

The Path to Professional Independence

Office of the Vice President for Research

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What Is a Postdoc?

Requires a doctoral degree. Research associates – part of the junior research staff – receive postdoctoral appointments. The postdoctoral appointment is **temporary** and conferred upon an individual who has **recently** been awarded a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate and who will be involved in full-time research or scholarship. The appointment is viewed as **preparatory** for a full-time academic or research career, is supervised by a senior scholar, and the appointee has the freedom, and is expected, to publish the results of his/her research or scholarship during the period of the appointment.

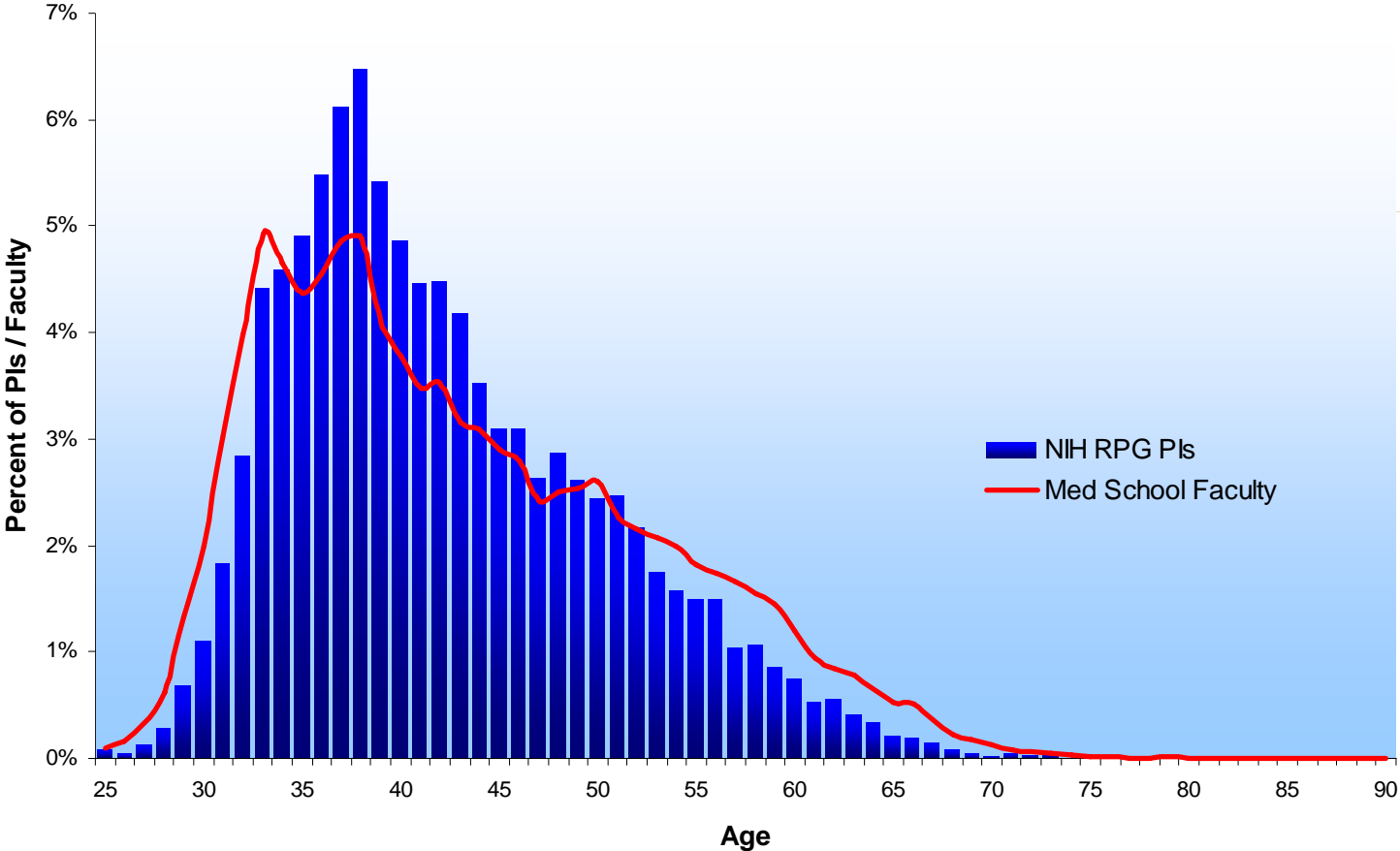
** Adapted from definitions provided by the American Association of Universities (AAU), Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).*

