

2014 Postdoctoral Survey Summary

Below is a brief summary of the findings from the 2014 postdoctoral survey. As in past surveys, the original invitation and 2 follow-up e-mails were sent to all postdocs (N = 221) to encourage participation in the web-based annual survey. A total of 111 responses were received in 2014, providing us with a 50% response rate.

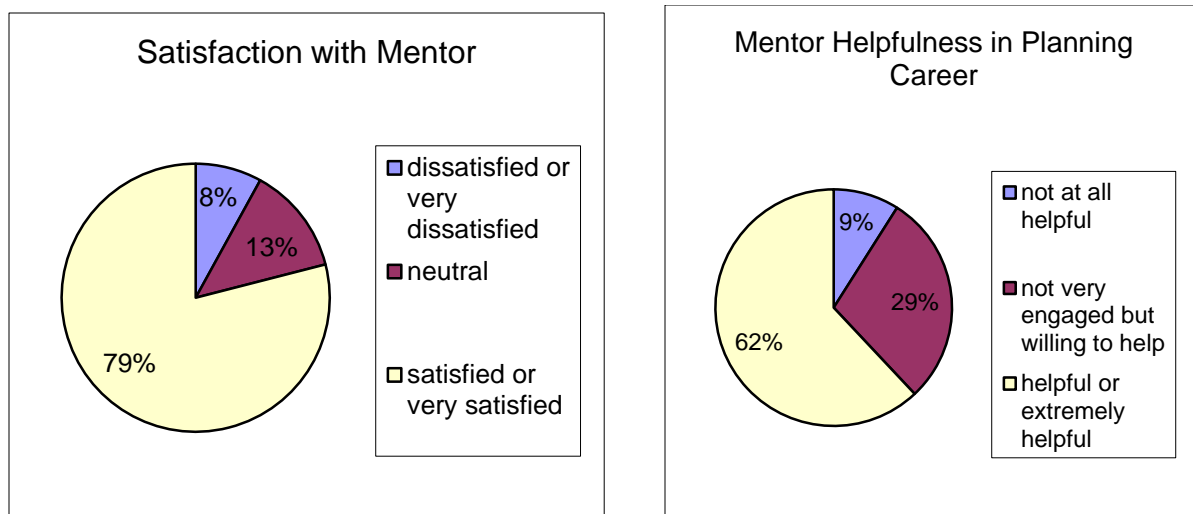
The Respondents: Below is information about the respondents compared to what we know about all postdocs at VCU. There appear to be some differences between respondents and all postdocs on the characteristics for which we have data. Respondents were somewhat more likely to be U.S. citizens or permanent residents and female, they were more likely to have been at VCU for less than a year, they were more likely to have held more than one postdoc position (33% of respondents have been in more than one position, compared to 23% of all postdocs). A smaller percentage of the respondents were in the School of Medicine compared to the overall postdoc population.

Characteristics of Survey Respondents compared to all VCU postdoctoral scholars (Fall 2014)

	Respondents N = 111	All postdoctoral scholars N = 221
Citizenship	47% citizens or permanent resident	43% citizens or permanent resident
Gender	55.6% female	43% female
Age	<31 years = 20.9% 31–39 years = 62.8% 40+ years = 16.4%	NA
Marital Status	63.6% married or w/partner	NA
Children <18	36.1% w/children	NA
Time as postdoc at VCU	<1 year = 36% 1-4 years = 58% 5+ years = 6%	<1 year = 32% 1-4 years = 64% 5+ years = 4%
Total # postdoc positions	1 position = 67% 2 positions = 28% 3 or more = 5%	1 position = 73% 2 positions = 19% 3 or more = 4%
School/College of Respondents	Medicine = 66% H & S = 13% Pharmacy = 9% Engineering = 8% Other = 4%	Medicine = 70 % H & S = 9% Pharmacy = 7% Engineering = 8% Other = 6%

Career aspirations: 41.7% of the respondents indicated that their main career goal was to be a tenure-track faculty member, with another 16.5% stating that some other type of academic position was their main career goal. 16.5% were interested in working in industry, 9.7% were interested in positions ranging from government (NIH, CDC, etc.) to science writing, and almost 10% were not sure of their main career goal. Almost 28% are actively looking for their next position, and over 35% plan to actively start seeking their next position within 12 months.

