

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 giving its members a forum to communicate ideas and push for advocacy. The current bylaws delineate the goals for the VPA 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 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 to the existing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at Vanderbilt. The VPA's 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 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 get togethers of 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 interacts with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) within the Graduate School and 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 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 defining a postdoc are the Graduate School postdoc list serve and the BRET office postdoc list serve, which are maintained by the OPA and the BRET office, respectively. 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, any faculty, graduate students, or staff who show an interest in helping the VPA 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 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 4 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 four executive members are elected for a term of 1 year and include: senior co-chair, junior co-chair, secretary and treasurer. Additional positions on the VPA board are appointed by the executive committee. 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 and winners will be by a simple majority (*i.e.*, the individual with the most votes wins). If the senior co-chair is running in the election, ballots are counted by an outgoing member of the executive committee or by the senior advisor. New officers will start at the August meeting. 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 secretary and treasurer 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).

A. 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.

B. 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 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.

C. 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.

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

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

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 bi-annual) surveys to solicit input from postdocs on problems and/or needs.

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.

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 Graduate School OPA and BRET office email list serves. Any item that proposes a non-housekeeping (*i.e.*, grammar, spelling, etc.) 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, the associate dean of the BRET office, and sent out to the Graduate School OPA and BRET office list serves 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).