within field choose: IRS site. The booklet can be printed out or you may call (800) 829-3676 for a copy to be sent by mail. Additional publications at this site that may help you include:

Publication 421, Scholarships and Fellowship Grants

Publication 355, Estimated Tax

Publication 306, Penalty for Underpayment of Estimated Tax

Publication 505, Tax Withholding and Estimated Tax

State of Alabama income tax website - [www.ador.state.al.us/incometax](http://www.ador.state.al.us/incometax)

Financial Affairs webpage on the UAB web site has a Scholarship & Fellowship section which is very helpful. See "Taxability to Individuals" at <http://main.uab.edu/show.asp?durki=14627>

**Status Code 21:** A Postdoctoral **Employee** is an individual who, while pursuing further training, provides services to UAB for compensation. These postdocs receive a salary, usually as part of an NIH-funded grant. Salaries and wages are fully taxable to the individual providing the services. Postdoctoral employees receive benefits as shown under the Benefits section.

## The Appointment Process

All the following steps must be completed in order for the appointment process to be finalized.

### 1. *Letter of Offer*

All postdoctoral appointments and re-appointments are coordinated through the Office of Postdoctoral Education. A detailed letter of offer on OPE letterhead, signed by the Associate Dean, is sent to the mentor to be signed and forwarded to the potential postdoc. In many cases, the letter of offer needs to be sent several weeks or months prior to the actual starting date (for example, to begin the visa process) and will specify the following:

- department or division to which the postdoc is assigned
- effective date of appointment
- duration of appointment and possibility of re-appointment
- mentor to whom assigned
- annual award/stipend amount
- a brief description of research activities in which the postdoc will be involved and the qualifications needed by the postdoc to complete these activities

Mentors may agree but are not required to provide relocation support to postdoctoral scholars as a part of a recruitment package. If mentors decide to support postdoctoral scholars by providing additional resources, the following must be stated explicitly in the position offer letter.

Postdoctoral 21 (employee)

*“As a part of your start up package, you will receive an incentive of \$\_\_\_\_. This incentive is subject to tax withholdings and will be included through your next direct deposit.”*

Postdoctoral 20 (trainee)

*“As a part of your start up package, you will receive an additional award of \$\_\_\_\_. This additional award is subject to federal tax reporting and will be included through your next direct deposit.”*

The allocation for this allowance cannot exceed \$5,000. Once the postdoctoral scholar is hired, an ACT document will need to be created with the document reason of Nonrecurring Element. The element is “Trainee 1T” for Postdoctoral Trainees (Status 20) and “Start-Up 1T” for Postdoctoral Employee (Status 21).

An accepted offer is signified by the postdoctoral scholar's signature with a copy of the signed letter kept in the Office of Postdoctoral Education. The department will keep the original letters.

International Candidates: If the prospective scholar will need assistance in entering the USA, the Department will contact UAB International Scholar and Student Services (ISSS) when the letter of offer is ready to be mailed. ISSS will process visa information and forward to the postdoc.

## ***2. Status Letter***

A second, equally important letter will be generated when the department establishes the funding source(s). The status letter provides details concerning the type of appointment (status code) and how that status code affects their benefits and taxes. See types of appointments above.

Signed copies of both the letter of offer and the status letter should be forwarded to the department administrator or to the mentor who should provide copies to the Office of Postdoctoral Education.

## ***3. Proof of Degree***

The letter of offer states that the appointment is contingent upon receipt of written confirmation that a terminal degree has been awarded. Proof of the degree is required by the appointment date. Proof of degree can be a transcript showing the awarding of the degree, an actual copy of the degree, or statement of completion, **translated into English if necessary**.

If the terminal degree has not yet been awarded at the time of appointment, but all requirements have been completed leading to the award, a letter must be submitted to the OPE from the Graduate School or Director of the degree program confirming that the degree is forthcoming.

Appointment to the UAB system will not be finalized until proof of degree is received by the Office of Postdoctoral Education.