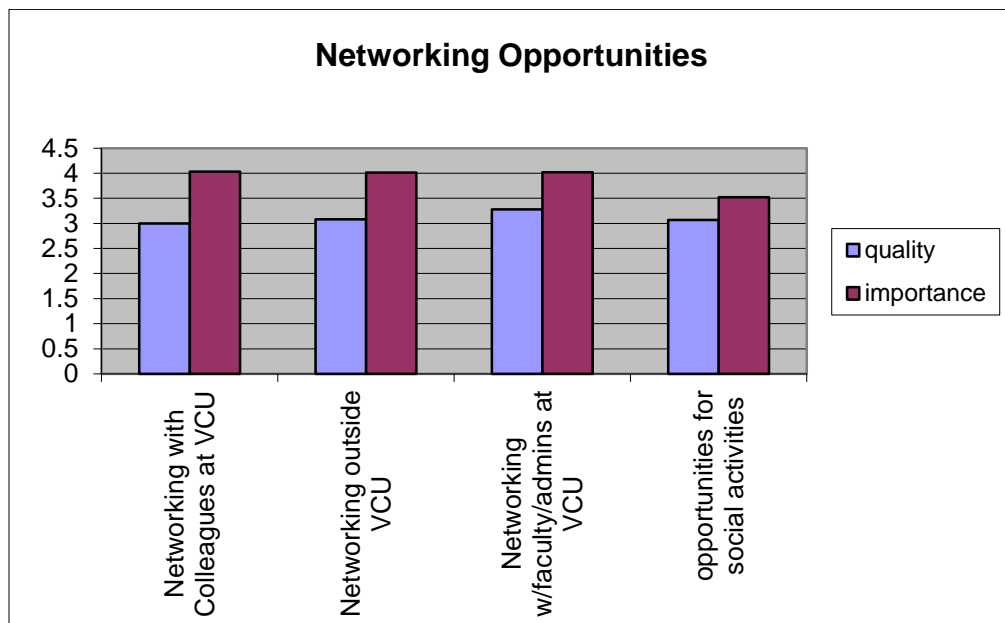
Career preparation: Just over 23% of the 2014 respondents stated they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their publication record, whereas 39% were neutral on this question, and 38% were satisfied or very satisfied. Over 46% felt they had not presented their research at conferences often enough. Despite this level of dissatisfaction with opportunities for dissemination, most (77.4%) felt their research training and experience was good or excellent, with only 6.5% (N=8), responding that their training was poor. Most postdocs also rated the mentoring they are receiving as good (39%) or excellent (30.5%), with 20% being neutral and 10.5% indicating their mentoring was poor or very poor. We also asked respondents how satisfied they were with their mentor and how engaged their mentor was in helping them plan their next career move. As can be seen below, most are satisfied and find the mentor helpful, however, 9% indicated that they do not find their mentor helpful in planning their next career move. When asked how often they meet with their mentor to discuss work and career, 18.8% responded that they meet daily and 53.5% responded that they meet weekly. However, fully a quarter of respondents indicated they only meet with their mentor monthly.



