

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 VPA). The VPA, established in 1998, facilitates the professional and personal development of its members by promoting scholarly learning and social activities as well as providing its members a forum to communicate ideas and advocacy issues. Following the establishment of the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) within the Vanderbilt Graduate School in 2016, the VPA is advised and administratively supported by the OPA. The current bylaws delineate the goals for the VPA and guidelines for all postdocs. 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 VPA.

The VPA has the purpose and function of creating an inclusive community that supports the postdocs at Vanderbilt University and Vanderbilt University Medical Center (combined herein referred to as 'Vanderbilt'). The VPA's mission and purpose are aligned with existing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at Vanderbilt. The VPA's purpose is organized into three main categories. The articles of this constitution revolve around article I and are written to implement the purpose of the VPA.

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 events for postdocs. In addition, this includes social activities both at the University and outside of the University. The VPA shall have a commitment to promoting networking opportunities both within the postdoc community as well as between the postdoc community, faculty, and professionals in non-academic fields.

C. Postdoc Advocacy – The VPA should be a source of information and a sounding board for complaints and concerns. The VPA is a place to pass those concerns on to the appropriate channels; however, the VPA does not, in and of itself, have authority to directly alter any policy, except its own bylaws and governance. The VPA interfaces with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) within the Graduate School, as well as the Schools and individual faculty to address the concerns that are brought forward.

Article II – Membership.

Membership in the VPA will be open to all postdocs as defined by Vanderbilt University and the Vanderbilt University Medical Center. 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 VPA. The best source of identifying a postdoc is the list serve maintained by the OPA. 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 VPA 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 VPA have a major

responsibility in increasing the participation and input from all facets of the postdoc community. Furthermore, faculty, graduate students, or staff who show an interest in helping the VPA are allowed to attend meetings and give input; however, they will not be allowed to vote on any issue that is brought to the VPA. 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 VPA consists of up to 10 elected members whose responsibility it is to provide continuity, leadership, and organization to the VPA. The executive committee, supported by appointed advisors, is flexible in how they feel they will implement the goals of the VPA; however, they are responsible for following the mission of the VPA as described in article I. The entire executive committee, with input from the VPA as a whole, will have fiscal responsibilities in deciding how money should be spent as well as determining fundraising opportunities for the VPA. Furthermore, the executive committee must regularly attend VPA meetings. The executive committee members are elected for a term of 1 year. A call for VPA executive committee 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 2 weeks, or until all postdocs have cast a vote, whichever comes first. Ballots will be counted by the outgoing senior co-chair. Votes can be made for up to 10 candidates. The 10 candidates with the largest number of votes will be elected. In the event of a tie, a run-off election will be held. If there are fewer than 10 nominees, vacant positions can be filled through an election at the next VPA meeting by a majority vote by all those present at the meeting. There is no requirement that all 10 positions be filled.

If the senior co-chair is running in the election, ballots are counted by an outgoing member of the executive committee or by a delegate who is not up for election. New executive committee members will start at the first meeting after the election results are announced. Both senior and junior co-chair positions can be held for a combined 2 years (1 year as junior co-chair and 1 year as senior co-chair, or 2 years as senior or junior co-chair), while the other positions can be held up to 2 times combined (i.e., a postdoc may serve two terms as secretary and two terms as treasurer, for four years total).

Once the 10 elected members are elected, they discuss and choose Executive Committee positions by mutual agreement at the first VPA meeting. In the case of a tie, a run-off election within the Executive Committee will be used to determine positions. The Senior Co-chair and Junior Co-chair positions must be filled.

The 10 elected committee positions and 1 appointed position are:

0. Senior Advisor (appointed) – The senior advisor is a person with extensive leadership experience in the VPA. Normally, the senior advisor is the outgoing senior co-chair (described below) and is responsible for helping the senior and junior co-chairs in fulfilling the responsibilities of the VPA. The senior advisor is appointed by the executive committee.

1. Senior Co-chair (elected) – The senior co-chair is responsible for establishing the direction of the VPA 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 at the time of their nomination. The responsibilities of the senior co-chair are to

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serve as a liaison between the VPA and the Graduate School OPA, Vanderbilt University and Medical Center administrations 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.

2. Junior Co-chair (elected) – The junior co-chair will be responsible for learning the organization and goals of the VPA. The junior co-chair must have been a postdoc at Vanderbilt for 3 years or less at the time of their nomination. 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 or find another committee member who will be attending this meeting.

