



THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL  
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development

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TO: Deans, Directors and Department Heads

FROM: Robert N. Shelton  
Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor

Tony G. Waldrop  
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RE: Policies Applicable to Postdoctoral Fellows

Last year the University formed an advisory committee consisting of faculty and postdoctoral fellows to identify issues affecting the quality of postdoctoral life at UNC at Chapel Hill, to advise the Office of Postdoctoral Services regarding new directions and initiatives, and to help establish standard policies for postdoctoral scholars at UNC. This committee has made a number of recommendations that have been presented to the Council of Deans and to the Vice Chancellors.

We write to inform you of new policies that have been established relative to postdoctoral scholars (see attached pages). These policies become effective July 1, 2003. Please distribute the attached pages to all faculty and postdoctoral scholars. Any questions can be directed to Tony Waldrop (962-1319; twaldrop@unc.edu). We very much appreciate the efforts of committee members and, in particular, the leadership of David Lee who chaired the committee. The membership list of the Advisory Committee is attached.

## **Postdoctoral Fellow Policies**

### **Effective: July 1, 2003**

#### Introduction

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill annually hosts approximately 900 Postdoctoral Fellows on its campus. Postdoctoral Fellows are placed in many different departments and centers at the University, and they are associated with the University primarily with the goal to continue their academic training. However, some aspects of their relationship with the University more resemble those of employees.

Given the hybrid nature of their association, the University has developed these policies to better outline the University's and the Postdoctoral Fellow's obligations and expectations in various contexts.

#### Definition of Postdoctoral Fellows

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill will utilize the FASEB (Federal of American Societies for Experimental Biology) definition of Postdoctoral Fellows. This includes the following criteria:

- 1) the appointee was awarded a Ph.D., equivalent doctorate or terminal degree (e.g., Sc.D., M.D., M.F.A.) in an appropriate field;
- 2) the appointment is temporary;
- 3) the appointment involves substantially full-time research or scholarship;
- 4) the appointment is viewed as preparatory for a full-time academic or research career;
- 5) the appointment may be part of a clinical training program, if research training under the supervision of a mentor is a primary purpose of the appointment;
- 6) the appointee works under the supervision of a scholar or a department in a university or similar research institution (e.g., national laboratory, NIH, etc.);  
and
- 7) the appointee is expected to publish the results of his or her research or scholarship during the period of appointment, in consultation with his or her mentor.

## Expectations of Postdoctoral Fellows

The University has adopted the following universal set of performance expectations (developed by FASEB) for Postdoctoral Fellows:

- 1) conscientious discharge of assigned duties;
- 2) adherence to ethical standards;
- 3) compliance with good laboratory practice and recognized University standards;
- 4) observation of established guidelines for research involving biohazards, human subjects or animals;
- 5) open and timely discussion with the mentor regarding research progress, distribution of reagents or materials, or any disclosure of findings or techniques privately or in publications;
- 6) collegial conduct towards coworkers; and
- 7) compliance with all applicable University policies and procedures.

## Appointment Policies for Postdoctoral Fellows

### 1) Appointment and Discontinuation of Appointment

The **maximum term of appointment** for a Postdoctoral Fellow is five years. Following this five-year training period, a Postdoctoral Fellow must either be moved into an established employee position or separated with a minimum ninety days notice.

A Postdoctoral Fellow may have his/her appointment ended without notice at any time during the appointment if he/she is found to have violated the expectations set forth above.

A Postdoctoral Fellow may have his/her appointment ended with thirty days notice if the funding supporting his/her appointment ends.

### 2) Evaluation

A mentor of a Postdoctoral Fellow must submit an **annual evaluation** of the Fellow's performance to the section head, department chair, center director, or other unit administrator directly responsible for the area in which the Postdoctoral Fellow is training. The evaluation process should be relatively simple and should include the opportunity for the Fellow to respond in writing to the evaluation.

### 3) Compensation

The **minimum stipend** for a Postdoctoral Fellow should be no less than the levels established by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) ([http://www.nichd.nih.gov/training/prog\\_post.htm#PA-03-067](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/training/prog_post.htm#PA-03-067)). The University recommends that all Postdoctoral Fellows receive no less than the NIH minimal level beginning July 1, 2003. However, the University will not require compliance with this stipend provision until July 1, 2006.

### 4) Leave

A Postdoctoral Fellow is eligible for: (a) 10 days of compensated **vacation leave** (in addition to recognized university holidays) per year and (b) 12 days of compensated **sick leave** per year. Neither vacation leave nor sick leave can be carried over to a new calendar year.

A Postdoctoral Fellow is eligible for six weeks of paid parental leave to care for a new biological or adopted child, which includes exhausting all available vacation and sick leave. This paid parental leave must be taken within one year of the birth or placement of the child.

### 5) Grievances

A Postdoctoral Fellow is eligible to use the University's Mediation Policy at any time to address a matter of concern.

Additionally, a Postdoctoral Fellow may use the following procedure to address matters of concern related to his/her appointment:

- a) The Fellow must make every effort to resolve the matter informally through discussions with his or her mentor.
- b) If the matter is not adequately resolved by discussion with the mentor, the Fellow must then seek resolution informally through the mentor's section head, department chair, center director or other unit administrator directly responsible for the mentor's professional activities.
- c) If still unresolved, the Fellow may formally request resolution by the Dean of the School in which the mentor is appointed. Such a request must be accompanied by a written statement describing the matter of concern, the supporting facts, and the disposition of prior informal discussions. The Dean shall seek to resolve the matter promptly, providing a written response outlining the reasons for the decision.
- d) If still unresolved, the Fellow may formally request in writing a resolution by the Provost.