

Supplementary Documentation:

Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan for NSCL

On average there are approximately 20 experimental and theoretical postdoctoral fellows at NSCL working in the areas of nuclear structure, nuclear reactions and astro-nuclear physics topics. NSCL is an ideal research environment that enables the postdoctoral researchers to work and interact with undergraduate and graduate students, other postdoctoral researchers and more senior researches with diverse backgrounds on a daily basis. During the previous operating grant NSCL strengthened and improved the mentoring of both graduate students and postdoctoral researchers by the appointment of an Associate Director for Education. This person acts as an advocate for the young scientists and as a conduit for information in parallel to that provided by the supervisor or mentor.

As part of the Mentoring Plan a formal half-year review of all postdoctoral researchers was recently initiated. It begins with an entry interview where the postdoctoral researcher and supervisor discuss expectations and future career plans of the postdoctoral researcher guided by a form to be completed during the conversation that contains standard topics and questions related to the research activities. This initial discussion is then followed by similar meetings with a slightly different question and answer form every 6 months. Due to the short duration (2-3 years) of a typical appointment, an annual review was considered to be too infrequent. The required reviews should occur in April and October of each year and the completed forms are collected and reviewed by the Associate Director for Education.

The postdoctoral researchers are represented on all relevant NSCL committees: e.g., computer, diversity, outreach, electronics, and the seminar committee where they can play an active role in the policies and developments of the laboratory. These representatives are not appointed but elected by the postdoctoral researchers themselves.

The Associate Director for Education meets with all NSCL postdoctoral researchers as a group on a monthly basis to keep them informed about NSCL related news and activities. During these meetings the representative of the various committees also report back to the group. Postdoctoral researchers also maintain their own website, where they share experiences, hints and maintain a list of current job openings.

The postdoctoral researchers are also encouraged to participate in activities and programs offered by the University and the professional societies. For example, recent postdoctoral researchers have participated in an MSU sponsored Work/Life balance workshop and the APS professional development workshops. A grant writing workshop especially for NSCL junior faculty and postdoctoral researchers will be hosted this year by MSU's Office of Research Facilitation and Dissemination.

The NSCL mentoring plan contains a special focuses on career planning. Every semester two non-academic speakers are added to the seminar program (out of a total of 12-14 speakers) to present a broad view of career opportunities outside the traditional academic track. Yearly alumni get-togethers or other events offer additional interactions for current students and

postdoctoral researchers with successful NSCL alumni from a variety of careers. The NSCL alumni contact list currently contains the names of over 270 alumni who have offered to be contacted by students and postdocs for career advice (<http://www.nscl.msu.edu/ourlab/alumni>). The web based list can be instantly filtered by profession and geographic distribution to facilitate finding a contact.

Finally, the postdoctoral researchers are an integral part of all laboratory social activities at NSCL which include the Tuesday Morning “coffee and bagels”, Thursday afternoon “ice cream social”, as well as summer BBQs and various other receptions for new arrivals and departing colleagues. These activities further foster the interaction among all laboratory employees.

Part of the role of the Associate Director for Education is to institutionalize all of these activities, monitor their effectiveness, make adjustments based on feedback from faculty and the postdoctoral researchers, and develop new activities.