## ***4. Copy of Curriculum Vitae***

An up-to-date copy of the curriculum vitae is required at the time of appointment for our files.

## ***5. Postdoctoral Scholar Personal Data Form***

The Postdoctoral Scholar Personal Data Form should be completed within the first month after arrival of the new postdoc. This form provides the necessary information required for the purpose of complying with federal reporting requirements and establishing averages that can be used to compare UAB standards with those on the national level. This information is confidential and will be kept in individual personnel files located in the OPE. **The OPE will use the current e-mail address provided on the Postdoctoral Scholar Personal Data Form to communicate with postdocs regarding upcoming career enhancement awards, seminars, positions, funding opportunities, etc. A new Postdoctoral Scholar Personal Data Form will need to be completed at the time of re-appointment each year to update our postdoc database.**

## ***6. Departmental Personnel Officer***

The postdoc should also contact their Departmental Personnel Officer as soon as possible after their arrival. The Departmental Personnel Officer will also need additional documents completed in order to process the postdoc's appointment into the UAB system.

## **Length of Appointment**

A postdoctoral position is a short-term, training position which should lead to a research career in academics, private industry, or government. Appointments are established for an initial period of one year, with the possibility of being re-appointed annually for an additional three years, not to exceed a total of four years. A four year time period for postdoctoral training has become the recommended length for most universities. A time-limited appointment protects the postdoc from an indefinite length of stay in a training position and is an adequate period for transition into full time positions with appropriate salaries and benefits.

In some cases, a faculty member may wish to extend an individual's postdoctoral appointment beyond the fourth year. If so, a written request to the Associate Dean of the Office of Postdoctoral Education should be made before the end of the postdoc's fourth year. Requests for a fifth year must include a mutually agreed upon and detailed career development plan for the postdoc signed by both the mentor and the postdoc. In all cases, appointment as a postdoctoral scholar at UAB is limited to a period not to exceed five years.

## **Re-Appointments**

Postdoctoral scholars are appointed for one year periods and must be re-appointed every year on their anniversary date if they continue in training. The department personnel representative or mentor will notify the OPE that a re-appointment letter must be generated through the OPE during the month prior to the yearly end date. The re-appointment letter will be signed by the Associate Dean of the Office of Postdoctoral Education, the mentor, and the postdoctoral scholar. If the mentor does not intend to re-appoint the postdoc for another year, the mentor must notify the postdoc in writing three months prior to the re-appointment date. Following the first year of appointment and in subsequent years, if it is apparent that funding will no longer be available, a minimum of three months notice must be given to the postdoc by the mentor

## **Change in Status**

Whenever a postdoctoral scholar's funding is changed requiring a change in status (21 to 20 or 20 to 21), a new letter of offer must be generated by the Office of Postdoctoral Education showing the new status and duties.

## **Appointment Protection**

The initial letter of offer specifies that the term of appointment at the University of Alabama at Birmingham as a postdoctoral scholar is for one year, subject to all rules and regulations, and can be renewed up to three more years (Four (4) years total). Postdoctoral scholars must be notified by their mentors in writing at least three months in advance that their appointment will not be renewed for the next year. Under special circumstances, postdoctoral scholars may be eligible for a fifth year of training, with the approval of the Associate Dean for Postdoctoral Education.

## **Compensation**

All mentors at the University of Alabama at Birmingham are strongly encouraged to follow the National Institutes of Health, National Research Service Award (NRSA) stipend level guidelines. The current ranges for years of experience can be found at the NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts or at the UAB postdoc Web site, [www.postdocs.uab.edu](http://www.postdocs.uab.edu).

If it is impossible to fund according to the NRSA guidelines, **the minimum starting salary at UAB is \$35,190.00 plus benefits.**

## **Orientation**

All UAB postdoctoral scholars are required to attend a general UAB orientation program conducted weekly by Human Resource Management (HRM). This orientation is an important component of the introduction to UAB. Personnel policies and benefits are discussed and benefit enrollment forms are completed during orientation.