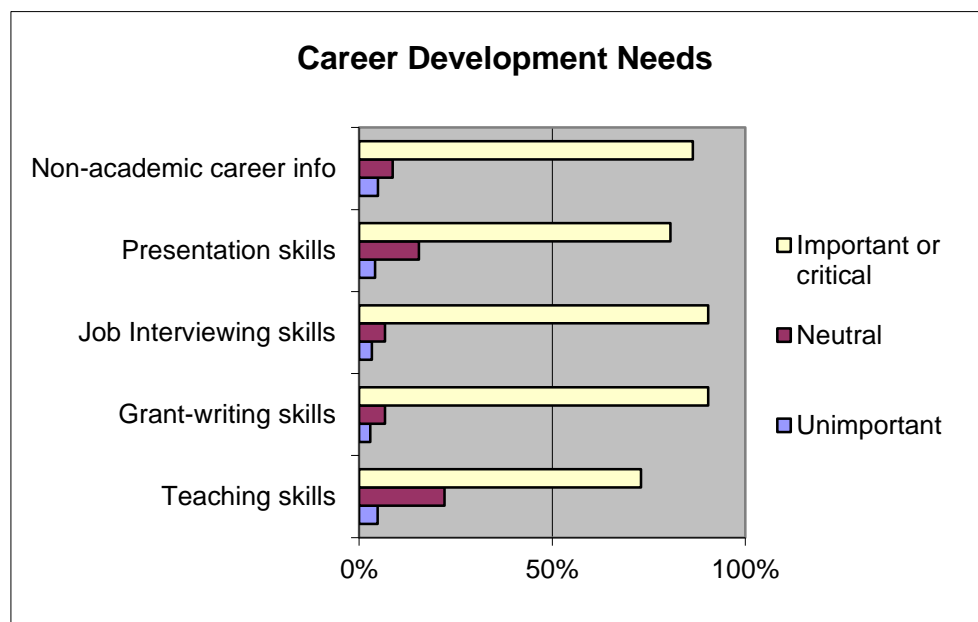
We asked respondents if they had developed a written career plan for themselves and if they had shared that plan with their mentors. Only 25% of the respondents indicated they had completed a career plan, and, of those who completed a plan, over 29% of them had not shared that plan with their mentor. Most postdocs perceived their mentors to be helpful or extremely helpful (62%), or at least willing to help in their career planning (29%), although over 20% indicated that they were uncomfortable or very uncomfortable discussing their next career move with their mentor.

Networking: Postdocs were asked to assess the quality of various networking opportunities and social activities at VCU, and to rate how important these opportunities/activities were to them. On a scale of 1 (low) to high (5), the mean rating for the quality of networking activities whether

