



CGS Workshop on Post Docs

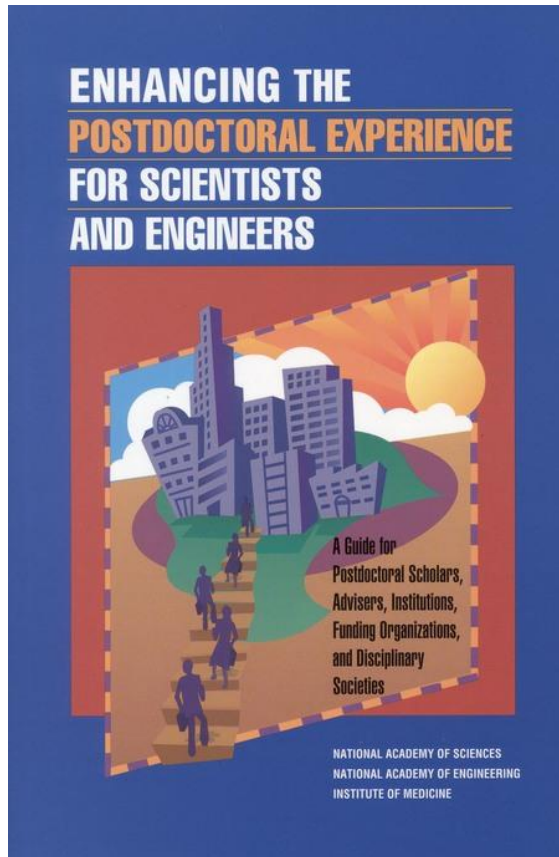
Jeffrey Engler, Associate Dean, UAB Graduate School

Susan Porter, Dean and Vice-Provost, University of British Columbia

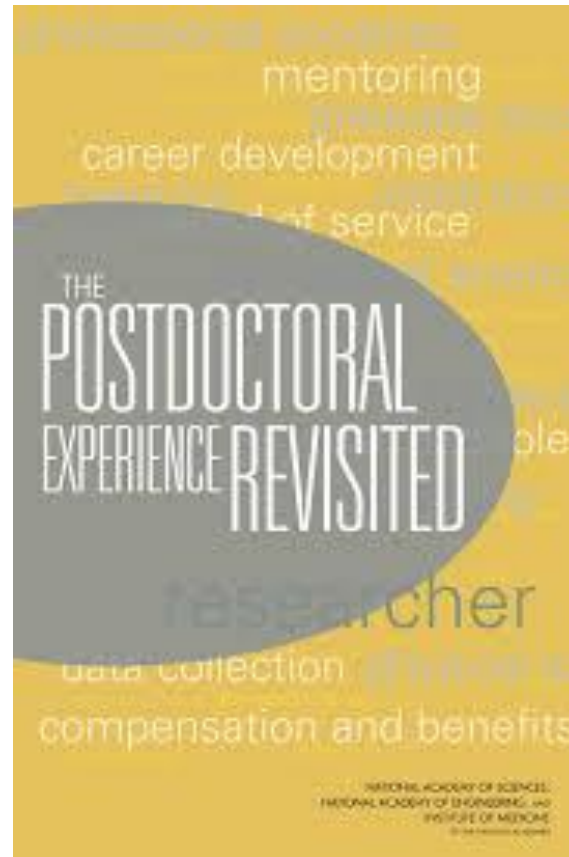
Elizabeth Watkins, Dean, UCSF Graduate Division

Topics for today's workshop

1. Terms of employment: how to identify/count? Issues of unionization. How can a grad dean influence?
2. Career planning and professional development: IDPs, curriculum, mentoring, skill development
3. Community building: avoiding isolation, postdoc slam, postdoc appreciation week; postdoc associations
4. Tracking outcomes
5. Services to provide postdocs
6. How to start a postdoc office: what works and doesn't work?



NAS report 2000
<http://www.nap.edu/catalog/9831.html>



Science Unscrambled: the postdoctoral experience:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3H0tLeQnOo>
 Aug. 5, 2015

THE FUTURE OF THE POSTDOC

There is a growing number of postdocs and few places in academia for them to go. But change could be on the way.

BY KENDALL POWELL

By the time Sophie Thuault-Restituto reached her twelfth year as a postdoctoral fellow, she had finally had enough. She had completed her first postdoc in London, then moved to New York University (NYU) in 2004 to start a second. Eight years and two laboratories later, she was still there and still effectively a postdoc, precariously dependent on outside grants to secure and pay for her position. Her research on Alzheimer's disease was not making it into high-profile journals, so she was unable to compete for academic positions in the United States or Europe. She loved science and had immense experience, but with two young children at home, she knew she needed something more secure. "My motivation was gone. I was done with doing research," she says.

