

Message from Roger Chalkley

It is that time of year again: training grant nomination time is coming up in May. The training grant directors will get a letter shortly outlining the specific “decision” dates upcoming. The Departmental Directors of Graduate Studies (DGSs) will make sure that this is transmitted to all IGP Faculty so that all will have plenty of time to create the nomination materials.

This brings me to a very important announcement. In past years if someone wanted to join your lab, or if you wanted to nominate a student to a training grant, you had to ask the BRET Office to pull together a lot of information from several different databases. We have now created a one-stop shopping web site where you can download key educational information about your student, this includes undergrad school grades, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, and IGP course performance and rotation evaluations. It is secure, easy to use and access information will be forwarded shortly by email.

Finally, there are a whole new slew of NIH RCR requirements. Your DGS will be forwarding the specifics shortly. If you want to check for yourself, click here: [NIH NOT-OD-10-019](#).

Message from Ann Richmond

Postdoctoral scholars and graduate students are the heart of our research efforts here at Vanderbilt. Recruitment of outstanding postdoctoral fellows to Vanderbilt is key to the success of the research mission of the Medical School and its faculty, not only for the outstanding research that postdoctoral fellows accomplish during their training period, but also for the rich training environment postdoctoral scholars provide for graduate students in the research laboratory.

To enhance our current strong pool of postdoctoral fellows at Vanderbilt, we instituted our first School of Medicine wide Postdoc Recruitment Event pilot project March 7-10, 2010, in coordination with the Annual Postdoctoral Research Symposium. This type of recruitment event has been highly successful at the NIH and St. Jude's in exposing graduate students to the environment for postdoctoral training at these two institutions.



**ANN RICHMOND, PH.D.,
ASSISTANT DEAN**

**FOCUS OF
NEXT ISSUE :**

◆ Training Grants

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Message from Ann Richmond (continued from page 1)

As a result of the enthusiasm of the administration, faculty, the recruits and the countless hours of dedicated effort from folks in the BRET office like Kim Petrie, Claudia Cottingham, Diane Mannas, Abby Brown, Katie Dickie, Nadia Ehtesham, Tom Oeltmann, and Ram Piyaket, I am happy to report that our initial pilot experiment was a great success. We brought in 34 very strong senior grad students from over 20 graduate schools in the US-- from Cornell to UCSD—on March 7-10, 2010. During the visit, students experienced the research strengths at Vanderbilt, met with over 75 faculty and their labs, and presented their research. While it will be a while before we know how many of the potential recruits will choose Vanderbilt for their postdoctoral experience, the apparent success of this first experiment suggests that we should continue the experiment next year, with some tweaking based upon feedback from the candidates and faculty.



We appreciate the support of Vice Chancellor Balser, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, Susan Wentz, and Senior Associate Dean for Biomedical Research, Education and Training, Roger Chalkley, in launching this event. A summary of evaluation by the candidates and the faculty is found on page 7 of this newsletter.

Orientation for new Vanderbilt Postdocs with the BRET Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

Attending an individual orientation can be valuable for new postdocs, even those that have completed their PhD at Vanderbilt. In fact, 71% (137) of all 2009 Annual Postdoc Survey respondents attended an individual orientation with the BRET Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. Of these, 88% (121) found the orientation helpful. There are important differences in benefits for postdocs, depending on how their postdoc position is classified (as either an employee or a trainee). To schedule an orientation for a new postdoc, contact Claudia Cottingham: Claudia.Cottingham@Vanderbilt.edu.

Items covered in the orientation include:

- Guide to benefits (i.e. health & dental insurance)
- Individual Development Plan for postdocs
- BRET Resources for postdocs such as BRET Office for Career Development, BRET Psychological Services, BRET poster printing services, and BRET English Classes
- Vanderbilt resources for postdocs, such as where to go for advice on writing manuscripts