Once a postdoctoral scholar has been appointed, he/she should be scheduled to attend the next regular orientation session which are usually held on Mondays. The appropriate department personnel can contact HRM (205) 934-6272 to accomplish this.

In conjunction with the regular orientation, a personalized session will be conducted for postdoctoral scholars by HRM staff. During this time, postdocs will be given the opportunity to ask questions and to receive individualized explanations of their benefits and responsibilities, and to complete enrollment forms.

All new postdocs at UAB are also required to attend a Postdoc Orientation during their first year. This Orientation is scheduled twice a year. Communication about the dates and times will be posted on the Office of Postdoctoral Education Web site, by e-mail and by flyers posted around campus. This Orientation introduces new postdocs to representatives from a number of important areas but usually aren't familiar with until later in their training. Representatives may include Institutional Review Board, Conflict of Interest Review Board, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, Occupational Health and Safety Office, Grants and Contracts Administration, Research Foundation, UAB Postdoctoral Association, among others. The program is usually 2 hours, mid-day and lunch is provided.

## **International Scholar & Student Services (ISSS)**

ISSS is responsible for advising and assisting international postdocs in matters of immigration, federal and state taxation, and orientation to the Birmingham community. ISSS also serves as a collaborative resource center that facilitates, promotes and strengthens international understanding. Administrative offices are located in room 250, Hill University Center. Phone (205) 934-3328. See the webpage for the ISSS Handbook and frequently asked questions. Webpage address is <http://students.uab.edu/to-do-list/show.asp?durki=4224> .

## Postdoc Obligations

- **Overall:** Acquire the experiences they need to advance their careers and contribute to the program of their mentor through research accomplishments and interaction with others. Meeting both objectives is most likely when the mentor and postdoc communicate well and share similar expectations.
- **Conduct:** Participate in the research project(s) outlined in discussions with the faculty mentor and to regularly inform the mentor of the research activity; to exercise ethical standards of the profession and of the University; to exhibit good laboratory practice and comply with guidelines for the use of human subjects and animals in research; to exhibit collegial conduct to his/her mentor, coworkers, and members of the University community; and to comply with University, School, departmental and funding agency policies and procedures.
- **Career Development:** Postdocs (with the support of their mentors) must take ownership of their professional development. They need to learn not only the use of new research tools, but also ways to access special resources (such as national and international labs, centers, and multi-user facilities) and to keep up with the exploding streams of scientific communication.

The chances for a satisfying career can be increased through regular attendance at seminars, “getting known” through publications and meeting attendance, course work related to the area of research, integrating research into teaching experiences, developing possible collaborations, and developing skills in grant writing, reviewing, and oral and written communication. This “continuing education” can increase versatility and the change for a rewarding career.

Intrinsic to “taking ownership” of a career is the element of taking control, of making and seizing opportunities. Timidity is not productive. Rather than waiting for invitations or instructions, successful postdocs ask for what they need, find their own new resources, meet new people, and solicit invitations to speak about their work. Developing a proactive mindset hastens the journey from student to professional. Not all advisers will welcome such initiatives. Their negative reactions can often be ameliorated by improved communication. In very difficult situations, the postdoc may need to consider an alternative situation.

- **Communication:** Communication is an essential responsibility of both postdoc and mentor. Postdocs must clearly articulate the skills or training they need; mentors must clearly explain the needs of the laboratory or institution. These needs are most likely to be met if the postdoc steps forward with questions and if the mentor takes the time to listen. The postdoc must also communicate with the institution when help is required.
- **Contributing to the institution:** The more postdocs are able to support the program of their mentor, the greater their value as team members. This can lead to a richer research

experience, the respect of other group members, and support in developing a career in the future. In addition to getting the work done, good practices include keeping up with the latest advances, communicating them to others (including the mentor), and interacting regularly with others in both the group and the institution. Expectations about the postdoc's contributions to the immediate community should be discussed carefully with the mentor and other lab members.

