Postdoctoral Scholar Frequently Asked Questions

Please visit our website for additional information: <http://www.research.vcu.edu/postdoc/index.htm>

**Is there an option for getting lower cost health insurance for family members?**

Postdocs may find lower cost family coverage through one of the health exchanges. Visit this website to learn more about your options and eligibility. <https://www.healthcare.gov/families/>

**How do I find low cost childcare in the area?**

VCU [Work/Life Resources](http://www.hr.vcu.edu/wellness.html) (828-1533, [worklife@vcu.edu](mailto:worklife@vcu.edu)) provides information about child care options in the surrounding area and across the country. The Virginia Department of Social Services also has a website that allows you to search for childcare facilities in the area. <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/search/cc.cgi> Depending on your income, you may be eligible for childcare assistance from the Department of Social Services: <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/assistance.cgi>

The PDA webpage also has a listing of some childcare resources that have been used by postdocs. <http://postdocs-vcu.wikispaces.com/>

**Are there career services available to postdocs, especially for positions outside of academia?**

The Office of Postdoctoral Services and the PDA offer periodic sessions on career opportunities and career development topics. Postdocs are also invited (and often given priority) to attend sessions at the VCU Biotech Park. Announcements of these programs are done through the postdoc listserv. There is also a program that was launched in Spring 2014 that focuses on career development for biomedical postdocs and grad students with particular focus on careers outside the academic setting. For more information please go to: <http://www.pharmacy.vcu.edu/programs/graduate/vcu_best/>

We are also currently working with the VCU Career Center to enhance services to postdocs on campus. Watch for listserv announcements about the developments in this area.

**How do I find out about research funding opportunities?**

The best place to start is on the Office of Research resources for researchers’ webpage. <http://www.research.vcu.edu/research_development/index.htm> For one-on-one assistance, contact Jessica Venable ([jcvenable@vcu.edu](mailto:jcvenable@vcu.edu)) who can provide you with instruction in using PIVOT, a powerful grant search tool that can be tailored for your specific area of research interest. Also, read the postdoc listserv for announcements of workshops focused on research proposal development and grant funding.

The OPS and PDA have also implemented an internal small grant program exclusively for postdocs. Proposals for the next round will be due in summer 2014. For application details go to: <http://www.research.vcu.edu/postdoc/small_grant_program.htm>

**What is the PDA?**

The PDA is the VCU Postdoctoral Association. It is an organization composed of all VCU postdocs whose mission is to support and advocate on behalf of postdoctoral scholars. To learn more about the organization, visit their website at: <http://postdocs-vcu.wikispaces.com/>

You should also join the PDA listserv to stay informed about activities sponsored by the PDA throughout the year. To join the list email Dr. Audrey Lafrenaye, President of the PDA at [forrestad@mymail.vcu.edu](mailto:forrestad@mymail.vcu.edu)

VCU is also a member of the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA). You can learn more about the NPA and the resources available to all VCU postdocs at: <http://www.research.vcu.edu/postdoc/npa.htm>

**Are there funds to help pay for travel expenses to present my research at professional conferences?**

Yes, the VCU Postdoctoral Association (PDA), has a travel grant program that makes awards 3 times per year. To be eligible for an award, the presenter must have an abstract accepted to a national or international meeting. Either poster or oral presentation format is eligible for the award. To be considered for this award a postdoctoral scholar must submit a pdf document of:

1. The abstract title, abstract and author names

2. Proof of acceptance of the abstract to a scientific meeting

3. A letter identifying why you need this award

Calls for travel award abstracts are sent via the PDA listserv. To join the listserv email Dr. Audrey Lefrenaye, President of the PDA at [forrestad@mymail.vcu.edu](mailto:forrestad@mymail.vcu.edu)

**Is there any neutral and confidential place at VCU where I can seek assistance if I have a problem within my lab or with my mentor?**

The university ombudsman is available to all postdocs. He provides assistance to help manage and resolve disputes, manage conflicts, and learn more productive ways of communicating.  For more information: <http://www.ombudsperson.vcu.edu/>

**Why do postdocs have to pay for using the recreational sports facilities (i.e., the gyms on campus) when students can use them for free?**

Students actually pay for use of the facilities through their mandatory university fee; in 2013-2014 this fee was $878.73/semester. For more information about student fees go to: <http://www.enrollment.vcu.edu/accounting/tuition_fees.html>

Postdocs are eligible for membership to the facilities at the faculty/staff rate. In 2013-2014, this rate was $200/year. For membership information: <http://www.recsports.vcu.edu/membership/>