CLAUDIA COTTINGHAM

Annual Postdoc Survey: Results

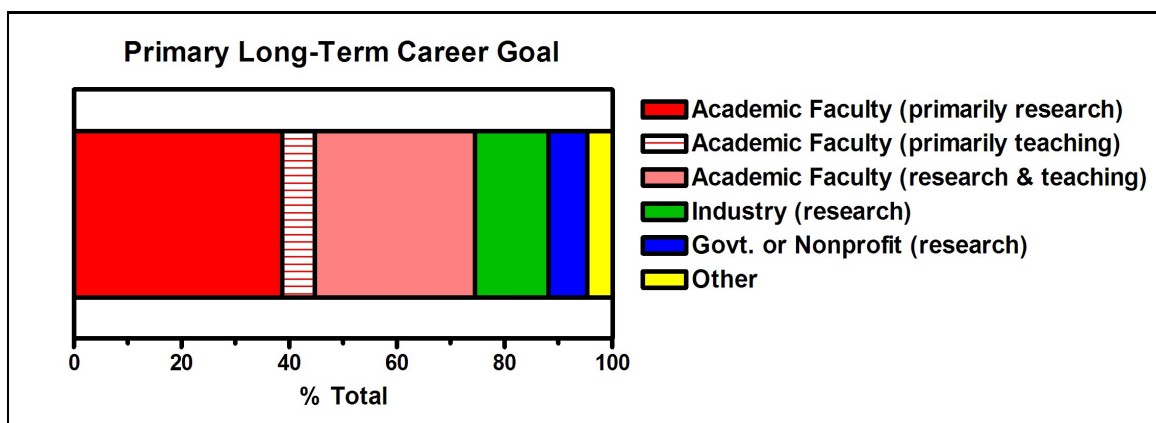
The annual postdoc survey is administered by the BRET Office of Outcomes Analysis, and continues to provide an insight into the current training environment for Vanderbilt postdocs. This year, 194 postdocs completed the survey, just under the minimum threshold of 200 for a random prize drawing. Below are some of the results of the December 2009 survey. Postdocs that completed this survey have been in their Vanderbilt postdoc positions for an average of 1.8 years.

Demographics of 2009 Survey Respondents:

	2009 Survey Respondents	Total Postdoc Population
Female	101 (52%)	222 (45%)
Male	90 (46%)	268 (55%)
Foreign Nationals	91 (47%)	255 (52%)
U.S. Citizens or Permanent Residents	103 (53%)	235 (48%)
Total	194 (100%)	490 (100%)

Primary Long-Term Career Goals: In the 2009 annual survey, Vanderbilt postdocs were asked to report their primary long-term career goal.

- 65% indicated that they want a career in academia, with a primary focus on research, teaching, or a combination of teaching and research.
- The second most frequent career goal was a research position in Industry.
- Individuals that chose “Other” as a career goal indicated that they are interested in careers in clinical care or in a clinical laboratory.
- 26% have changed their long-term career goal during their Vanderbilt postdoc.

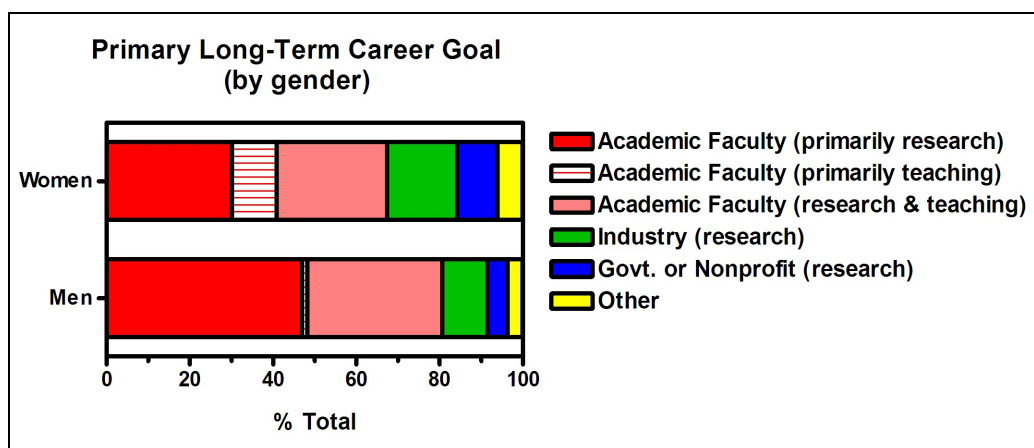


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Annual Postdoc Survey: Results *(continued from page 3)*

There were some interesting differences to note in the current long-term career goals when the results are sorted by gender. Although an identical percentage of men and women want to stay in a scientific career, the sectors of interest differ.

