COMMUNITY GROUP: POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS/ASSOCIATES

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1. A brief description of the community (diversity; status variations; demographic profile)

Postdoctoral scholars (‘postdocs’) are here defined as employees, staff, or fellows who 1) are terminal degree holders (typically an advanced doctoral degree in their field) and 2) are at Emory in a temporary position to obtain additional professional and academic training, to complete independent research, and/or to teach students. The majority of postdocs work in close supervision with a faculty mentor or advisor and are often dependent upon this advisor for their salary, as well as professional development and support in reaching the next stage of their career. The length of time on campus is often highly dependent on funding (e.g., external grants) and discipline (e.g., 9 months to 7+ years), which can create a great deal of professional uncertainty.

Historically, the expectation of postdocs is that they are obtaining additional training and will go into careers as faculty members in research or academia, but this is increasingly less common, with many postdocs ultimately pursuing careers outside this traditional path (e.g., academic administration, government, nonprofit sector, policy work). Postdocs often occupy a liminal space between faculty, student, and staff, and thus often fall through the “administrative cracks” between these roles. Postdocs often report feeling disconnected from campus communities and from each other.

Postdocs at Emory go by many titles, including ‘Postdoctoral Fellow’, ‘Research Fellow’, ‘Visiting Assistant Professor’, ‘Instructor,’ and others. There is limited data about both the number and demographic information of postdocs at Emory. For example, using HR codes 9903 and 9905 offers a limited view of the postdoc community at present below:

![Postdoc Community Pie Chart]

- SOM (336)
- ECAS (90)
- Yerkes (33)
- SPH (27)
- SON (9)
- Law (7)
- Candler Theology (2)
- GBS (1)
- HR (1)

Total = 506
Although we lack specific numbers for the community at large, a substantial portion of postdocs are part of historically underrepresented groups of postdocs in higher education. This includes women scholars, racially and ethnically diverse scholars, LGBTQ+ scholars, first-generation scholars, differently abled scholars, low-income scholars, international scholars, and scholars with families.

It is important to note that postdocs are skilled and expert members of our scholarly community. They play critical roles in the training and mentorship of both undergraduate and graduate students. Postdocs are the future workforce, taking their experiences at Emory with them as they move into roles throughout the world. Thus, the success of a diverse postdoc community is a necessary step in building a diverse workforce. Postdocs are integral to Emory’s goal of realizing a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus community.

2. Process used to gather information (note timeline, activities, listening sessions, 1:1 conversations):

The postdoctoral committee was formed with attention to representation in regard to racial, ethnic, international status, gender, and academic discipline diversity. Represented amongst committee members were the School of Medicine, Candler School of Theology, Emory College of Arts & Sciences, Rollins School of Public Health, School of Nursing, and Goizueta Business School.ii

The postdoctoral committee held four listening sessions hosted by committee members with the Emory postdoctoral community. In Spring 2021, a total of 21 postdocs (who were not members of the committee) met in these listening sessions and discussed questions related to the three DEI themes. The committee also gathered testimonials and anecdotal accounts through both formal and informal conversations with members of the postdoc community.

3. Briefly list relevant resources, experts, and archival materials used to develop, build upon, evaluate, or strengthen goals and objectives (i.e., inventory of what exists, its effectiveness, observable gaps).

Internal Emory Resources
· Institutional Research and Decision Support
· School of Medicine Office of Postdoctoral Educationiii

External Emory Resources
· Educational data from the National Postdoctoral Association
· Emory Institutional Research Report, Quick Factsiv

4. List recommended goals and objectives: short-term (immediate), mid-term (within two years), long-term (beyond two years) for each of the three areas—professional development, education, awareness; climate and culture; accountability.

The following sections are organized by order of priority, with recognition that certain aspects of the recommended goals and objectives will vary across short-, mid-, and long-term timelines.
**Professional Development, Education, and Awareness:** Professional Development, Education, and Awareness includes advanced learning opportunities that utilize various modes of engagement to enhance knowledge, proficiency, skills, and effectiveness in implementing and practicing the principles and values of DEI. Providing resources for advanced learning opportunities, that utilize various modes of engagement that enhance knowledge, proficiency, skills, and effectiveness, specific to postdocs is critical to create a sense of belonging in the greater Emory community.

