



**Northwestern University**

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**Postdoctoral Forum**

Annual Report

Fiscal year 2015

## Dear Postdocs, Friends, and Supporters,

We are happy to announce that 2015 was our most successful year yet as judged by feedback from postdocs, and 2016 is shaping up to be a fantastic year of growth and change for NUPF. On the heels of our first major election, we have new officers bringing new ideas to the table, a new sense of purpose, and new direction to the future of NUPF. We have made technological updates to streamline how we communicate with postdocs without overcrowding inboxes, and we continue to rally the support of postdocs, advisors, and supporters throughout Northwestern University dedicated to enhancing the experience of all postdocs at the university.

We continue to increase our presence at Northwestern University and this has been reflected in the number of postdocs interested in joining our mission to serve all postdocs. Now in addition to an active Facebook group, we have a brand new website that makes it easier for us to maintain events and resources and easier for postdocs to locate information. Our listserv now has 336 subscribers who receive regular updates and current offerings. All along our focus has been to engage the large postdoctoral community, which is spread across 11 schools on the two Northwestern University campuses in Chicago and Evanston. We have established productive relationships with schools and offices which host the majority of postdoctoral appointees to endorse NUPF activities and to allocate resources specifically for postdoc centered programs and events. Furthermore our advisory board reflects this diversity of schools and departments so as to cater to all of Northwestern University.

Our third year has proved to be a successful and productive one, and we hope to continue to grow and change in the coming year. As in previous years we hosted a Kick-off event in the winter, organized at both campuses to introduce our organization to over 70 postdocs new and old from over 30 departments; our third annual Symposium attended by over 50 postdocs, faculty, and students interested in engaging with colleagues outside of their regular spheres; and our monthly coffee hours, attracting on average 20 postdocs eager to socialize even on busy mornings. Additionally we organized a record number of new events aimed at educating postdocs on various career paths and ways to successfully reach their ideal job. Our advisory board now has seven members with support from three big schools and two NU offices with significant postdoc populations and involvement; our listserv reaches out to over 300 postdoc members, and we look forward to healthy financial 2016.

We the officials of NUPF would like to extend our thanks, first to the active members of NUPF whose hard work and dedication have led to significant enhancement of the postdoctoral experience at Northwestern, to the faculty, administrators, and staff who have supported our efforts, and to the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs for supporting and strengthening all of our activities with regular feedback and supervision. By listening to the needs of postdocs and establishing productive relationships throughout the university, we believe we can improve life throughout Northwestern University. With your continued support, we look forward to building a strong community that is open, communicative, and active, by adapting to the needs of postdocs and providing future years of programming for postdocs at your own Northwestern University.

Best regards,

Veronika Hoeke and Andy Robinson  
NUPF Chair and outgoing NUPF Chair

## Mission, Vision and Introduction to NUPF

“An initiative, to foster a sense of community, provide resources for personal, professional, and career development, increase interdepartmental communication, and create an open forum for the postdoctoral fellows of Northwestern University”

### Goals

#### *Provide*

- A venue to communicate and discuss issues relevant to postdoctoral fellows at NU
- Career development resources and instruction via seminars and workshops

#### *Promote*

- Positive dialogue among postdoctoral fellows, faculty members, administrators and the university
- Professional and social interactions among postdoctoral fellows

#### *Enhance*

- The postdoctoral experience and connection with the NU community
- The personal development and leadership skills of postdoctoral fellows

#### *Support*

- Inter-departmental and inter-disciplinary communication and collaboration amongst all of NU including:

Feinberg School of Medicine | Henry and Leigh Bienen School of Music | Kellogg School of Management | McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Sciences | Medill School of Journalism | Northwestern University at Qatar | School of Communication | School of Continuing Studies | School of Education and Social Policy | School of Law | The Graduate School | Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences | The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs | The Office for Research

NUPF is the first postdoc-founded and -operated association of postdoctoral fellows at Northwestern University. NUPF seeks to augment the postdoctoral experience at Northwestern University by creating a community of postdoctoral fellows and providing opportunities for improved professional networking and social interaction. The Forum is structured to address the intellectual and social needs of postdoctoral fellows across various departments and centers on the Evanston and Chicago campuses. This report details NUPF activities and finances for the fiscal year 2015.

