Postdoctoral Mentoring Program

Procedures, Guidelines and Resources

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Overview of the Mentoring Program:

As one of the largest laboratories in the nation for science and engineering research, Argonne National Laboratory is home to some of the most prolific and well-renowned scientists and engineers. To maintain an environment that fosters innovative research, we are committed to ensuring the success of our major players on the frontlines of our research—our Postdoctoral Scientists.

The Argonne National Laboratory has a long-standing reputation as a place that offers postdoctoral researchers the opportunity to:

- Perform in a rich science and technology environment
- Present and publish research
- Contribute to the overall research efforts of the Laboratory
- Advance knowledge in the areas of basic and applied research
- Strengthen our national scientific and technical capabilities.

Postdoctoral appointments at Argonne and elsewhere are temporary by design. These appointments are meant to be a periods of enrichment that allow young professionals the opportunity to build their skills and work towards achieving long-term career goals. Since the postdoctoral scientists here at Argonne make major contributions to the bulk of the Laboratory's work, it is beneficial for all that their tenure at the Lab be as productive and rewarding as possible. In turn, it is the Lab's responsibility to ensure that our Postdocs are successful in the next phase of their careers. The Lab-wide postdoc mentoring program was implemented to help us fulfill this goal.

The Mentoring Program's chief objective is to ensure that all postdocs have access to broad and sound advice about their career and personal development.

This document outlines the major steps in participating in the mentoring program and provides suggestions on ensuring a productive mentoring relationship.

Mentoring Program Roles/Definitions:

Mentees: Postdoctoral scientists. Responsible for arranging periodic meetings with their mentors and ensuring that all required documentation is completed.

Mentors: Lab research staff, other than the Postdoc's immediate supervisor or PI, who agree to serve as a postdoc's mentor. As a mentor, the staff member agrees to consul the mentee as needed or as requested. **The mentor is NOT responsible for resolving conflicts between the supervisor and the postdoc.**

Mentoring Program Coordinators:

- Local Divisional staff members who help facilitate mentor-mentee pairings within their division and assist in the implementation of the mentoring program within their home division.

- Maintains records of mentor-mentee pairings.
- Assists their divisions with procedural aspects of the Mentoring Program.

Mentoring Program Assistants: senior postdocs in the divisions who assist their divisional Mentoring Program Coordinator with facilitating mentor/mentee pairings and with procedural aspects of the program as needed.

Postdoctoral Program Coordinator:

- Educational Programs contact who oversees the Lab-wide Mentoring Program
- Serves as a point of contact for the divisions on issues regarding the Mentoring Program
- Maintains documentation of mentor/mentee pairings as reported by the divisions
- Assists the divisions in local implementation of the mentoring program
- Reports to the OTD on the status and progress of the Lab-wide Mentoring Program
- Evaluates the program on an annual basis and informs divisional mentoring program coordinators and management of the status of the program
- Helps implement strategies to enhance the effectiveness of the mentoring program
- Seeks input from the postdocs and divisional Mentoring Program Coordinator on the status and progress of the Mentoring Program.
- Ensures that Mentoring Program Policies and Procedures are followed and revises guidelines as deemed necessary upon recommendation from the divisions.

Mentoring Program Policies and Procedures:

The Postdoctoral Mentoring Program follows a structured-facilitated design. This is a relatively formal program with support from the Laboratory. In most cases, postdocs will select their own mentors after they have had the chance to review staff bios and meet with potential mentors. However, in divisions with a large number of postdocs, it may become necessary for the division to facilitate mentor-mentee pairings. This approach should only be taken with the understanding that the postdoc reserves the right to select a new mentor if desired.

The general steps to be taken by the postdoc are as follows:

1. Within 90 days of the starting date, each postdoc should select a member of the Argonne research staff to serve as a mentor. The mentor *must not* be the postdoc's supervisor.

2. Postdocs who encounter difficulties in identifying a mentor should seek assistance from their local Mentoring Program Coordinator and/or Assistant.