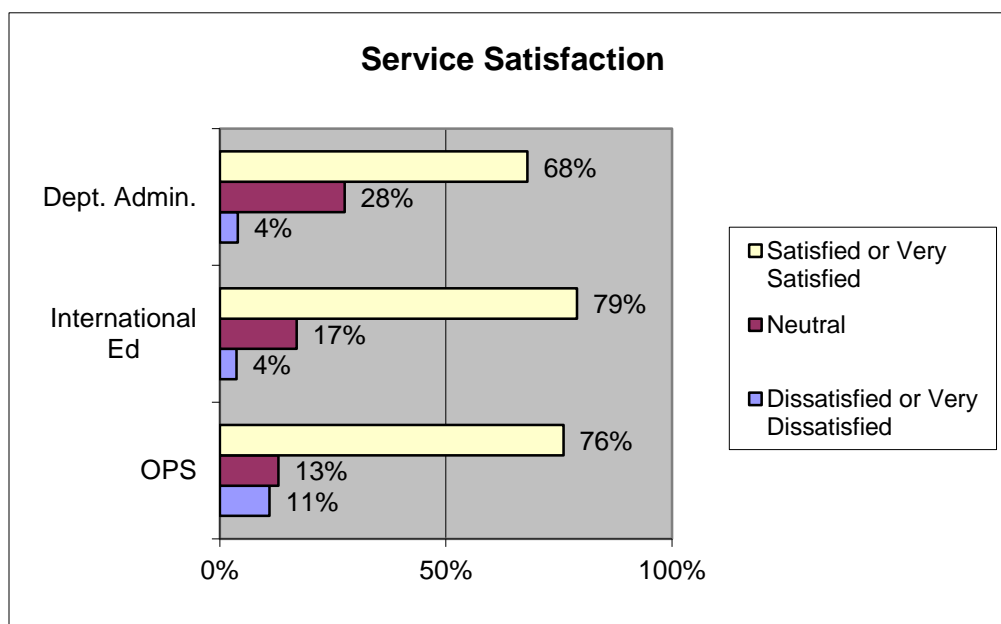
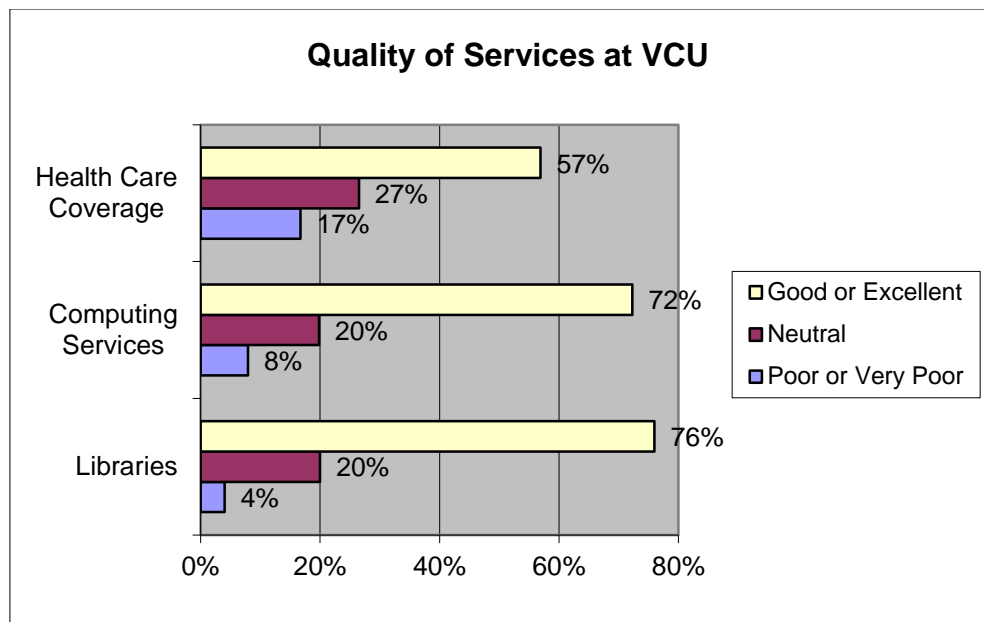
at VCU or outside VCU, is lower than the importance the respondents place on these activities. As with respondents in past surveys, networking outside VCU was rated as very important, but a substantial percentage (over 36%) of the respondents rated the quality of their networking opportunities outside VCU as poor or very poor.



Career development activities: To help the Office of Postdoctoral Services in its planning, respondents were asked how important it is for them to receive training in a variety of areas. While grant writing has consistently been the most important need expressed by respondents, non-academic career information and job interviewing skills have increased in importance among respondents over the years. In this year's survey, over 85% of all respondents indicated that non-academic career information was important or critical to them. This compares to just over 50% in our 2009 survey.



Services available to Postdocs: Respondents were asked to rate the quality and satisfaction of a variety of services available to them at VCU. We do see a substantial number of respondents who indicated they were “neutral” on these questions. This is likely a function of the percentage who have been at VCU for less than a year, and thus have had limited experience with the service. In general, postdoctoral scholars are quite satisfied with the services available to them at VCU. Healthcare coverage continues to be one area of concern, but compared to earlier surveys, the percentage of those who responded that their health care coverage was good or excellent has increased. In 2009, 27% indicated that health care coverage was poor or very poor, compared to 17% this year, and only 47% rated it as good or excellent in 2009, compared to this year’s 57%. Open ended comments, however, still indicate considerable concern about cost and family coverage.



Overall satisfaction with postdoctoral experience at VCU: 75% of the respondents rated their experience at VCU as a postdoc as either satisfied (53%) or very satisfied (22%), whereas 7% (N = 7) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, and 18% were neutral. We also asked respondents how valued they felt at VCU. 15% indicated they were not valued and 42% felt only mildly valued. When asked for additional comments to explain their response to this question, respondents noted such things “My mentor values me, but my salary and my temporary employee status do not make me feel valued by the university;” “Postdocs are exploited here. Plain and simple. Do all the work, get no benefits or recognition.”