Distribution of Postdocs at U.Va.

School	Architecture	Arts & Sciences	Education	Engineering	Medicine	Nursing	Other	Total
Postdocs	1	74	10	34	340	2	6	467
Percent Distribution	0.2%	15.8%	2.1%	7.3%	72.8%	0.4%	1.3%	100%

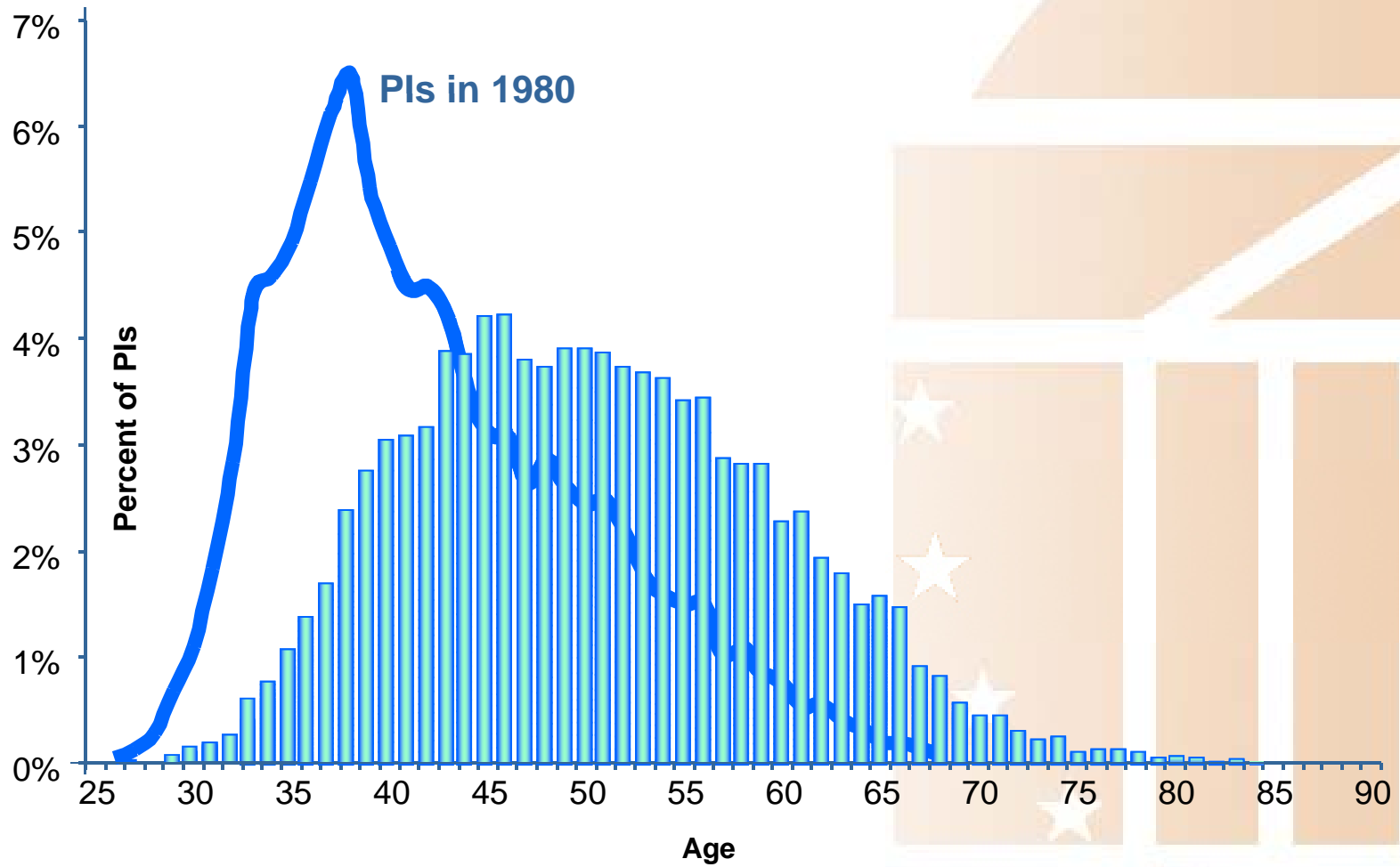
Changing Demographics

1980



Sources: IMPAC II Current and History Files and AAMC Faculty Roster System

Changing Demographics 2008



Sources: IMPAC II Current and History Files and AAMC Faculty Roster System

Best Practices

- Association of American Universities
 - “Initial postdoctoral appointments should be no longer than two to three years.”
 - “The total time spent in postdoctoral appointments by a given individual should not exceed six years.”
- NAS report recommendation (*Bridges to Independence*)
 - Expected duration of 3 years
 - Maximum duration of 5 years
 - “NIH should enforce a 5-year limit on the use of any funding mechanism—including research grants—to support postdoctoral researchers.”
- National Postdoctoral Association
 - “The aggregate amount of time spent as a postdoc is recommended to not exceed 5 years.”

Policies of Benchmark Institutions

Institution	Period of Initial Appointment	Maximum Term w/o Extensions	Maximum Term w/ Extensions
Stanford University	1	5*	submitted to Asst. Dean for Postdoc Aff.
UC-Berkeley	1	3	4-5 (by dean)* 6 (by chancellor)*
University of Georgia	n/a	5	submitted to V.P. for Research
University of Maryland	n/a	5*	n/a
University of Michigan	1	3 (research fellow) 6 (sr. research fellow)	n/a
UNC-Chapel Hill	n/a	5	submitted to V.C. for Research
University of Wisconsin	2-3	5	n/a