- **Planning for departure:** Departure should not be delayed without good reason; the postdoc should neither be pressured to work indefinitely for the mentor, nor become overly comfortable in what should be a finite apprenticeship. If success in the research has proved elusive, the postdoc may be tempted to extend the stay, even indefinitely.

\*From *Enhancing the Postdoctoral Experience for Scientists and Engineering, A Guide for Postdoctoral Scholars, Advisers, Institutions, Funding Organizations, and Disciplinary Societies*, National Academy Press, Washington, DC. For complex text see: <http://www.nap.edu/books/0309069963/html>

### **Mentor Obligations \***

Postdoctoral research opportunities at the University of Alabama at Birmingham are intended to foster the training of basic and clinical research scientists. Included within this goal is the concept that postdoctoral scholars, with the guidance of their mentors, will develop a scientific project that utilizes the creativity and independence of the scholar. In this spirit, the mentor will provide adequate facilities, funds and the appropriate guidance to achieve the agreed upon goals of the project. In addition, mentors should provide guidance in critical review of scientific information, grant writing, manuscript writing and preparation and in the art of performing research. Mentors should also advise and, as possible, aid scholars in decisions regarding future employment potential and career paths. Mentor review of postdoctoral scholar performance and career development should be conducted at least once per year. Unsatisfactory job performance or failure to comply with University standards of conduct should be discussed with the postdoc and documented in writing.

\*Adapted from Emory University Office of Postdoctoral Education website at <http://www.med.emory.edu/POSTDOC/>.

### **Postdoctoral Scholar Tracking System**

The Office of Postdoctoral Education maintains a postdoctoral database that contains information on postdoctoral scholars within the UAB system. This information is obtained from the Postdoctoral Scholar Personal Data Form that is required from each postdoc upon their initial appointment and each year at their re-appointment. This information is kept in the postdoc's individual folder. The principal purpose for compiling the information is to comply with federal reporting requirements, but also to give the University an accurate base from which to establish standard minimum salaries, and to track appointments that involve more than one department.

### **UAB Postdoctoral Association**

The UAB Postdoctoral Association (UAB-PDA) submitted a constitution and bylaws to the postdoctoral community in April 2004. Ratification was given at the first UAB-PDA meeting on May 4, 2004. Executive Board and officers are listed on the postdoctoral webpage.

## **GETTING STARTED INFORMATION**

A new postdoctoral scholar at UAB has many resources to help in the transition to a new community and new research environment. These resources include the mentor, fellow lab members, departmental administrators, ISSS for foreign nationals, and the Office of Postdoctoral Education. Please make use of all or as many as needed to help smooth the way.

Additionally, the OPE has a group of volunteers who are available to answer questions about UAB, the community or any other problem that might be encountered. These volunteers are postdocs who have probably been through many of the same situations and can eliminate unnecessary effort when searching for answers to problems. Many are from other countries and are aware of cultural differences and communication problems. To receive the name and email of one of the UAB-PAT (UAB Postdoctoral Acclimation Team) members, call or email [sharontj@uab.edu](mailto:sharontj@uab.edu). The following is a brief listing of some of the areas that you may need.

### **Alabama Driver's License**

Frequently asked questions at <http://www.dps.state.al.us/dfac.99.html>  
Department of Public Safety, (205) 252-7445  
Open Monday-Friday, 8:00-5:00, 908 Bankhead Highway W

### **Social Security Office**

International postdocs should take the following documents with them to the Social Security office: Passport, I-94 card, Immigration Document (for example, IAP-66 or I-20) - Open Monday-Friday, 9:00-4:00, 1-800-772-1213, 2001 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue North

### **Voter Registration**

Packets may be obtained from: any public library, City Hall, Jefferson County Court Houses, Jefferson County Board of Registrars, (205) 325-5550, 716 21<sup>st</sup> Street North

### **Off Campus Housing**

A variety of types of housing are available for rent. Contact leasing companies or see classified sections of local newspapers for rates, availability and leasing agreements. Birmingham News: <http://www.bhamnews.com>

### **Student Housing**

Student Housing is available to Postdoctoral Trainees (status code 20), as they are engaging in training and are provided stipends from a fellowship (a strictly interpreted training grant). For more information see [StudentHousing@uab.edu](mailto:StudentHousing@uab.edu) at (205) 934-2092.

