ACD Working Group on Re-envisioning NIH-Supported Postdoctoral Training (Postdoc WG)

Shelley Berger, PhD & Tara Schwetz, PhD
NIH Advisory Committee to the Director Meeting
November 3, 2022
Decline in Postdocs – Not new, but growing challenge…
Postdocs #s have steadily increased since 1980, but stayed relatively flat for the last decade

NSF Statistics: U.S. Researchers by Position Over Time

Researchers by Position in 2020

- **Nonfaculty Researchers with doctorates**: 31%
- **Post Doctoral Appointees**: 69%

Source: https://ncses.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf22319

Data to be updated December 2020
NIH NRSA Postdoctoral Fellows and Trainees, and Stipend Level
Decreasing awards and increasing stipends (but low compared to industry)

Number of Postdocs Supported, 1998 - 2021
Stipend Level, 2010 - 2022

Source: NIH/OER
Doctorate Recipient Employment Commitments

Increasing percentage of earned doctorates commit immediately to industry/business

Employment Sector of Science & Engineering Doctorate Recipients with Definite Postgraduation Commitments for US Employment

- **Industry/Business**: 57%
- **Academia**: 26%
- **Government**: 9%
- **Nonprofit**: 6%
- **Other/Unknown**: 3%

Source: [https://ncses.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf22319](https://ncses.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf22319)

Data to be updated December 2020
Multi-Factorial Challenge

Is there an ongoing change in trajectory of graduate student decisions?
Proposed WG Charge

- **Evaluate** evidence on the perceived shortage in PhDs seeking U.S. postdocs
- **Assess and consider** factors influencing the scope and persistence of the issue
- **Review and compare** other approaches to postdoctoral training
- **Consider** ways to support postdocs’ quality-of-life and work-life balance
- **Engage** key internal and external stakeholders
Proposed ACD Working Group

Co-Chairs:

Shelley Berger, PhD
Tara Schwetz, PhD

Proposed WG Membership and Expertise:

- ACD members
- NIH members
- Postdocs
- Grad students
- Early career investigators
- Academic organizations
- Postdoc associations
- Economists

Executive Secretaries:

- Joel Islam
- Laura Long
Welcome ideas, thoughts, questions, and volunteers for the proposed ACD WG