NUPF fills a unique niche at Northwestern University. While postdoctoral fellows within the University's schools, colleges, departments, centers, and institutes benefit from working with prolific faculty members, the independent

nature of the postdoc appointment can work against the fellow in limiting access to professional and personal development opportunities. The Northwestern community is very fortunate to have an active Office of Postdoctoral Affairs catering to a variety of postdoc needs including professional, career, and social activities. Yet we believe the best way to serve the needs of postdocs is to engage postdocs in surveying their needs and organizing resources and events to meet these needs. To that end the Forum offers postdoctoral fellows a range of programming to supplement their training. NUPF has planned and executed a widely distributed programming schedule, which included social events, professional development opportunities, and alumni networking events. Additionally we serve as a communication conduit between postdoctoral fellows, faculty members, and the university. NUPF continues to work closely with the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, university administration, and existing student groups to identify unique needs of the postdoc community and cater to those needs.

At all of our events NUPF distributes surveys to attendees asking how NUPF can support and improve their postdoctoral experience at Northwestern University as well as what type of professional and social events would benefit the postdoctoral community. We continue to listen and respond to the needs of the postdoc community. In 2015 we started with a new website and bi-weekly newsletter designed by dedicated members to make resources and event advertisement easier and more efficient. We have already found that feedback is critical to improving our mission, as with the numerous responses we received from various events, and we have improved the roadmap for 2016.

NUPF has grown immensely in our third year with over 150 new members signing on to the mailing list. To cater to the needs of the Northwestern University postdoctoral population, NUPF now has three targeted committees: Career and Professional Committee, Social Committee, and International Committee. NUPF has also successfully secured funding from almost all the schools with significant postdoc appointments at Northwestern University enabling it to organize various activities detailed in this report. At each event the number of people added to the mailing list increases along with the number of attendees for the various social and professional events. In the coming years NUPF aims to expand each subcommittee to increase the number of activities we can sponsor and enhance the management of organized events.

## NUPF Structure

NUPF is composed of an executive committee to oversee all general activities of NUPF and subcommittees to address career and professional development, social development, and international issues. The core structure of NUPF is flexible allowing for committees to be modified or added in the coming years to address additional needs of the postdoc community.

1. Current Executive Committee (as of 1/2016)
  - i. Chair – **Veronika Hoeke**
  - ii. Treasurer – **Haley Titus**
  - iii. Administrative Coordinator – **Sumeyye Yar**
  - iv. Web Design Coordinators – **Justin Eddy, Dean Procter, Matt Green**
  - v. Career and Professional Development Committee Chair – **Marco Biancucci**
  - vi. Social Committee Chair – **Michelle Harris**

vii. International Committee Chair – **Sriram Boothalingam**

- Subcommittee members in FY2015

- a. Career and Professional Development Committee (CAP)

- i. Eleonora Forte
    - ii. Marco Biancucci
    - iii. Pamela Jackson
    - iv. Linda Foit
    - v. Nick Angeloni
    - vi. Iwona Konieczna
    - vii. Foteini Kouri
    - viii. Britta Mohl
    - ix. Josh Wood
    - x. Alexandra Chalastanis
    - xi. Sumeyye Yar
    - xii. Dean Procter
    - xiii. Altea Rocchi
    - xiv. Justin Eddy
    - xv. Matt Green

- b. Social Programming Committee

- i. André Iovane
    - ii. Michelle Harris
    - iii. Neil Huang
    - iv. Aushra Abouzeid
    - v. Haley Titus
    - vi. Jason Jacoby

- c. International Affairs Committee

- i. Veronika Hoeke
    - ii. Kathrin Flasskamp
    - iii. Guozhen Zhang
    - iv. Sriram Boothalingam
    - v. Royette Tavernier

vi. Arash Dehzangi

vii. Tim Schoof

2. NUPF Advisors

- |                                       |                                   |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs | Jennifer Hobbs and Kristen Mighty |
| b. Founding member                    | Satyender Goel                    |