Student Housing is not available for Postdoctoral Employees (status code 21). At the current time, no facilities are available for married postdocs.

### **Child Care**

The following are some of the child care facilities where UAB postdocs have placed their children. There are many more in the nearby vicinity. Check local yellow pages for others.

UAB Child Development Center, (205) 975-7373 or (205) 934-7353, 1113 15<sup>th</sup> Street South, there is usually a 6-8 week waiting period, [bjordan@uab.edu](mailto:bjordan@uab.edu)

South Highland Presbyterian, (205) 939-1210, 2035 Highland Avenue South near UAB

McElwain Baptist Church, 4445 Montevallo Road, (205) 956-8790, near the Eastwood Mall/Mountain Brook area

Jewish Community Center, 3960 Montclair Road, (205) 879-0411, in Mountain Brook

Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, 1114 Montclair Road, (205) 871-8771, in Homewood

## BENEFITS AND SERVICES

### Benefits

Benefits to postdoctoral scholars vary according to the type of appointment. Due to IRS restrictions placed on non-taxed fellowships, company-paid fringe benefits are not allowed for **Postdoc Trainees (Status Code 20)**. However, VIVA Health Insurance coverage is provided at no cost to the postdoc with the option of purchasing the dental portion of the insurance plan. Because of their unique status as “trainees” who do not receive a salary but rather a stipend, these postdocs are eligible for student housing.

**Postdoc Employees (Status Code 21)**, because of their employee-employer relationship with the University, receive a salary. They also are provided VIVA Health Insurance coverage paid through the University with the option of purchasing the dental portion of the insurance plan. Status Code 21 postdocs are not eligible for student housing.

### Benefits Eligibility Table

Employment Category	Status Code	UAB paid Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance	Employee paid Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance	UAB paid Long Term Disability Insurance
Postdoctoral Scholar <b>Trainee</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes*</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Postdoctoral Scholar <b>Employee</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes*</b>	<b>Yes</b>

Employment Category	Status Code	TIAA-CREF Retirement	Viva Health Insurance	Dental Insurance	UAB paid Group Term Life Insurance
Postdoctoral Scholar Trainee	20	No	Yes	Yes*	Yes
Postdoctoral Scholar Employee	21	Yes Matched up to 5% of salary	Yes	Yes*	Yes

\*individual pays premium

### University Paid Benefits

- **Viva Health Insurance**

VIVA Health is the health care plan provided **for postdoctoral trainees (status code 20) and postdoctoral employees (status code 21)**. The premium for either single or family coverage is paid by the University. Coverage under UAB's group health care plan must be elected on either the first day of appointment or the first day of the month following the date of appointment. The postdoc has **31 days from their starting date to complete hospital insurance forms** either by participating in orientation or by scheduling an appointment with the Benefits Department. Some form of health insurance coverage is mandatory and proof of insurance is required if the University's health insurance is not elected. VIVA Health also covers medical evacuation and repatriation of remains for international postdoctoral scholars.

- **Group Term Life Insurance**

Group Term Life Insurance coverage **varies with salary** as indicated at no cost to the individual.

<u>Annual Salary</u>	<u>Coverage</u>
Up to \$11,999.00	\$22,500.00
\$12,000.00 to \$17,999.00	\$25,200.00
\$18,000.00 to \$23,999.00	\$30,000.00
\$24,000.00 to \$29,999.00	\$37,500.00
\$30,000.00 to \$39,999.00	\$50,000.00
\$40,000.00 and above	125% of salary with a maximum insurance coverage of \$300,000.00

- **Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance**

\$22,500.00 for accidental death.  
No cost to the individual.