3. A mentor in the host division may be desirable from a practical standpoint. However, a postdoc may choose a mentor from another division provided that both parties agree to the mentoring arrangement.

4. Once a mentor has been identified, the mentoring agreement (attached to this document) should be filled out and returned to the Divisional Office, who will then forward it to the Postdoctoral Program Coordinator with copy to the Divisional Mentoring Program Coordinator.

5. It is recommended that mentors and mentees try to meet on a quarterly basis. However, the actual frequency of the meetings is at the discretion of the postdoc.

6. The meeting can take a variety of forms, including a simple check that everything is going well. Both parties should be proactive in ensuring that meetings take place. The annual postdoc evaluation form (ANL-699) is used to confirm that meetings have occurred.

7. In the event that a postdoc wishes to change mentor, a new designation may be made at any time by repeating the steps outlined above. The postdoc should consult the divisional Mentoring Program Coordinator to alert him/her of the change.

8. The postdoc should be proactive in filling out the MP evaluation items in the Lab postdoc evaluation form (ANL-699).

Procedures for Divisional Mentoring Program Coordinators

Divisions must select a staff member to fill the role of Mentoring Program Coordinator who is tasked with coordinating the Mentoring Program in their division. The major duties of the Mentoring Program Coordinator are:

1. Review the Mentoring Program Guidelines for their home divisions and the Postdoctoral Office.

2. Maintain a list of mentor-mentee pairings and update the Postdoctoral Program Coordinator as requested.

3. Assist postdocs with selecting a mentor as needed or as outlined by the divisional guidelines (some divisions have opted for a facilitated pairing approach).

4. Be cognizant of the arrival of new postdocs and inform incoming postdocs of the divisional guidelines for the mentoring program.

5. Update the divisional office on the status of the program as needed.

6. Serve as a point of contact for the Postdoctoral Program Coordinator regarding all aspects of the Mentoring Program.

7. Suggest strategies to improve and enhance the effectiveness of the mentoring program.

Procedures for Mentoring Program Assistants

It is suggested that divisions select a senior postdoc (or more than one) to assist the Mentoring Program Coordinator within their division. The Mentoring Program Assistant may also be looked at to set an example for other postdocs and promote collegiality within the division. The major duties of the Mentoring Program Assistant are:

1. Review the Mentoring Program Guidelines for their home divisions and the Postdoctoral Office.

2. Maintain collegial relationships with staff scientists and postdocs in order to be in a position to facilitate matching postdocs with mentors when needed.

3. Be cognizant of the arrival of new postdocs and assist the Mentoring Program Coordinator as needed in communicating the program guidelines to new postdocs.

4. Suggest strategies to improve and enhance the effectiveness of the mentoring program.

5. Serve as a liaison between the Mentoring Program Coordinator and the postdocs on issues regarding the Mentoring Program.

Procedures for Divisional Offices

1. The division office will maintain a list of postdocs and staff mentors to facilitate matchups. It is expected that the divisional office will maintain a dialogue with the Mentoring Program Coordinator to determine the status of the mentoring program and offer assistance as needed.

2. The total number of postdocs assigned to a given mentor is left to the discretion of the mentor and division office.

3. The division office should archive the mentor selection forms, with copies to the Laboratory Postdoctoral Program Lead.

4. If a mentor seeks assistance with a problem identified between a postdoc and supervisor, the division office should offer guidance in keeping with the Lab's Policies on Problem Resolution, currently HR-8000.1 in the LMS manual.

5. The division office, in coordination with the Mentoring Program Coordinator, should select Postdocs to serve as Mentoring Program Assistants as deemed necessary by the division. This practice is recommended for those divisions with large numbers of postdocs or whose research may be housed in several buildings, providing a challenge to communication. Ideally the postdocs should be "senior", i.e. have worked at the Lab for several months and are familiar with the Lab environment.