So in 2013, Thuault-Restituto moved into a job as a research-laboratory operations manager at NYU, where she coordinates building renovations and fosters collaboration

between labs. She enjoys the fact that her staff position has set hours, as well as better pay and benefits. But at the time of the move, she mourned the loss of a research career and she regrets the years wasted pursuing one. "I stayed five years more than I should have," she says.

Thuault-Restituto is the face of a postdoctoral system that is broken. These highly skilled scientists are a major engine driving scientific research, yet they are often poorly rewarded and have no way to progress in academia. The number of postdocs in science has ballooned: in the United States alone, it jumped by 150% between 2000 and 2012. But the number of tenured and other full-time faculty positions has plateaued and, in some places, it is even shrinking (see *Nature* 472, 276–279; 2011). Many postdocs move on to fulfilling careers elsewhere, but those who want to continue in research can find themselves thwarted. They end up trapped as 'permadocs': doing multiple postdoc terms, staying in these positions

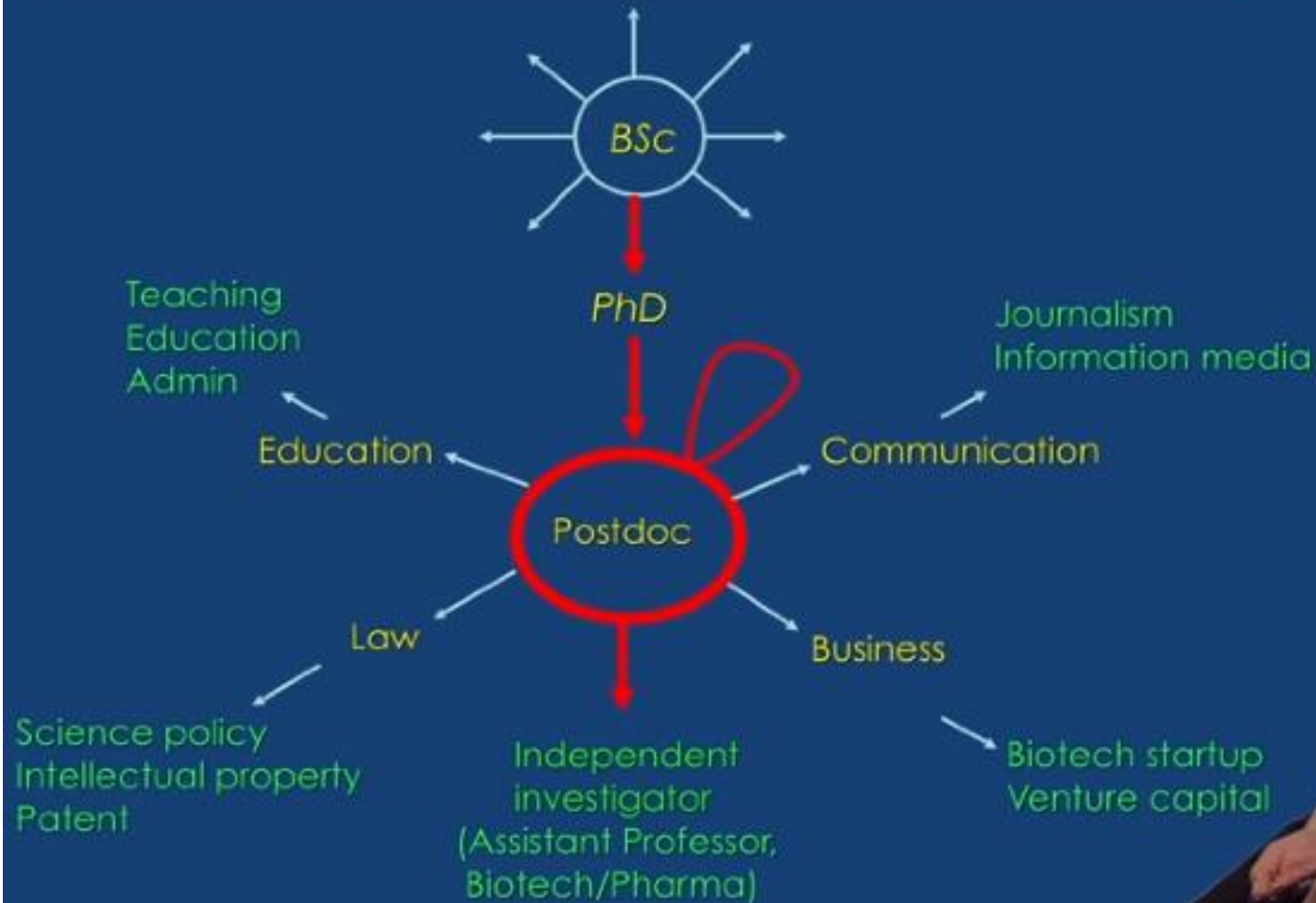
for many years and, in a small but significant proportion, never leaving them. Of the more than 40,000 US postdocs in 2013, almost 4,000 had been so for more than 6 years (see "The postdoc pile-up").