- **Long-Term Disability Insurance (Salary Continuation)**

After a 90-day waiting period, 66 ⅔ % monthly salary (not to exceed \$10,000 per month) for the first 90 days of benefits. After 90 days of continued benefits, plan pays 60% monthly salary (not to exceed \$10,000 per month). No cost to the individual.

- **Retirement Plan – TIAA/CREF**

Teachers Insurance & Annuity Association/College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA/CREF). Eligible to participate in the TIAA/CREF 403(b) program on a tax sheltered basis. The program offers the individual a choice as to the distribution of the total deposit to be placed in TIAA (fixed annuity) or CREF (variable annuity). UAB will match the amount that the postdoc contributes, up to 5% of his/her salary. **Available to postdoctoral employees (status code 21) only.**

### **Voluntary Employee Paid Benefits**

- **Postdoctoral Met Life Dental Basic Option**

Preventive and diagnostic are covered at 90% UCR. Basic services are covered at 90% UCR subject to a \$25.00 deductible. The postdoc will pay a monthly premium for single coverage or family coverage.

- **Postdoctoral Met Life Dental Comprehensive Option**

In addition to the basic dental benefits, the comprehensive plan covers major services at 60% UCR subject to the deductible. Orthodontics is covered at 50% UCR up to a \$1,000 lifetime maximum per patient. The postdoc pays the full monthly premium for single coverage or for family coverage.

- **Group Universal Life Insurance Coverage**

Maximum Coverage - Five (5) times salary, not to exceed \$1.4 million

Guaranteed Issue - Three (3) times salary, not to exceed \$100,000 during first 31 days of employment without evidence of insurability. Individual pays full premium.

- **Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance**

Maximum coverage - up to \$500,000. Individual pays full premium.

- **Long-Term Care**

Provides benefits for an array of services including home health care, assisted living facility care, nursing facility care, adult day care and respite care. To enroll in the plan call MetLife at 205-970-9782. Postdoc pays full premium.

### **Other Benefits**

- **Social Security** - Taxes and benefits established by the U.S. Government

- **Unemployment Compensation Insurance** (paid by the University)

- **On-the-Job Injury/Illness Program** (paid by the University)

## Professional Development Classes

The Office of Postdoctoral Education encourages postdoctoral scholars to take advantage of the many classes and seminars offered through the Professional Development Office. The OPE will pay tuition and fee costs for one career development classes per postdoc per year (up to 3 credit hours). A complete listing of these courses can be found on the OPE web page at [www.postdocs.uab.edu](http://www.postdocs.uab.edu) under Career Development, or by going directly to the Professional Development web page at [www.uab.edu/profdev](http://www.uab.edu/profdev)

All courses to be sponsored by the OPE must be approved prior to registration. Once a course has been decided upon, the postdoctoral scholar must contact the Office of Postdoctoral Education by email [sharontj@uab.edu](mailto:sharontj@uab.edu) or at (205) 975-7020 for approval. Upon approval to take the course, the postdoc will fill out the following forms at the Office of Postdoctoral Education:

a non-degree application will be completed (if student has not been admitted)  
registration form, immunization form, and health insurance waiver will be completed  
and a check for the processing fee must be paid by the postdoc

The non-degree application must be received in the graduate school before the registration process is complete. The initial application is handled through the OPE and eliminates unnecessary paperwork on the part of everyone involved. This is the only way to ensure tuition and fees are paid by the OPE. If a course is completed without prior approval, all costs involved will be the responsibility of the individual.

