

Constitution of the Vanderbilt University Postdoctoral Association

Introduction

The purpose of this constitution is to codify the definition, organization and responsibilities of the Vanderbilt University Postdoctoral Association (herein referred to as the PDA). The PDA, established in 1998, facilitates the professional and personal development of its members by promoting scholarly learning and social activities as well as giving its members a forum to communicate ideas and push for advocacy. The current bylaws delineate the goals for the PDA and set down guidelines for future postdoctoral scholars to use. The term postdoc will be used throughout the text and will refer to postdoctoral fellows, postdoctoral scholars, and/or postdoctoral researchers.

Article I – Purpose and Function of the PDA.

The PDA has the purpose and function of supporting the postdocs at Vanderbilt University. This purpose is broken into 3 main categories. The articles of this constitution revolve around article I and are written to implement the purpose of the PDA.

- A. *Scholarly Learning* – This includes inviting outside speakers, organizing workshops, and giving postdocs opportunities to present their work in local meetings.
- B. *Social Activities* – This includes formal and informal meetings and get-togethers of postdocs. In addition, this includes social activities both at the University and outside of the University. The PDA shall have a commitment to promoting networking opportunities both within the postdoc community as well as between the postdoc community and the faculty.
- C. *Postdoc Advocacy*– The PDA should be a source of information and a sounding board for complaints and concerns. The PDA is a place to pass those concerns on to the appropriate channels; however, the PDA does not, in and of itself, have authority to directly alter any policy, except its own bylaws and governance. The PDA interacts with the Biomedical Research, Education, and Training (BRET) Office as well as faculty to address the concerns that are brought forward.

Article II – Membership.

Membership in the PDA will be open to all postdocs as defined by Vanderbilt University. As the definition of a postdoc may be different depending on department, training grant status, or other considerations, the final definition will be the responsibility of the officers of the PDA. The best source of defining a postdoc is the BRET office postdoc list serve, which is maintained by the BRET office. The minimum requirement of membership will be that the scholar must have either a Ph.D and/or an MD degree and be actively involved in postdoctoral research. The PDA will in no way discriminate based on race, creed, gender, sexual orientation, or any other way. All postdocs at Vanderbilt are invited to

join and the officers of the PDA have a major responsibility in increasing the participation and input from all facets of the postdoc community. Furthermore, any faculty, graduate students, or staff who show an interest in helping the PDA are also allowed to attend any meetings and give input; however, they will not be allowed to vote on any issue that is brought to the PDA. Any item requiring a majority vote will be solely decided by those who are postdocs at Vanderbilt.

Article III – Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee of the Vanderbilt PDA consists of 4 members whose responsibility it is to provide continuity, leadership, and organization to the PDA. The executive committee is flexible in how they feel they will implement the goals of the PDA; however, they are responsible for following the mission of the PDA as described in article I.

The entire executive committee, with input from the PDA as a whole, will have fiscal responsibilities in deciding how money should be spent as well as determining fundraising opportunities for the PDA. Furthermore, the executive committee must regularly attend PDA meetings.

The four executive members are appointed for 1 year. The four positions are senior advisor, senior co-chair, junior co-chair, and secretary-treasurer. Three of the positions are elected and one is appointed. The position of senior advisor is appointed by the executive committee. Senior co-chair, junior co-chair, and secretary-treasurer are all elected positions. A call for nominations will go out via e-mail after the June meeting. A list of nominees will be sent out for vote after the July meeting and voting will be open for 1 week. Ballots will be counted by the BRET office and winners will be by a simple majority (i.e. the individual with the most votes wins). New officers will start at the August meeting and appointments are for 1 year. Both senior and junior co-chair positions can only be held once, while the secretary/treasurer position can be held up to 2 times.