3. Advisory Board (as of 1/2016)

- a. Satyender Goel, Director of HealthLNK, Research Assistant Professor, Feinberg School of Medicine
- b. Jennifer Hobbs, Assistant Dean for Graduate and Postdoctoral Training and Development, The Graduate School
- c. Kristen Mighty, Senior Program Coordinator, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
- d. Sacha Patera, Director of Law-STEM Initiatives, Pritzker School of Law
- e. Bruce Lindvall, Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies, McCormick
- f. Shelley Levine, Assistant Director for Graduate Studies, Weinberg
- g. Steven Anderson, Associate Director of the Driskill Graduate Program in Life Sciences, Feinberg School of Medicine
- h. Fruma Yehiely, Associate Vice President for Research, Office for Research
- i. Theresa Johnson, International Scholar Advisor, International Office

## Subcommittee Reports

### I) Career and Professional Development Committee (CAP)

The Career and Professional Development Committee (CAP) aims to develop professional activities and support the career goals of postdoctoral fellows throughout Northwestern University. In 2015, the committee had fifteen members, support from the Executive Committee, and considerable advice from Jennifer Hobbs and Kristen Mighty from the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA), and Sacha Patera, Director of Northwestern Law-STEM Initiatives. Activities focused on:

- Creating networking opportunities for Northwestern postdoctoral fellows and build professional connections with colleagues from across disciplines and outside campus
- Facilitating interactions between Northwestern postdocs and graduate students with academic and industry professionals
- Obtaining funding for Academic careers
- High impact publishing

- Improving communication skills
- Exploring non-academic careers
- Tailoring resumes for non-academic career roles

These are in chronological order the events organized this year by the CAP team:

### **Info Session on European Funding Opportunities for Students, Postdocs and Researchers of All Nationalities**

The info session was held Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015 in the Daniel Hale Williams Auditorium on the Chicago campus. About 25 people attended; most of them were international postdocs. The speaker was the regional representative of North America for EURAXESS, Viktoria Bodnarova. The main objectives of the information session were:

- Raising awareness on mobility and career opportunities in Europe, with a special focus on Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions and the ERC Grants;
- Helping to connect researchers from both continents with a view to expand the EURAXESS Links North America community.

The info-session was divided in three parts. In the first part, the speaker introduced EURAXESS Links, a European research area initiative that provides access to a complete range of information and support services for European and non-European researchers wishing to pursue research careers in Europe. The second part was centered on the Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions for Doctoral and Post-doctoral training in EU. The speaker described in detail the criteria of eligibility, the different kinds of fellowships available, and the modality of application. The last part was focused on the European Research Council (ERC) Grants for early and independent research in EU. The speaker explained what the ERC is and what ERC offers. Furthermore, she provided information on how to prepare and submit an ERC research proposal and how the proposals are evaluated.

### **Breaking into the Pharma Industry: An Insider's Perspective**

This event was held Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on the Chicago Campus. The speaker was the Vice President of Pharmaceuticals Discovery at AbbVie, James P. Sullivan. The event was directed at postdocs and graduate students interested in opportunities in the pharmaceutical/biotech industry. Dr. Sullivan introduced AbbVie and its drug development schemes and discussed different career options in pharma. Two recruiters from AbbVie's HR attended the event and provided useful information on careers at AbbVie. This event was attended by approximately 80 people. The audience showed a lot of interest in the topics and there was an extensive Q&A time.

### **Scientific careers in biopharmaceutical industry: "It is not about the title but the role and its responsibilities": Baxalta info-session**

This event was created with the intent to explore possible job positions in the pharmaceutical industry. It was held Thursday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on the Chicago campus and video-conferenced to the Evanston Campus. The invited speaker was Raul Sokies, the Sr. Director Program Management R&D, Global Project Leader Baxalta, formerly Baxter BioScience.