Yale University	n/a	4	6*

* Includes postdoctoral appointments at other institutions



Revisions to the Policy on Professional Research Staff

Revised Policy on Professional Research Staff

- Revisions to *Policy on Professional Research Staff*, which includes research associates, intended to:
 - Align policy and practice for postdocs beyond 3-year term.
 - Formalize process related to justification and plan of action for completion of training period.
 - Permit longer terms in special or exceptional circumstances (e.g., NIH K99 award, discipline-specific factors, etc.)
- Revised policy expected to be in effect by end of 2009.

	Period of Initial Appointment	Maximum Term w/o Extensions	Maximum Term w/ Extensions
Old Policy	1 year	3 years	n/a
New Policy	1 year	3 years	5 years*
			>5 years**

* With approval by the Office of the Vice President for Research

** With approval by the Office of the Executive Vice President & Provost

Request for Extension of Postdoctoral Employment

- Documentation must be provided to justify that the nature of employment continues to be training-related and that an extension is beneficial to involved parties.
- Prior to submission of request, faculty mentor and postdoc should meet to discuss training- and career-related goals.
- Faculty mentor and postdoc are encouraged, but not required, to complete an individual development plan (IDP).
- Request for extension includes a one-page statement citing (a) the reason for the request, (b) training-related goals for the extension period, and (c) career-related milestones for the extension period.