3. Secretary (elected) – The secretary shall be responsible for taking minutes and giving input at the VPA meetings.

4. Treasurer (elected) – The treasurer shall be responsible for keeping track of money and other budgetary concerns. The treasurer will interact with the OPA to determine the financial status of the VPA. The treasurer will also give input at the VPA meetings.

The following executive committee members are executive committee members who are also directly responsible as chairs of the standing committees detailed under Article IV – Committees.

5. Scholarly Learning Chair (elected) – The scholarly learning chair will sit as a chair of the committee for organizing invited talks, workshops, and seminars. At least two scholarly learning events will be organized every semester, including those in collaboration with the OPA, BRET office and other organizations and groups on campus.

6. Social Activities & Community Building Chair (elected) - The social activities chair will sit as a chair of the committee for planning, organizing, and implementing social activities within the postdoc community.

7. Postdoc Advocacy Chair (elected) - The postdoc advocacy chair will sit as a chair of the committee for postdoc surveys, and evaluating concerns and complaints from the postdoc community.

8. Communications Chair (elected) – The communications chair will sit as a chair of the committee for communicating with the Vanderbilt postdoc community via social media sites, VPA website, and VPA newsletters.

9. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair (elected) - The diversity, equity, and inclusion chair will sit as a chair of the committee that represents the needs and the voices from underrepresented groups such as women, LGBTQ+, ethnic/racial, and other minority populations in the postdoc community.

10. Community Outreach Chair (elected) - The community outreach chair will sit as a chair of the committee for building relationships with the greater Nashville and/or academic community. Examples of community outreach events include volunteering in the community, or engaging with other universities for postdoctoral exchange events.

Article IV – Committees.

There will be five standing committees which will be based on the overall purpose of the VPA; however, in order to maintain as much flexibility as possible, subcommittees can be created by the executive committee if needed. Chairs for the 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 biannual) surveys to solicit input from postdocs on problems and/or needs. The Postdoc Advocacy Committee will send out anonymous surveys to the postdoc community to determine preferences, wishes, and concerns of postdocs, as well as their suggestions for improved programming. Survey questions will be developed by the Executive Committee and the OPA. Results of these surveys will be shared with the OPA and sent out in an aggregate form to the post-doc community.

D. Committee on Communications – This committee will be responsible for communication with the Vanderbilt postdoc community. Three subcommittees are responsible for Social media, the VPA website, and the VPA newsletter. The chair and subcommittees will make all effort to connect with as many Vanderbilt postdocs as possible.

- Subcommittee for Website – This subcommittee will be responsible for maintaining the VPA website (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/VPA>). The chair will be responsible for updating the website regularly with news and events and ensure all VPA documentation is available to the postdoc community.

- Subcommittee for Newsletter – This subcommittee will be responsible for creating the postdoc newsletter. The committee is responsible for inviting contributions from the postdoc community. This newsletter is to be distributed at least once per year.

- Subcommittee for Social Media – This subcommittee will be responsible for communication through the VPA's social media presence, which includes, but is not limited to, the VPA Facebook group, Twitter account, and LinkedIn account.

E. Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – This committee will organize events that have a specific focus on underrepresented women, LGBTQ+ and ethnic/racial populations within their disciplines, whilst aiding the entire postdoc community. This committee will gather information from postdocs on their sources of support on campus and organize events based on the postdocs' needs.

F. Committee on Community Outreach – This committee will be responsible for communicating with the greater Nashville community and/or broader academic community. Possible committee activities include volunteering in the community, outreach in local schools, enhancing

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engagement of postdocs in VPA programming, or engaging with other universities for postdoctoral exchange events.

Article V – Departmental and college representatives

Departmental and college representatives are appointed by the executive committee to facilitate direct communication between the VPA and postdocs and faculty of a department or college. The executive committee decides which departments and/or colleges should have representatives, depending on the number of postdocs within that department or college. Postdocs should be appointed to represent the VPA within their own department or college; however, if no postdocs are available to serve as representatives, the executive committee may appoint representatives from another department or college. Postdocs may serve as representatives for a maximum of two years.

Article VI – Meetings.

Meetings shall take place once per month at the discretion and availability of the executive committee. Scheduling meetings around federal holidays should be avoided. 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 VPA 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, or the monthly meeting may be combined with the monthly Happy Hour event. In addition to formal meetings, committees and the executive committee should meet as needed.

Article VII – Voting

Any issue brought forth by any member of the VPA 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 VPA can be sent out for ratification by e-mail vote to the entire postdoc community using the OPA email listserv. Any item that proposes a non-housekeeping (e.g., grammar, spelling) change to these bylaws must be sent out to the list serves. 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 VIII – 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 the director of the OPA and sent out to the postdoc listserv managed by the OPA 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).