1. A Postdoctoral Fellow Office would include for PDEA:
   1.1. A full-time employee in an advocacy role (Short term)
   1.2. Support for postdoctoral fellows while at Emory (Short term)
   1.3. Standardized grievance procedures for instances of workplace abuse (Mid-term)
   1.4. A structure that connects liaisons with representatives within each discipline/school (Mid-term)
   1.5. A mechanism for taking time off (Mid-term)
   1.6. Institutional memory to support long-term change (Long term)

2. Recommendation to use HR code to similarly categorize postdoctoral fellows across schools (Mid-term)

3. Develop formal mechanisms for Emory to facilitate retention of postdoctoral fellows in more permanent manners (mid-term)

4. Develop a university-wide bridge program Postdoc to Faculty (long term)
   4.1. Postdoctoral fellows are a very diverse population, a key pool to pull from to diversify faculty

5. Standardized method (e.g., forms, etc.) to set job and role expectations between postdoctoral fellows and mentors (e.g., work hours, mentoring, etc.) (Short term)

6. Create opportunities and allow for postdoctoral fellows to easily attain certificates and credentials on topics to advance their academic, industry, and other career goals (e.g., teaching on-campus and in the community) (Short term)

7. Resources for postdoctoral fellows interested in entering non-academic positions and/or working within the broader Atlanta community (Short term)
   7.1. Could potentially connect postdoctoral fellows to local community organizations, institutions, and companies seeking scientists [scholars?] with research/teaching skills
   7.2. This is inspired by the fact that we have an Atlanta community subcommittee - serves strengthening of broader community/community collaborations

**Climate & Culture:** Building a collective community and institutional memory for postdocs is critical to creating a sense of belonging in the greater Emory community. To this end, we recommend centralizing postdoc events and resources by establishing a Postdoctoral Fellow Office, a website hosted by Emory widely, and institutional support for professional development and personal well-being.

1. Issues of climate and culture can be addressed through a central Postdoctoral Fellow Office in the following ways:
   1.1. Providing a physical space for community building, academic advancement, professional advancement, and connections to the broader university community (Long Term)
1.2. Developing a website hosted by Emory widely, not school-specific, that will assist in recording and maintaining institutional memory of postdoctoral fellows’ scholarship, presence, labor, etc. on campus (Short Term)

1.3. Developing handbooks, materials, campus tours, and programming to assist postdocs in acclimating to campus (Mid Term)

2. Implementing institutional support for postdocs and facilitate positive, collaborative work environments

   2.1. Advocating directly for the needs of diverse postdocs (Short term)
   2.2. Providing well-defined explanations of how to access Emory academic, cultural, professional, and health resources (Mid-term)

**Accountability:** *A primary challenge for postdocs is the temporary nature of our positions and the fact that many postdocs are wholly dependent on their advisor for salary and professional advancement. The following suggestions center on the career advancement and well-being of postdocs, particularly those from marginalized and vulnerable communities.*

1. Create a full-time employee postdoctoral advocate position, ideally housed within the postdoc office

   1.1. Appoint a person within each unit, department, or school who is responsible for working with postdoctoral scholars. This person would be a formal liaison to the proposed campus-wide postdoc office and develop expertise in supporting postdoctoral needs (Mid-term)

2. Develop a standardized system for handling grievances, including for managing disputes with advisors or mentors, perhaps modeled on systems in place for graduate students (Mid-term)

   2.1. Specific examples of such harm include bullying, abuse of power, or sustained hostile behavior, including the ridiculing, threatening, blaming, invasion of privacy, verbal abuse of mentees, career sabotage (e.g. holding ‘hostage’ recommendation letters or visa status), sexual assault, or *quid pro quo* sexual relationships

   2.2. Address discrimination based on race, nationality, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, disability, language, or socioeconomic status by having a dedicated or assigned staff within the Ombuds Office and the Office of Equity and Inclusion that focuses on the unique status if postdocs

3. Create a mechanism and adjudication process whereby faculty who commit repeated instances of discrimination, abuse, sexual harassment, and/or attempts to limit career opportunities of mentees are professionally held accountable (Long-term)

4. Create positions for postdoctoral representatives on the University Senate (Short term)
5. Create a fund to support moving expenses/relocation costs for incoming postdocs, targeted at postdocs who have demonstrated financial need and are first-generation and/or from an underrepresented background (Mid-term)

6. Evaluate and adjust compensation, benefits, and other H.R.-related policies to ensure adequate support for postdocs, particularly given the temporary nature of postdoc positions and other needs common among postdocs. (Mid-term)

**Provide brief justification for each recommendation**

The variation in time spent at Emory as postdocs along with learning to navigate the university and advocating for oneself poses a serious challenge for this community. A Postdoctoral Fellow Office can help in this regard, as well as assist in achieving the recommendations under each DEI theme.