- Compared to men, a higher percentage of women are interested in research careers in industry, government, or non-profit sectors.
- A higher percentage of women want an academic faculty position that includes a teaching component.
- A higher percentage of men want an academic faculty position that focuses primarily on research.



Postdoc Exit Survey

In January of 2008, the BRET Office of Outcomes Analysis began administering the online postdoc exit survey to all postdocs as they completed their postdoctoral training at Vanderbilt. To date, 175 exiting postdocs have completed the exit survey. These Vanderbilt postdocs published a mean of 3.2 peer-reviewed articles and presented their findings at least 3.1 times at national or international meetings.

Demographics of Exit Survey Respondents

	Exit Survey Respondents	Total Postdoc Population (2009)
Female	83 (47%)	222 (45%)
Male	93 (53%)	268 (55%)
Foreign Nationals	49 (28%)	255 (52%)
U.S. Citizens or Permanent Residents	120 (72%)	235 (48%)
# Years as VU Postdoc (mean \pm std. dev.)	3.2 \pm 2.0	2.2 \pm 0.1
Total	175 (100%)	490 (100%)

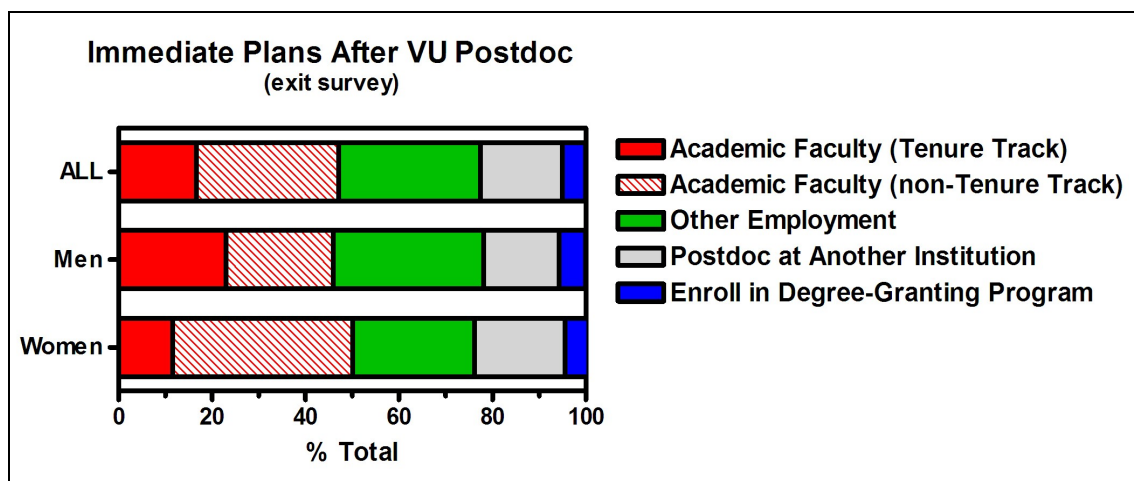
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Postdoc Exit Survey *(continued from page 4)*

Career Outcomes

On the exit survey, postdocs are asked about their immediate plans upon completing their postdoctoral training at Vanderbilt. 48% of exiting postdocs (both genders) report going on to academic faculty positions at institutions such as Arizona State University, Auburn University, Colgate University, Duke University, Emory University, Indiana University, Thomas Jefferson University, The College of William & Mary, and Yale University.

- Compared to men, a higher percentage of women accepted a non-tenure track faculty position.
- “Other Employment” category is composed of positions such as non-faculty positions at academic institutions or positions in industry.
- Few postdocs chose to enter a degree-granting program to earn a degree such as a J.D. or an M.B.A..



Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association (PDA)

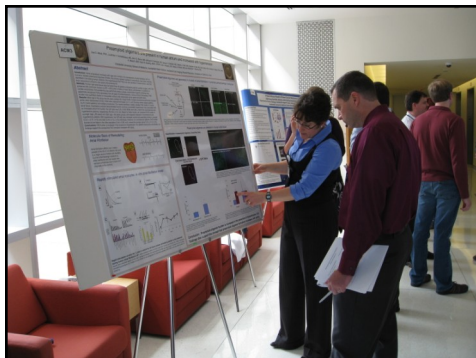
The Vanderbilt PDA was formed in 1998 and has successfully united postdoctoral research fellows from the basic science as well as clinical departments. The PDA activities range from planning and coordinating the annual Postdoctoral Research Symposium to monthly meetings and social gatherings.

PDA meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. in room 350 Light Hall. All postdoctoral fellows are welcome to attend.



PDA OFFICERS (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT):
BROCK SCHWEITZER, PH.D., JENNIFER KOPKA, PH.D., GILLIAN ALLISON, PH.D., AND
ASHOKA MADDUR, PH.D.

Fourth Annual Postdoctoral Research Symposium



This year's research symposium was held in conjunction with the first School of Medicine wide Postdoc Recruitment Event. Symposium events included (1) Invited short talks by postdocs and Core Facility Faculty, (2) a poster session, (3) a Keynote Address by Dr. Teresa Compton (Executive Director, Infectious disease, Novartis Institutes for Biomedical Research), and concluded with an awards ceremony.

Congratulations to the following award winners:

- The 2010 Vanderbilt postdoc of the year was Anthony Baucum, Ph.D., who received a certificate and a check for \$500, sponsored by the Vanderbilt Medical Alumni Association. In addition to the winner, nominees for this award were Jingchun Sun, Ph.D., Karl Boheme, Ph.D., Luigi Moretti, M.D., M.P.H., and Jennifer Noto, Ph.D. All nominees received a two year membership in the American Association for the Advancement of Science and a two year subscription to the journal *Science*.
- The 2010 Mentor of the Year was Dr. R. Stokes Peebles, Jr. In addition to the winner, the nominees included Jennifer Pietenpol, Richard Peek, James (Tom) Thomas, Lillian Nanney, and Roy Zent.
- Three postdocs who won travel awards for Best use of Shared Resources were: Subhrajit Biswas, Amanda Solis and Michael Morabito.
- Winners in the poster categories received a \$100 check:

Poster Prize Category	Winner
Animal or Clinical Models	Elaine Shelton
Biochemistry	Shuangli Guo
Biological Sciences	Vaibhav Shah
Cancer Biology	Tammy Sobolik-Delmaire
Cell Biology	Aron Parekh
Microbiology & Immunology	Toni Nagy
Neuroscience	AJ Baucum
Pharmacology	Greg Digby



The symposium was sponsored by the VUMC BRET Office, VUMC Office for Research, VUMC Shared Resources, the Vanderbilt Medical Alumni Association, Vanderbilt eProcurement, Invitrogen, Millipore, and Covance.

First Annual Postdoctoral Recruitment Event

After an initial application, postdoctoral candidates were invited to campus to take part in the recruitment event. Meetings between candidates and Vanderbilt faculty members were scheduled throughout the event, and were based on interest demonstrated by both candidates and faculty.

Overview of the Candidates' Schedules:

Sunday: Reception and Dinner with Vanderbilt Faculty and Postdocs

Monday: Welcome and Introductions
Overview and tour of Vanderbilt core facilities
Presentation: "How to Have a Successful Postdoctoral Experience"

Tuesday: Welcome, Discovery video, Core talks
Postdoc candidate oral & poster presentations
Keynote Address

Wednesday: Tour of Nashville



Evaluation of Event by Visiting Postdoc Candidates:

After returning home, postdoc candidates were asked to complete an online evaluation of the recruitment event. A brief synopsis of the evaluation results appear below. To view a detailed summary (including all comments), click [here](#). Once you have opened the detailed summary, you may view the free-text comments for the last two questions by clicking on the blue "**Show Replies**" text that appears below each of these questions.

- All 34 candidates completed the online evaluation, and all 34 said that they would recommend students at their current institution attend this event in the future.
- Individual meetings with a faculty member were the most useful type of interaction for candidates in identifying a laboratory to join.
- 82% had an adequate opportunity to meet with faculty members in which they had expressed a prior interest. 94% thought it was also helpful or very helpful to meet with faculty in whom they had *not* expressed a prior interest.
- 82% were able to identify potential opportunities for a postdoctoral position at Vanderbilt that they plan to pursue. The BRET Office of Outcomes Analysis will track how many of these candidates accept a post-doc position at Vanderbilt in the future.

