

September 28, 2018

SENATE RESEARCH OFFICERS COMMITTEE (ROC)

2017-2018 ACADEMIC YEAR FINAL REPORT

Here we provide brief summaries for a few of the highest-priority issues that the ROC addressed during the past year.

Staff Officer Title Changes/Salary Equity Report. In February 2014, the Office of the Provost released its latest Salary Study of Officers of Research. This was a follow-up to a previous study, released in May 2010, which found a number of statistically significant differentials in pay by gender and race/ethnicity and included recommendations for addressing this issue. The follow-up study found almost exactly the same pay differentials. Some of the largest differentials were among the Staff Officers. The Office of the Provost is still working on increasing the number of Staff Officer grades from two to six so as to reclassify this population and repeat the study using titles that better reflect its levels of experience and responsibility. The ROC is very concerned that the reclassification process is taking so long to implement. It is now over four and a half years since the last study was released.

Addressing Postdoctoral issues with the Columbia Administration. The ROC has been in discussions with Chris Brown (Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs), Mike Purdy (Executive Vice President for Research), and Ericka Peterson (Director, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs) about several issues affecting the postdoctoral community. These discussions have led to some improvements in the Postdoctoral Teaching Policy. We hope these policy changes, to be rolled out soon, will remove some of the current obstacles facing postdoctoral researchers who desire to teach. The ROC has also drawn the administration's attention to a number of mental health issues present in the postdoctoral and associate research scientist communities. In response, the Offices of Faculty Affairs and of the EVP for Research have started an initiative to survey grad students, postdocs, and associate research scientists, via an outside consulting firm, to identify key areas where Columbia can better assist its employees and graduate students. This initiative has benefited from collaboration with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and the Columbia University Postdoc Society.

Town Hall Meetings for Postdoctoral Researchers. Two were held in March—one on Morningside and one at CUMC—and one in May at Lamont. Brief presentations were given by the Chair or Vice-Chair of the ROC, by Ombuds Officer Joan Waters, by Ericka Peterson, and by Postdoc Senator Regina Martuscello for the Columbia University Postdoctoral Society (CUPS). One of the major issues raised was misconduct by Principal Investigators. Postdocs said some PIs have verbally abused or threatened them, made sexual advances to them, or overworked them, sometimes prohibiting them from taking vacation days. Other major problems for postdocs include insufficient housing

and childcare resources, as well as uncertainty about their benefits and contract terms. . There is also a general sense that postdocs are treated better at Cornell and NYU than at Columbia.

Meetings with university administrators and others

- Michael E. Stokes, Co-President, Columbia University Postdoctoral Society (15 Aug 2017).
- Ericka Peterson, Director, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (14 Nov 2017).
- Chris Brown, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs; G. Michael Purdy, Executive Vice President for Research; Pearl Spiro, Associate Provost; Ericka Peterson (13 Dec 2017).
- Joint meeting with the Senate Housing Policy Committee (01 Mar 2018).
- Joan Waters, Ombuds Officer, and her aide Jeimy Batista (17 Apr 2018).
- Geraldine Mc Allister, Senate Director (12 Jun 2018).

Some issues for the coming year

- Salary equity, annual raises, and salary minimums
- Staff Officer titles reclassification
- Housing (esp. for first year foreign national postdocs)
- PI misconduct survey
- Promotion policy

Respectfully,

University Senate Research Officers Committee 2017-2018

DANIEL WOLF SAVIN, Chair, *Senior Research Scientist*, Astrophysics Laboratory
HABIB BORJIAN, *Associate Research Scholar*, Center for Iranian Studies
MANUELA BUONANNO, *Associate Research Scientist*, Center for Radiological Research
NANCY LOIACONO, *Associate Research Scientist*, Environmental Health Sciences
REGINA MARTUSCELLO, *Postdoctoral Research Scientist*, Pathology
SMARANDA MURESAN, Vice Chair, *Research Scientist*, Data Science Institute
ANGELA D. NELSON, *Senior Staff Associate*, Nephrology
SYLVIA TRZASKA, *Associate Research Scientist*, Center for International Earth Science Information Network
STEFAN VAN LIEFFERINGE, *Associate Research Scholar*, Department of Art History and Archeology