FLORIDA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Policy on Mentoring Postdoctoral Scholars

POC: Asst. Vice Provost for Research
Date: Nov 9, 2009

Approved by:
T. Dwayne McCay
Provost and Executive Vice President

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has recently announced the requirement for inclusion of a postdoctoral scholar training plan effective for proposals submitted on or after 1/5/09. The NSF proposal project description will include a new section concerning the mentoring of postdoctoral scholars whenever a proposed project includes postdoctoral scholars. This separate section will be included in the 15-page limit and provide a full description of the assessed in the merit review as part of the broader impacts criteria, and proposals that include a postdoctoral scholar but do not address postdoctoral scholar mentoring as a separate section in the project description will be returned without review. NSF will also require that annual reports and the final report for the research grants that include funding to support postdoctoral scholars include a description of the mentoring activities provided to such researchers.

Developing a Mentoring Plan:

A complete mentoring plan should contain information about academic as well as professional development training. Ideally, the plan should be developed through discussions between the postdoctoral scholar and the faculty mentor.

Please note that the information provided below is not intended as boilerplate text for proposals (the NSF has strongly recommended against this); rather the following information is provided to assist faculty in preparing a customized mentoring plan tailored to a faculty member's own laboratory and research program and to demonstrate the slate of resources available to them and trainees.

Specify how you initiate the training of a new postdoctoral scholar, include discussions associated with expectation setting, both yours and theirs.

Indicate how frequently you meet individually with each postdoc to discuss research results and to explicitly discuss his/her specific career goals (instead of simply stating an open-door policy, describe a specific meeting schedule, say once a week or month for an hour to go over results and/or issues in conjunction with your availability in person or electronically).

Describe weekly/biweekly/monthly journal clubs, lab meetings, or other departmental/school meetings at which postdocs have the opportunity or are required to present and discuss their research with other members of the laboratory or other research groups including poster sessions.

Describe additional experimentation facilities along with training that may be available to postdoc, if relevant to the proposed research.

Include additional learning opportunities available to postdoc through collaborations with which the laboratory or postdocs will be involved specifically.

Indicate any travel support for postdocs to attend regional, national, and/or international scientific meetings to facilitate their training and to provide networking opportunities.

If relevant, indicate that you require your postdocs to attend training programs that address ethical and safety issues related to Human Subjects research and use of laboratory animals.

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Describe how your postdocs are involved in the grant writing and manuscript preparation and review including opportunities to attend workshops on grant proposal preparation.

Describe the annual performance evaluation process you use to evaluate all postdoctoral scholars such as resources available.