- A. *Senior Advisor* – The senior advisor is the person with the most experience in the PDA. Normally, the senior advisor is the outgoing senior chair (described below) and is responsible for helping the senior and junior co-chairs in fulfilling the responsibilities of the PDA. The senior advisor is appointed by the executive committee.
- B. *Senior Co-chair* – The senior co-chair is responsible for establishing the direction of the PDA within the guidelines described in article I. The senior co-chair, along with the executive committee, will be responsible for coming up with agenda items and will play a major role in assigning individuals to committees. The senior co-chair must have been a postdoc at Vanderbilt for at least 1 year. The responsibilities of the Senior co-chair are to serve as a liaison between the PDA and the Medical Center administration and to serve as the postdoc representative at various meetings, including the Vanderbilt Medical Alumni Association Board of Directors meeting each spring and fall and the National Postdoc Association meeting, usually held in early spring.

C. *Junior Co-chair* – The junior co-chair will be responsible for learning the organization and goals of the PDA. The junior co-chair must have been a postdoc at Vanderbilt for less than 2 years. The junior co-chair is also responsible for giving input at meetings and for being the head of 1 committee. Furthermore, the junior co-chair should attend the National Postdoc Association meeting along with the senior co-chair.

D. *Secretary/Treasurer* – The secretary-treasurer shall be responsible for taking minutes at the PDA meetings as well as keeping track of money and other budgetary concerns. The secretary-treasurer will interact with the BRET office in determining the financial status of the PDA.

Article IV – Committees.

There will be 3 standing committees which will be based on the overall purpose of the PDA; however, in order to maintain as much flexibility as possible, subcommittees can be created by the executive committee if needed. Chairs for the three standing committees shall be appointed by the Executive Committee to serve a maximum of one year. Service on subcommittees will last as long as deemed necessary by the Executive Chairs.

A. *Committee on Scholarly Learning* – This committee will be responsible for selecting speakers (either internal or external) for regular seminars or workshops of interest to the postdocs, organizing an annual postdoc poster symposium at Vanderbilt, and inviting a noted individual for our Postdoc Distinguished Speaker series.

B. *Committee on Social Activities* – This committee will be responsible for planning, organizing, and implementing social activities for the postdoc community. These include the annual summer family picnic, annual holiday party, happy hours, service events and other social events that the committee decides on.

C. *Committee on Postdoc Advocacy* – This committee will evaluate concerns and/or complaints from postdocs and pass those on to the executive committee who will bring up problems to the appropriate people. Furthermore, this committee is responsible for creating and sending out quarterly (or bi-annual) surveys to solicit input from fellows on problems and/or needs.

Article V – Meetings.

Meetings shall take place on the 1st Tuesday of every month, except for the months of January and July, when the meeting shall occur on the second Tuesday of the month to accommodate the New Year's and July 4th holidays. The Executive Committee, however, reserves the right to change the date of the monthly meeting to accommodate attendance of the committee members at national meetings, in which case the new date and time of

the monthly PDA meeting will be sent out at least one week prior to the meeting. The agenda for the monthly meetings should be e-mailed 1 week prior to the meeting and a reminder for the meeting should be emailed out the morning of the meeting. In order to increase attendance at meetings, snacks and drinks should be served if at all possible. In addition to formal meetings, committees and the executive committee should meet as needed.

Article VI – Voting

Any issue brought forth by any member of the PDA must be voted on at the monthly meetings and determined by a majority of the people in attendance at that meeting. In addition, any item voted on by the PDA can be sent out for ratification by e-mail vote to the entire BRET office list serve. Any item that proposes a non-housekeeping (i.e. grammar, spelling, etc.,) change to these bylaws must be sent out to the list serve. For a vote to pass in this case, a majority of respondents must reply in the affirmative (i.e. if 20 votes are received, 11 must be aye votes for a motion to pass)

Article VII – Impeachment of officers

In the rare event that the postdoc community feels an officer is deemed to be unfit or unable to perform his/her position, that officer may be asked to step down. This must be accepted by both the faculty representative to the PDA, the associate dean of the BRET office, and sent out to the BRET office list serve for vote. For impeachment to pass in this case, a majority of respondents must reply in the affirmative (i.e. if 20 votes are received, 11 must be aye votes for a motion to pass)