## Awards

- *'Career Enhancement Awards'* - These competitive awards are available to all postdoctoral scholars and provide up to \$1,500 for collaborative research with other universities, attendance at workshops or courses to learn new skills, or performance of science-related internships.
- *'Travel Awards'* - These competitive awards are available to all postdoctoral scholars and provide up to \$500 for travel to national or international scientific meetings for the purpose of giving a poster or oral presentation.
- *'Internship Awards'* - These competitive awards are available to all postdoctoral scholars and will fund up to 1 - 2 awards per year in the amount of \$5000 each to aid scholars in their performance of internships within or outside of UAB. Internships may be performed in an industrial, administrative, or academic setting.
- *'Grant Incentive Awards'* - These competitive awards are available to all postdoctoral scholars and provide up to \$1,000 as a financial incentive designed to encourage Scholars to apply for individual Scholarships. Awarded monies may be utilized to enhance the Scholar's training respective to the funded grant.

## Legacy Community Federal Credit Union

### Credit Card

The Office of Postdoctoral Education is very happy to announce that the Legacy Community Federal Credit Union will offer the opportunity to obtain a **credit card** to newly-arrived foreign

nationals. A postdoc should go to either of the locations near UAB – 1400 South 20<sup>th</sup> Street or 516 South 20<sup>th</sup> Street –open an account for as little as \$25.00 and fill out the application. They will require social security number, the letter of offer showing salary and start date, and another identification such a passport, driver’s license, or US government or military ID.

### **Loan**

Another service that the Legacy Community Federal Credit Union can provide for postdocs is help with unplanned cash flow shortages. A new UAB postdoc can exhaust their available funds quickly when paying deposits on rent, utilities, etc and may require a **small loan** to tide him or her over until they are in the UAB system and receive a paycheck. The Legacy Community Federal Credit Union again can help with this problem. Open an account with them for as little as \$25.00, provide an ID as mentioned previously, social security number, letter of offer, complete the application and they will begin the process.

The Legacy Community Federal Credit Union will not eliminate anyone from their services because of lack of credit history, but will need to know, as all financial institutions do, that an individual’s ability to repay a loan or pay a credit card bill is not hindered from excessive debt. They will need documentation showing salary and have agreed to accept the letter of offer as proof. The application for a loan or credit card will ask about any debt amount owed. After comparison of these two figures, they will determine qualification and notify the applicant about the requested service. For a Foreign National Postdoc acquiring the necessary credit history for a credit card can sometimes take years so we believe that this is a wonderful opportunity for newly arrived postdocs and are very happy to present this offer to you from the Legacy Community Federal Credit Union.

### **Vacation Leave**

Six months after the effective appointment date, all Postdoctoral Scholars are eligible for ten (10) paid working days per year. Vacation days do not accrue and cannot be carried over from year to year. All requests for vacation leave should be made in writing and must be approved by the direct supervisor. Postdoctoral Scholars and their supervisors are responsible for maintaining appropriate records.

### **Sick Leave**

Ten (10) paid working days per year. Sick leave should not be used as vacation. Sick days do not accrue and cannot be carried over from year to year.

### **Maternity/Paternity Leave**

Twenty-two (22) paid successive working days immediately following or just prior to birth or adoption of a child. If both spouses are employed as postdoctoral fellows, each one is eligible for a consecutive term of maternity/paternity leave. Additional, non-paid leave, following the provisions of the Family Medical Leave Act, must be requested and approved by the supervisor.

## **Counseling**

**The Resource Center** – An Employee Assistance/Counseling Service is provided by UAB as a benefit to all employees. All postdoctoral scholars are eligible for this confidential service (205) 934-2281.

**Campus Counseling** - (205) 934-3779, is a non-UAB affiliation, but is open to anyone. It is a non-profit organization that offers front line counseling by appointment. Hours are 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

## **M.A.R.S.**

Motorist Assistance Road Services “M.A.R.S” is a service provided by Parking Services free of charge. The service is set up to help any employee or student having car trouble on campus. Services include retrieving keys, jump starting cars, inflating tires, and assisting if you are out of gas. M.A.R.S. employees are not mechanics, but they will do their very best to assist you and get you on your way. If they are unable to provide assistance then they will help you find someone who can. Telephone number: (205) 975-MARS (975-6277).