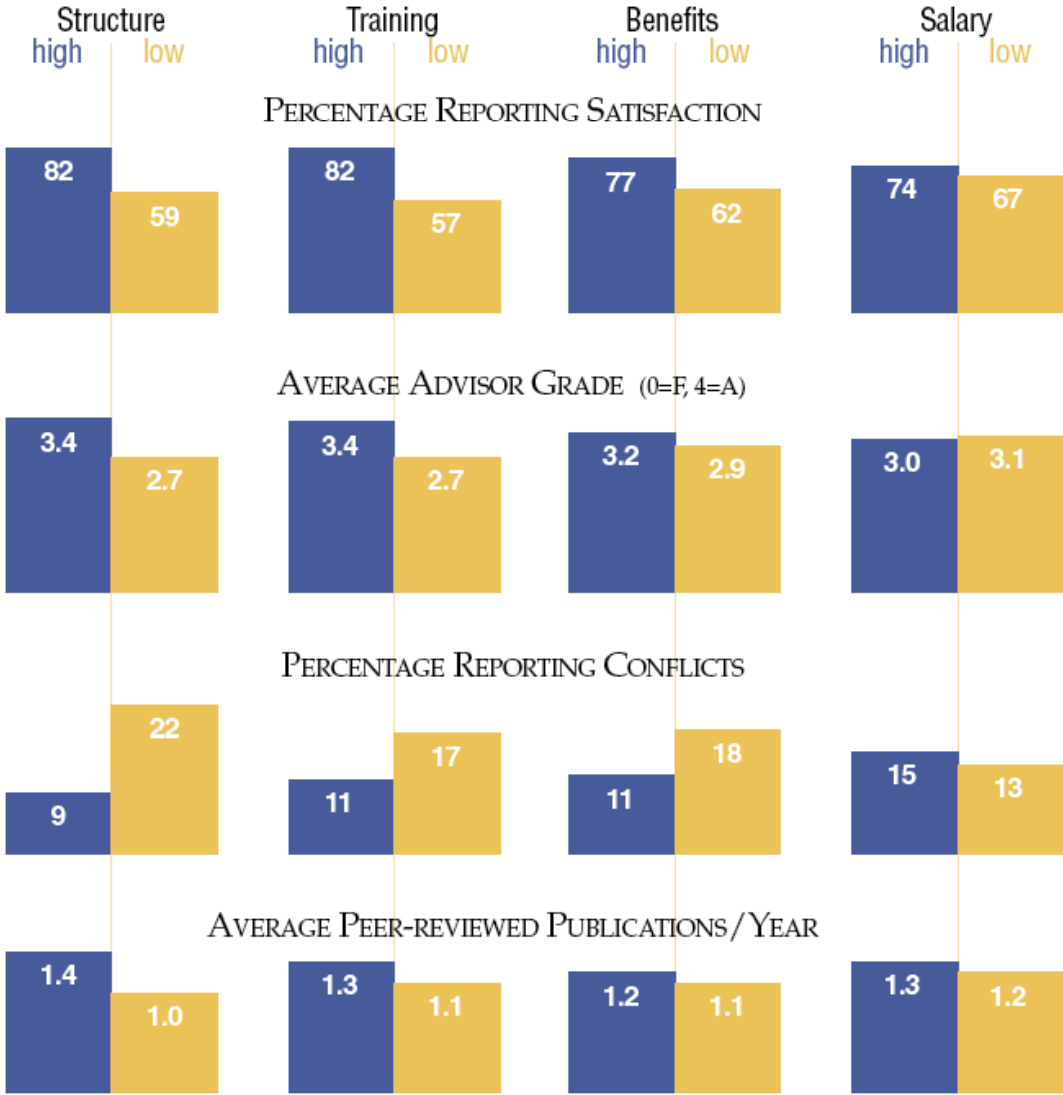
What Makes a Successful Experience?

