



Future of Research

Statement from Future of Research on the FLSA injunction

Updates to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA, which affects academic workers, including postdocs (<http://futureofresearch.org/flsa-and-postdocs/>)) were due to go into effect on Dec 1st, 2016 requiring either a minimum salary for those with non-exempt job duties of \$47,476, or the use of timesheets and payment of overtime at time-and-a-half over 40 hours in a work week. A hearing was held on November 16th with 21 U.S. states filing a preliminary injunction against the Department of Labor to delay the December 1st implementation of these updates to the FLSA. The injunction was granted on November 22nd.

Our most recent data as of Nov 20th, 10 days prior to implementation, showed that 69% of postdocs would have seen salaries raised. We urge those institutions who planned to raise postdoctoral salaries to continue with their plans to do so, as recommended by a consensus across academia (see Pickett et al., PNAS 2015: "Toward a sustainable biomedical research enterprise: Finding consensus and implementing recommendations"). We support the NIH in continuing its plans to raise NRSA stipend levels on Dec 1st.

Salary information at institutions is incredibly hard for postdocs and prospective postdocs to find and we encourage institutions to harmonize salaries - and benefits - across all postdoctoral designations, and to administer postdoctoral researchers in a manner that is easier to identify postdocs and their training outcomes.

We ask institutions who have moved postdoctoral researchers into hourly positions to re-institute salaried positions. It is not in the spirit of academia to make the postdoc an hourly position, but instead a mentored experience for the development of independence which requires flexibility in scheduling.

We also encourage institutions to treat postdocs on fellowships in the same way as they treat postdocs paid from research grants. Postdocs on fellowships are increasingly facing lower salaries and loss of benefits. These are competitive awards that should be rewards for excellent researchers, and postdocs should not face financial penalties for bringing competitive fellowships to institutions.

Reversing plans to raise postdoc salaries will be a setback in the national discussion about improving the academic enterprise. Academic institutions now have an opportunity, and indeed an obligation to their stated commitments to support training in academia, to take a stance at this time and improve the postdoctoral experience, and to ensure that it is indeed a high-quality training opportunity at their institution.