Advice for the Mentee:

The Mentoring Program was put in place for your benefit. While we cannot tell you what to ask of your mentor, we can offer suggestions for topics you might want to discuss. Whatever you discuss is between you and your mentor. You should prepare yourself to accept feedback and criticism, as this is part of the learning process. You should also take a proactive approach to mentoring. Do not wait for your mentor to come to you—call him/her to set up an appointment. Always maintain a professional demeanor and be mindful of your mentor's time.

Some things you may want to ask of your Mentor:

- What is your story—what is the career path your mentor took to become a staff scientist or engineer at Argonne.
- What other affiliations does your mentor have? Are they a faculty at a local university?
    - Have they served on committees in professional societies?
- What advice does your mentor have as you prepare for an interview or a major presentation at a conference? Can he/she provide feedback on your presentation?
- Can your mentor help you get more connected in your field?
- What steps and practices does your mentor take to maintain satisfaction in both work and life?
- What recommendations does your mentor have for helping you in areas that need improvement—i.e. communication skills, time management, organization?
- How do you deal with overly critical manuscript reviews—i.e. "Reviewer Number 3"?

Some things you should ask of yourself:

- What do I hope to obtain from this mentoring relationship?
- What can I and my mentor do to help meet the expectations?
- What are my career goals? In what environment do I feel most comfortable working?
- What skills do I already possess that will be useful in meeting my career goals?
- In what areas do I need improvement?

Advice for the Mentor

While you are not responsible for the Postdoc's performance, you may be able to make a positive enough impression to help the postdoc keep on the path to both meeting his/her research objectives and meeting his/her career goals. The postdoc should take a proactive approach in arranging periodic meetings with you. However, be cognizant of the length of time between meetings. If you have not seen or heard from your mentee in a while, it is probably time to check in with the mentee. You are not expected to know the answer to every question your mentee asks and we cannot tell you what to discuss. We can offer some suggestions that may help you advance the mentoring relationship.

- Ask your mentee how he/she is doing—in both life and work. While this is a fairly open-ended question, it may get the conversation rolling.
- Ask your mentee what he/she hopes to gain from the mentoring relationship. This will help guide your conversations and make them more productive.
- Tell your mentee your story—how did you get to where you are today? What challenges did you face and continue to face in your career?
- Offer a constructive critique of your mentee's writing or presentation skills. A second pair of eyes and ears never hurts.
- Be honest if your time is limited. This is understandable and even expected in our demanding fields.
- Offer to introduce your mentee to colleagues in your field.
- Point out articles and talk that may be of interest to your mentee—this may give you both something to talk about.
- Seek the guidance of your divisional office, the postdoc office or HR if you are uncomfortable with a situation or conversation. Do not try to handle potential conflicts or crises on your own.

Additional Resources

The following may be found at
http://www.anl.gov/postdocs/mentoring

- Mentoring Program Documentation Forms
- Mentoring Program Contact Information
- Mentoring Program Feedback and comment submission forms
- Resources and published articles on the topic of mentoring

Mentoring Program Contacts

Division*	MP Coordinator	Email
ASD	Ryan Lindberg	lindberg@aps.anl.gov
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Postdoctoral Society of Argonne		
Argonne has a thriving postdoctoral community that is here to enhance your experience. To contact the PSA send an email to psargonne@anl.gov.		
Additional laboratory contacts may be found at:		
Mentoring at Argonne Inside Argonne Page: http://inside.anl.gov/pages/mentoring-argonne		
Argonne Mentoring Blog (available externally): http://blogs.anl.gov/mentoring/		

*CLS and PSC - see Kristene Henne (khenne@anl.gov) for assistance
**Contact Division Office

Last update: June 2, 2014

We, the undersigned, agree to participate in the Argonne Postdoctoral Mentoring Program and have read the Lab-wide and Divisional guidelines for the Program.

POSTDOC NAME (PRINT) _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE

_____

MENTOR NAME (PRINT) _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE

_____

Return this form to the division office while keeping copies for the postdoc and mentor.
(The division office will provide the Lab Postdoctoral Programs Coordinator.)