This problem is felt acutely in the large US biomedical-sciences workforce, but the trends are similar in many other countries and disciplines — and the economic drivers are too. Postdoc salaries have remained low — often less than the stipend and tuition costs of a graduate student. "We had the incentives all wrong," says Paula Stephan, an economist at Georgia State University in Atlanta who studies research labour markets. "We made postdocs so cheap that principal investigators had lots of incentives to hire them."

Discussion about the postdoc problem has grown increasingly loud. In December 2014, a committee convened by the US National Academies released a report aimed at highlighting and improving the postdoc's plight. The

Powell, K. (2015) *Nature* **520**: 144-147.

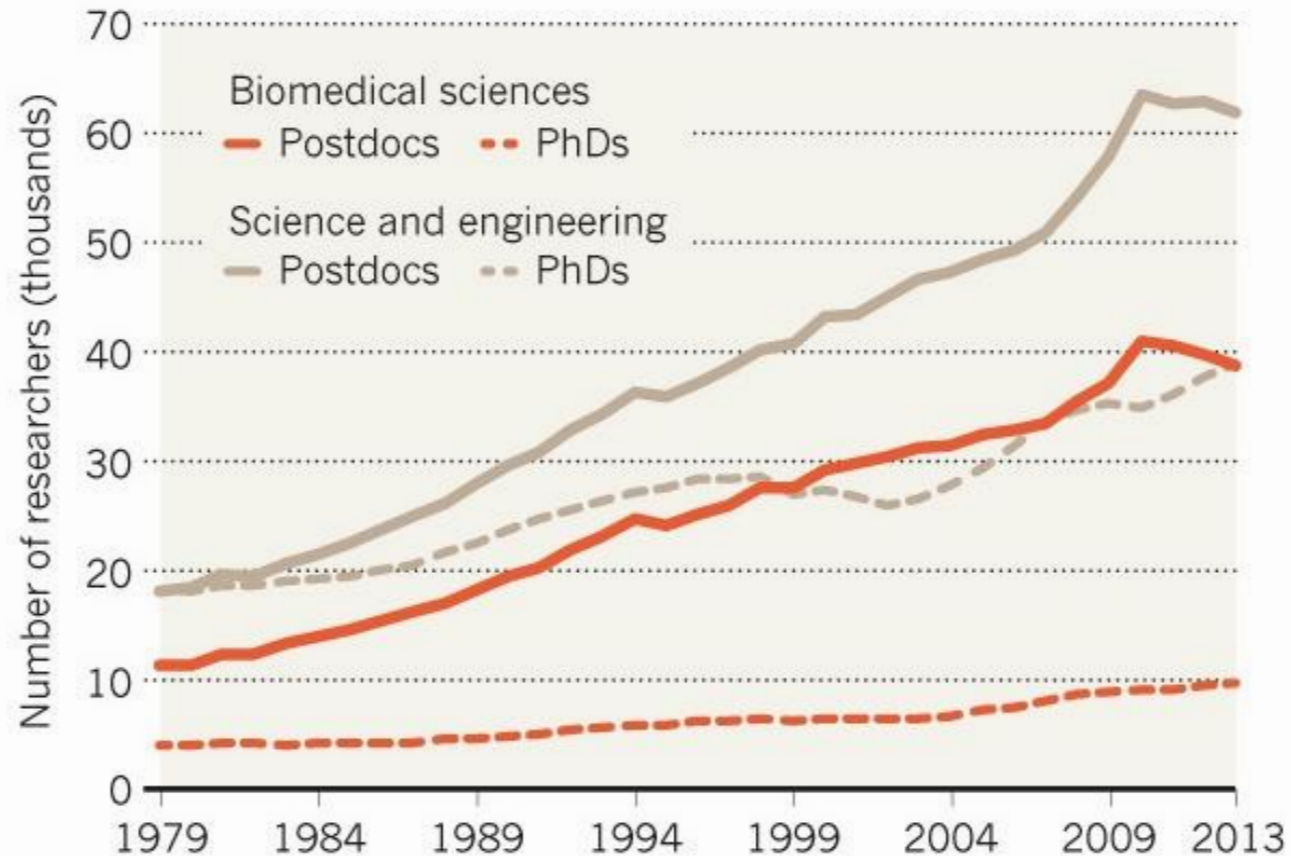
NOW: The Postdoc Terminal



Keith Yamamoto video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10DAHpa_B9k 2/19/2014

Postdoctoral Fellows in the US 1979 - 2013



<http://www.nature.com/news/massive-pool-of-us-biomedical-postdocs-starts-to-shrink-1.18632>.

Accessed 11/3/15.

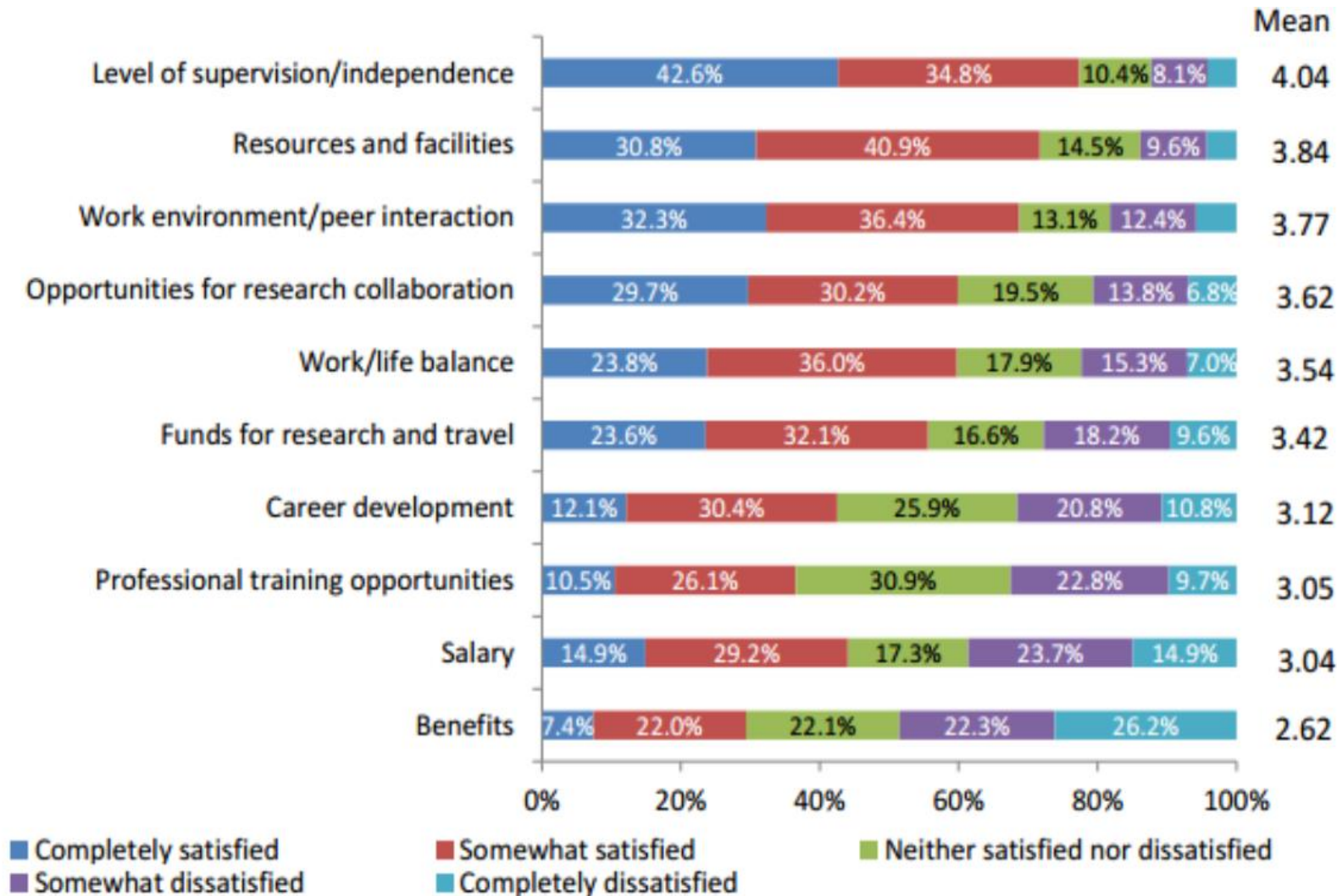
The 2013 Canadian Postdoc Survey:

Painting a Picture of Canadian Postdoctoral Scholars

CAPS-ACSP and Mitacs

Mitchell, J.S., Walker, V.E., Annan, R.B., Corkery, T.C., Goel, N., Harvey, L., Kent, D.G., Peters, J., Vilches, S.L. 2013. The 2013 Canadian Postdoc Survey: Painting a Picture of Canadian Postdoctoral Scholars. Canadian Association of Postdoctoral Scholars and Mitacs.

Satisfaction with elements of postdoctoral experience



- **81%** originally wanted tenure-track career
- **69%** currently want tenure-track career
- **<50%** will obtain tenure-track career

I would have loved to have realized earlier that [consulting] was an option for me! It would have relieved a lot of anxiety about my future.

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4. Tracking outcomes
5. Services to provide postdocs
6. How to start a postdoc office: what works and doesn't work?

Framing Questions: Terms of Employment

Goal: Understand and advocate for appropriate terms of postdoctoral appointments.

1. What types and terms of appointments are available to postdocs?
2. How do those classifications affect the benefits they receive?
3. Benefits: Health insurance, retirement, family leave, child care
4. What future challenges will institutions face with regard to postdoctoral trainees?

Framing Questions: Professional Development

Goal: What resources for career planning and advising can graduate deans provide?

1. Individual development plans
2. Career coaching and advising
3. Mentor training for faculty
4. Professional skills

Framing Questions: Community Building

Goal: Design a meaningful postdoc orientation session that can be replicated at your institution

Considerations:

1. **Timing:** Postdocs begin employment throughout the year. How often should orientation sessions be offered? How long should each session last?
2. **Communication:** How will you invite new postdocs and encourage attendance?
3. **Outcomes:** What should the postdoc take away from the session?
4. **Format:** How to present information in engaging fashion? How to encourage interaction? Will you include campus partners? Will you provide food?
5. **Evaluation:** How will you assess the success of the orientation?

Framing Questions: Tracking Outcomes

Goal: Design components of retrospective and prospective postdoc career outcomes studies that can be initiated at your institution

Considerations:

1. Defining your goals: who is the audience for this study?
2. Identifying postdocs to include in the study
3. Choosing a method: respondent survey or independent ascertainment
4. Choosing a data management system
5. Developing categories of employment (sector, job description)
6. Collaborating with campus partners (departments, PIs, alumni relations, career services)
7. Distributing the workload

Framing Questions: How to Start a Postdoc Office?

Goal: Develop potential strategies for creating a postdoc office and/or to optimizing such an office

Questions:

1. What should be the primary mandates of a postdoc office?
2. Some are housed in the VP-Research office, some in the Graduate School, some may be independent, or elsewhere. Where should the office be housed, and why?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of where they are housed? What synergies may be present? Are there potential conflicts?
4. How much should a postdoc office be responsible for? Is it important for some services or oversight to be linked? E.g., Appointment and orientation? Funding adjudication and application support?
5. What role should the office play in advocacy for postdocs, both within and external to the university?
6. What does it cost to run a postdoc office? What personnel are needed?

Framing Questions: Services for Postdocs

Goal: Consider what services postdocs should have, how they should be provided, and by whom, they should be provided.

1. Could or should some of the following services be available for postdocs?

- Recruitment, identification of potential supervisors at institution;
- Assistance with immigration issues;
- Assistance with relocation and housing;
- Appointment, and assistance regarding appointment conditions, etc.;
- Orientation;
- Assistance with conflict, IP, academic concerns, etc;
- Professional development and English language support;
- Career services;
- Funding application support;
- Counseling;
- Others?

Framing Questions: Services for Postdocs

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1. Could or should some of the following services be available for postdocs?
2. Which, if any, should a designated Postdoc Office provide, which, if any, should others provide?
3. Should the service be provided by those dedicated to postdocs? Can some be provided from faculty-oriented units, or student-oriented units?
4. What kinds of collaboration might be possible between the units offering services?

Thanks for your participation!