Attribute	PI Rankings (2009)	Postdoc Rankings (2008)
<i>Communication</i>	1	7
Direction & Vision	2	1
Mentoring	3	4
<i>Training</i>	4	9
Work Culture-Environment	5	n/a
<i>Networking</i>	6	2
Employer/Situation	7	5
Quality of Life	8	n/a
Advancement/Career Options	9	6
Compensation & Benefits	10	8
Considering Spouses/Partners	11	10

Source: *Science Careers* (2008 & 2009)

Sigma Xi Postdoc Survey

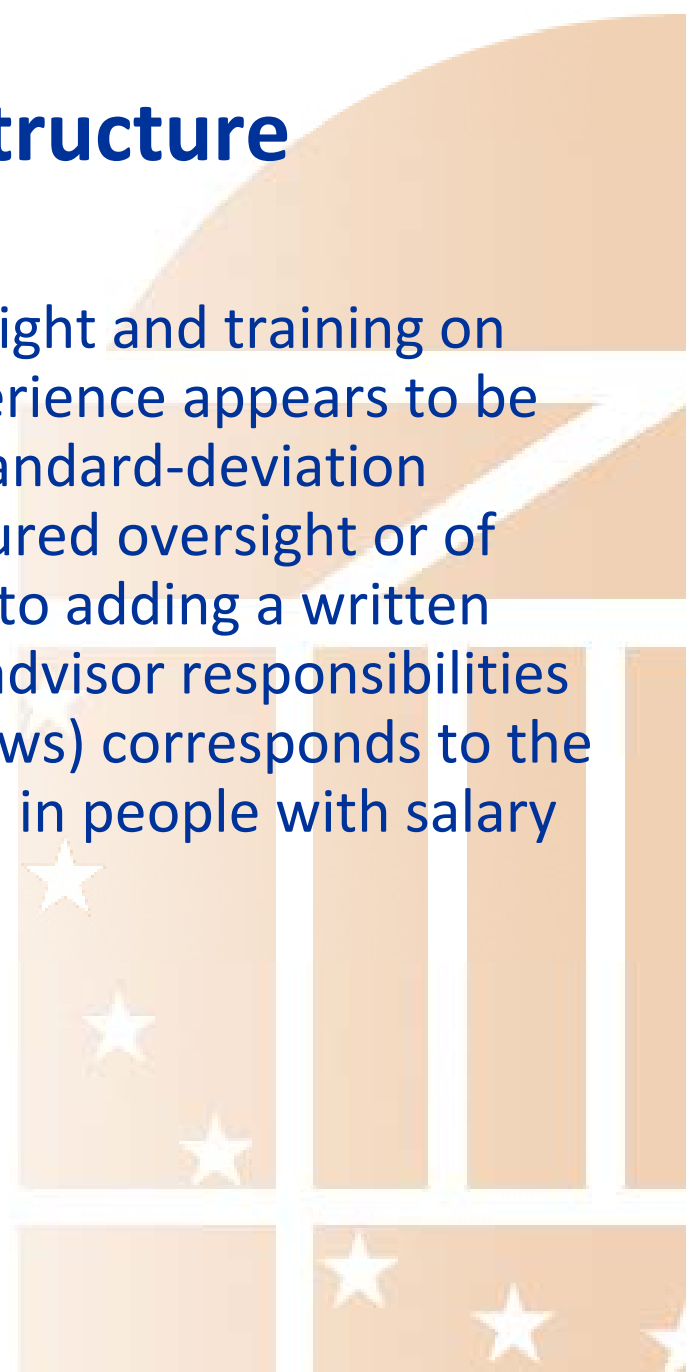
CORRELATES OF SUCCESS



Importance of Structure

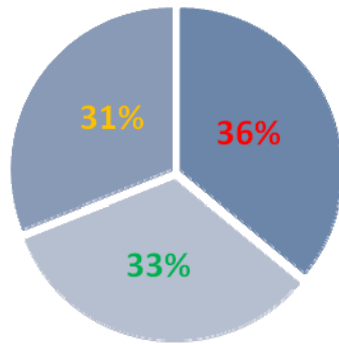
“...the influence of structured oversight and training on the quality of the postdoctoral experience appears to be [great]. It turns out that a single-standard-deviation difference in our measure of structured oversight or of formal training (roughly equivalent to adding a written plan that covers both postdoc and advisor responsibilities and instituting regular, formal reviews) corresponds to the same difference in satisfaction seen in people with salary differentials of \$20,000.”