First Annual Postdoc Recruitment Event (continued from page 7)

Evaluation of the Event by Faculty

An online evaluation was sent via email to all BRET faculty members on Monday, 3/15/2010. A detailed summary (including all comments) may be found by clicking [here](#). Free text comments may be viewed in the summary by clicking on the blue “**Show Replies**” text that appears below each of these questions.

Fifty-one faculty members completed the online evaluation. Of these respondents:

- 49% were looking for a postdoc prior to the announcement for this event.
- 52% thought that the candidates were stronger than candidates that they normally review.
- 96% actively participated in the event by meeting with candidates either individually or at the poster session.
- 88% said that this event provided opportunities to recruit a suitable postdoc to their laboratory.
- 59% plan to follow up with specific postdoc candidates that they met at the event.
- 96% received adequate communication from the BRET Office about this event.
- 83% recommend that Vanderbilt continue this type of recruiting event for postdoctoral candidates.

Alert: All individuals coming to VUMC for summer research must be registered

Is someone coming to either gain experience or observe research in your laboratory this summer? If so, these individuals must all be registered during their time at Vanderbilt. Short-term summer research positions fall into one of two categories:

- **Paid positions (Research Interns):** These are short-term paid positions (usually in the summer), where individuals join a lab to gain educational experience. The procedures for appointment differ depending on the intern’s age at the start of the experience. This position is not eligible for employee benefits through HR, but the BRET Office can make arrangements for health insurance benefits as long as appropriate payment arrangements are made. Pre-IGP students will also be appointed through this mechanism. For more information on how to register these individuals, visit: http://bret.mc.vanderbilt.edu/bret/php_files/research_interns.php
- **Unpaid positions (Student Observers/Volunteers):** These positions are typically less than 8 weeks and are for individuals who wish to participate in research activities for purely educational purposes. Strict criteria govern the placement of student observers in research laboratories. The approval process differs depending on the age of the observer at the start of the experience. For more information on how to register these individuals, visit: http://bret.mc.vanderbilt.edu/student_observers/

Announcement: Vanderbilt Internal Grant Application Review

The Clinical & Translational Scientist Development (CTSD) program offers an internal review of an R01 or K99/R00 application submitted by individuals at Vanderbilt *who do not yet have an R01 or K99/R00 award*. This includes first submissions and revisions, and basic and clinical investigation.

This internal review is a mechanism for NIH applicants to receive constructive feedback by senior faculty who have served on NIH study sections. Postdocs and faculty members that would like to submit a K99 or first-time R01 application are encouraged to submit a letter of intent to Donna Georgescu at: donna.georgescu@vanderbilt.edu. The letter of intent is due by **April 20, 2010** for the June/July NIH submission cycle.

Participants that submit a K99 or first-time R01 application will watch their application being reviewed by the panel and receive written verbal feedback on their grant applications within one week.

Announcement: BRET Summer English Classes for Postdocs

BRET will offer summer English classes on Tuesday & Thursday from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., taught by the Tennessee Foreign Language Institute. Classes are offered in two sessions; session 1 is May 4th to June 17th, and session 2 is June 22nd to July 29th. If interested, send an email to: Claudia.Cottingham@Vanderbilt.edu.

Upcoming Events for Spring, 2010

- **April 27, 2010:** *Transitioning to Faculty Part 2: "Achieving Tenure"*
- **May 3, 2010:** *Final lab choice due for IGP/CPB students*
- **May 14, 2010:** *Vanderbilt Commencement*
- **May 17, 2010:** *BRET RCR*
- **May 12, 2010:** *Training Grant Nominations due*

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Save the dates:

- **June 15-16, 2010:** *Scientific Writing Workshops: Dr. Judith Swan, Princeton Writing Studio*
- **July 27-28, 2010:** *Symposium: Career Opportunities in the Biomedical & Biological Sciences*

BRET Newsletter Editor:
Abby Brown, Ph.D.



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