**Professional Development, Awareness, & Education**
- Given that postdocs have terminal degrees but are in a transient position, professional development needs are different than those of graduate students and early-career faculty. Postdocs from underrepresented groups and/or international postdocs also have additional needs.
- Many postdocs feel disconnected from the greater Emory community; a centralized office would allow for postdocs to access resources that their advisor may not be aware of and create and grow networks with other postdocs on campus.

**Climate & Culture**
- Building a community, a support network, and an institutional memory for postdocs is critical to creating a sense of belonging and investment in the greater Emory community. Due to the diversity associated with the postdoc title, postdocs tend to be in silos within their departments. This isolation in addition to the ambiguity associated with the postdoc role can be debilitating.
- The Postdoctoral Fellow Office will encourage cross-department communication by providing a dedicated physical space for hosting professional, cultural, and social events designed specifically for postdoc needs. A well-curated virtual platform will assist in recording and maintaining the institutional memory of postdoctoral fellows’ scholarship, presence, labor, etc. In addition, a central physical and virtual presence for postdocs will facilitate the sharing and finding of resources regarding mental health, affordable childcare, equitable access to advancement, etc.

**Accountability**
- Following the completion of this report, postdocs on campus will need a centralized space to continue conversations related to DEI. An office will facilitate cooperation and accountability between postdocs and the university.
- Institutional structures for handling grievances and adjudicating repeated instances of discrimination or abuse, as well as evaluation of benefits and H.R.-related policies, are critical for ensuring that Emory is a place where postdocs of all backgrounds can successfully complete their postdoctoral training and meet their career goals.
Appendix

Slides Used in Postdoc Listening Sessions

Rules of Engagement

- Please mute when not speaking
- Cameras on when possible
- The conversation is confidential
- Anything reported as part of the committee will be de-identified
- Please be elaborate on your answers

Professional Development, Education, and Awareness

Advanced learning opportunities for administrators, faculty, staff, students, both formal and informal, that utilizes various modes of engagement that enhance knowledge, proficiency, skills, and effectiveness in implementing and practicing the principles and values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- Is the environment at Emory equitable and inclusive in helping to advance your career in terms of teaching, research, and publications? If so, how? If not, how might Emory improve?
Climate and Culture

Reflect the collective attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and principles of faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Culture is demonstrated in our collective community of engagement, expressed in the values of community members and the ways they interact with and among each other, felt in the sense of belonging and the true investment in the well-being of each other. It is our authentic human connection. It is the ability to thrive and bring our whole selves with us each day in order to realize our truest and highest potential as individuals and as a collective.

- How are your scholarship, service, and voice are valued and/or rewarded in your research group/department? Do you feel there is room for improvement?
- Describe the connection you feel with your advisor, research group, department, and the university.

Accountability

Taking responsibility and action for identifying, eliminating persistence patterns of inequity that impede our ability to fulfill our institutional mission and goals for education rooted in our DEI principles and values for the Emory enterprise.

- Are you aware of or have encountered barriers to reporting an incident of discrimination or harassment? Are there existing Emory policies that have stopped you from reporting?
- In conclusion, is there anything else Emory can do, including specific policies, that could improve the recruitment and retention of postdoctoral trainees from diverse backgrounds?

Examples of Existing Postdoctoral Fellowship to Tenure Track Pipeline

https://presidentspostdoc.umich.edu/

https://ehe.osu.edu/postdoctoral-fellows/

https://research.unc.edu/carolina-postdocs/
This chart represents postdocs on campus that fall under HR codes 9903 & 9905. Data provided to our committee by Lydia Soleil.

Postdoctoral committee members that played a pivotal role in shaping this report include Nicole M. Baran, Kalisha Bonds-Johnson, Roxana Chicas, Yun Hang, Meredith Henry, Seyma Katrinli, Ren Li, Laramie Lemon, Byrd McDaniel, Elizabeth Newman, Karena Nguyen, Peng Yin, and Robby Van Sciver.

This is the only funded postdoctoral office on campus, hence data offered a limited view of the campus-wide postdoctoral community.

See, [https://provost.emory.edu/planning-administration/data/factbook/humanresources.html](https://provost.emory.edu/planning-administration/data/factbook/humanresources.html)

This is in progress as of the submission of this report (August 2021)