-- *Sigma Xi Postdoc Survey, 2005*

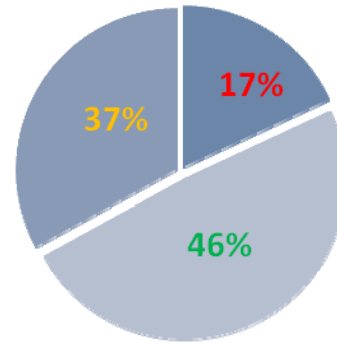


Developing Transferable Skills

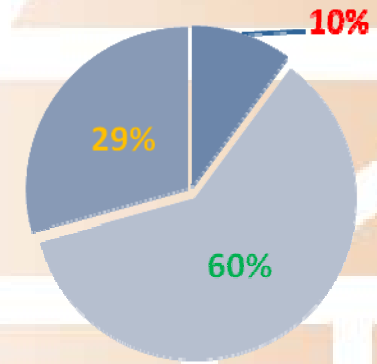
Research Ethics



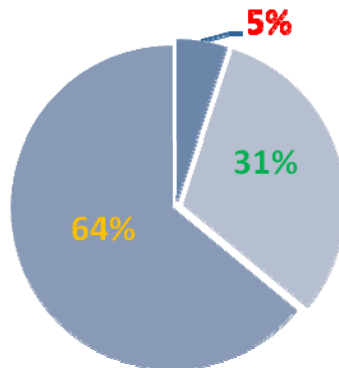
Proposal Writing



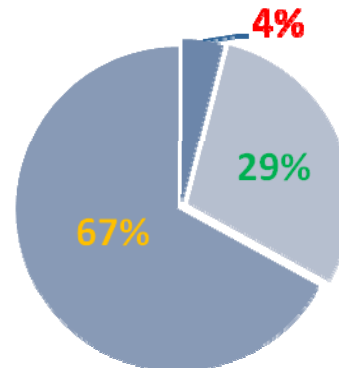
Writing Skills



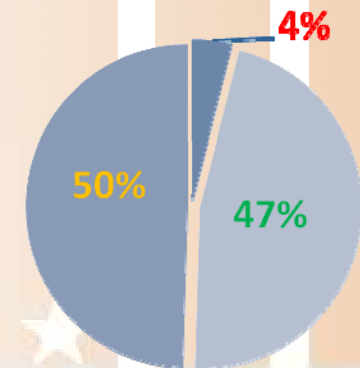
Teaching Skills



Negotiating Skills



Lab Management



Workshop or formal coursework



Informal, on-the-job training



No training

Staying on the Path to Independence

- Complete an individual development plan (IDP), in cooperation with faculty mentor.
- Meet regularly with faculty mentor to discuss research goals/accomplishments and career goals/progression.
- Take advantage of postdoctoral programs office:
 - One-on-one career/professional development counseling sessions.
 - Postdoc seminar series.
 - Other seminars open to graduate students and postdocs.
- Explore myriad of career opportunities outside academia.
- Seek out opportunities to develop “transferrable skills:”
 - Center for American English Language & Culture
 - Teaching Resource Center
 - University Human Resources



The Path from Trainee to Independent Scientist

“There’s educational value in some period of years, such as three years – or five years for physicists and mathematicians – of being in a training position. But at some point they’re not training any more; they’re in career paths as independent scientists.”

-- Michael Stryker, William F. Ganong Endowed Chair in Physiology
University of California, San Francisco



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