



Sigma Xi Postdoctoral Survey

As part of its mission to support the health of the research enterprise, Sigma Xi is coordinating the development and implementation of a national series of surveys designed to improve postdoctoral education. Funded by a \$355,000 grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Sigma Xi is creating a confidential medium through which postdocs can provide candid feedback to their institutions about their training and research experiences. The results will enable institutions to benchmark their postdoctoral policies and practices against those of peer institutions.

For information regarding the Sigma Xi Postdoctoral Survey, please visit <http://postdoc.sigmaxi.org>, or contact us at postdoc@sigmaxi.org.

Sigma Xi thanks the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation for its generous support of this project and its continued commitment to the enhancement of the postdoctoral experience.

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Partners:

National Postdoc Association
Science's Next Wave
National Bureau of Economic Research
RTI International

Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society

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Sigma Xi Postdoctoral Survey

Overview

In an effort to improve the postdoctoral experience, Sigma Xi is working with postdoctoral associations and offices across the U.S. to develop, support, and coordinate a national set of postdoc surveys. Supported by a \$355,000 grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, and in partnership with the National Postdoc Association, *Science's* Next Wave, RTI International and the National Bureau of Economic Research, Sigma Xi is creating a confidential mechanism through which postdocs can provide candid feedback to their institutions about their training and research experiences. Sigma Xi is working with postdoc associations and offices and other educational leaders to develop a common set of survey questions so that institutions may benchmark their postdoc policies and practices against those of their peers. Participating organizations will be able to supplement the common core questions with their own locally administered questions. Survey specialists at RTI International will be crafting questions, designing methodological procedures, and performing statistical analyses to ensure that the surveys are of the highest quality.

Participating

Sigma Xi is developing a survey toolkit for use by participating organizations (i.e. postdoc associations, postdoc offices, deans, etc.) that consists of a core set of survey questions, web software for administering surveys online, a set of professionally designed methodological procedures, modest financial support for survey-related expenses, and a set of customized reports at the end.

If your postdoc association or office is interested in participating, do one of these things:

- Talk to Geoff Davis or Jenny Zilaro of Sigma Xi during the NPA meeting this week.
- Email us at postdoc@sigmaxi.org
- Visit our Web site at <http://postdoc.sigmaxi.org>
- Fill out the attached questionnaire and return it to Geoff or Jenny in person or by mail:
Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society, Box 13975, RTP, NC 27709

Timetable

The survey will be piloted at 3 institutions in the fall of 2003, and the main survey will follow in the spring of 2004. **Participating institutions will be identified by summer 2003.** For further information and updates, please visit <http://postdoc.sigmaxi.org>, or contact us at postdoc@sigmaxi.org.

About Sigma Xi

Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society is a non-profit membership society of nearly 75,000 scientists and engineers elected to the Society by virtue of their research achievements or potential. Sigma Xi's core mission is to enhance the health of the research enterprise, to foster integrity in science, and to promote the public's understanding of science for the purpose of improving the human condition.

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Survey Partners

National Postdoctoral Association, <http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/> : The National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) is a nascent organization committed to improving to the postdoctoral experience in the U.S. by working co-operatively with all parties and organizations involved in postdoctoral affairs. With the support of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the NPA seeks to crystallize the currently diffuse postdoc debate and provide a focal point for achieving administrative changes to improve the treatment of postdocs in the U.S.

The Postdoc Network at *Science's* Next Wave, <http://nextwave.sciencemag.org/pdn/> : The Postdoc Network (PDN) has become an active player in the postdoc policy arena, helping an increasing number of organizations of postdoctoral scholars and institutions hosting postdoctoral scholars as they work to enhance the postdoctoral experience. Launched in October 2000 with support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the PDN is a free-access online publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) dedicated to bringing together all the stakeholders involved in defining postdoc working conditions, including postdocs, academic administrators, government officials, funding organizations, and professional societies.

RTI International, <http://www.rti.org/> : RTI International is an independent organization dedicated to conducting innovative, multidisciplinary research that improves the human condition. With a worldwide staff of more than 1,950, RTI is active in health and medicine, environmental protection, technology commercialization, education and decision support systems.

National Bureau of Economic Research's Science and Engineering Workforce Project, <http://www.nber.org/~sewp/> : The NBER Science and Engineering Workforce Project (SEWP) is a group of economists and other researchers (mathematicians, historians) working on issues relating to the development, deployment and contribution of scientists, engineers and related workers to the economy. The SWP was established in 2001 with funding from the Sloan Foundation and meets three times a year to discuss key science-job-market issues with public and private policy-makers and participants in the job market.

Sigma Xi Postdoc Survey: We Want Your Input

On the reverse, you will find an outline of potential areas to address in our survey questions. Further elaboration on these areas, along with an extensive list of questions collected from existing postdoc surveys as background material, appear on the web site:

<http://postdoc.sigmaxi.org>

Please share your responses with Geoff Davis or Jenny Zilaro of Sigma Xi during the NPA meeting this week, email us at postdoc@sigmaxi.org, or mail us at Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society, Box 13975, RTP, NC 27709.

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Title: _____

Institution: _____

What are your top priorities for the aspects of the postdoctoral experience we should explore? Here we are looking for fairly broad categories, e.g. “access to medical benefits” or “career plans of foreign postdocs.”

Are there any specific issues or hypotheses that you would like us to investigate? At this point we do not need specific questions to ask on the survey. Rather, we would like general questions that you would like answered such as “Are security regulations having an impact on non-US citizen postdocs’ research?” or “Does access to family benefits impact experiences for female postdocs?”

Please share other ideas, comments, concerns!

Sigma Xi Postdoctoral Survey Areas of Interest
See <http://postdoc.sigmaxi.org/questions> for more details

A. Demographic information

B. Expectations and outcomes

- Measures of overall value
 - Productivity
 - Satisfaction
 - Retention
 - Willingness to recruit prospective postdocs
- Goals and expectations

C. The postdoc experience

- Mentorship
 - Frequency of interaction
 - Formal goal setting
 - Formal evaluation
 - Non-PI mentors
 - Miscellaneous
- Research environment
- Postdoc control of experience
- Training
 - Student vs. employee
 - Concrete skills training
 - Courses/workshops/seminar
 - Education in research protocol issues such as ethics, conflicts of interest, and outside consulting
 - Communication skills
 - Grantsmanship
 - Teaching
- Resources and facilities
 - Travel funding

D. Compensation and benefits

- Compensation
- Tax status
- Medical benefits
- Leave
- Workers compensation
- Transportation
- Housing
- What benefits does population need/want?

E. Administrative issues

- Status and affiliation
- Classification
- Letter of appointment/contract
- Letter of completion
- Fractional appointment
- Perverse incentives
- Authorship policies
- Misconduct policies
- Time limitations
- Grievance resolution
- Conflicts of interest
- Policy awareness / efficacy
- Postdoc association / office

F. Career Issues

- Progression in status
- Job transition
- Opportunities
- Career counseling and job placement assistance

G. Issues of special interest

- Family issues
- Foreign postdocs