Mr. Sokies presented a general overview of the structural organization of a pharmaceutical company and explained to the audience the interconnections between different departments in a company for the drug discovery pipelines. In particular, he described emerging job positions and illustrated the expertise required for each sector of the drug development. The audience was extremely engaged in the discussion and Mr. Sokies was available to answer many questions from postdoctoral fellows and graduate students both during and after the event. The

attendees really appreciated the very interactive nature of the meeting that was overall a success with more than 40 attendees between the two campuses.

### Resume Seminar and Workshop Series

This innovative workshop was designed to fill a unique need in the postdoctoral community- to empower postdocs with the skills needed to pursue careers outside of academia. The two-event series was held on both Campuses and consisted of a seminar and a workshop aimed to help participants to tailor their resumes for non-academic career roles. On the Chicago Campus the seminar was on May 27<sup>th</sup> and the workshop on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, while in Evanston we hosted the seminar on June 25<sup>th</sup> and the workshop on June 30<sup>th</sup>. The series was led by Dr. Sacha Patera (Director, Law-STEM Initiatives) who shared many strategies and personal insight to improve and direct resumes specifically for industrial and consulting positions. The hands-on workshops were only open to postdoctoral fellows and were uniquely designed to implement the strategies discussed in the leading seminars giving postdocs a direct chance to improve their resumes. Approximately 40 people attended the seminars, and the workshops were attended by approximately 20 people.

### Academic career panel with junior faculty

This event was organized on two different dates: June 11<sup>th</sup> in Evanston and July 22<sup>nd</sup> on the Chicago campus. The goal of these sessions was to provide postdocs with relevant information about how to best tackle the career progression from trainee to PI. We believe that younger faculty members are the most suited to answer questions concerning the transition from a postdoctoral position to a faculty position. The main questions addressed in these events were: How did you obtain your assistant professor position? How can postdocs best prepare for the transition to the independent researcher role? How does one most effectively obtain funding before the start-up funds run out? For both campuses, four different PIs were recruited based on their different expertise and disciplines. Although we had thought that this kind of event would be very compelling for postdocs who want to stay in the academic track, the number of attendees for both events was under 20 people. We think that several factors contributed to this low participation. First, both events were held in the middle of the summer, when postdocs usually attend conferences or travel for vacation. Second, our events were anticipated by a similar event organized by another professional development organization at Northwestern that probably reached out to our audience. Third, there is an evident trend showing that the postdocs attending our events have in general a higher interest for non-academic careers. Overall, beside the attendance that was below expectations, we still believe that these two events were successful. Indeed, people who attended the panel had the unique opportunity to directly interact with the invited PIs and actively participated in the discussion. Based on the post-event surveys, the participants really found these two events useful because they received valuable and personalized suggestions to help them reaching their academic career goals.

### Industry Careers in the Clinical Arena

The panel was held on Thursday, August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at McGaw Pavilion Williams Auditorium on the Chicago campus. 50 postdoctoral fellows and graduate students attended. The aim of the panel was to have the attendees learn more about the non-bench career routes that a PhD degree holder can pursue. The speakers invited for this event were

- Dr. Ann LeFever, Director, Cell Processing Facility at Northwestern Memorial Hospital
- Dr. Nancy Sacco, Executive Director, Dev Science/Strategic Operations at Astellas Pharma
- Dr. Peter Gin-Fu Chen, Associate Director, US Medical Affairs, Baxalta
- Dr. Susan Cazzetta, Executive Medical Science Liaison at Takeda

The panelists illustrated their transitions from academia to industry, talked about their current job positions and suggested paths to obtain these kinds of jobs.

### Third Annual NUPF Symposium: Sharing Knowledge, Driving Innovation

This year's NUPF Symposium was held at the Norris University Center on the Evanston Campus on Tuesday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. The Research Symposium was designed to emphasize the development of communication skills. The ability to effectively communicate research to audiences outside a given field is, indeed, an important skill which affects a variety of real-world decisions such as funding and public policy. This event gave postdoctoral fellows and graduate students an exclusive opportunity to network with researchers from diverse departments across Northwestern, to present their research in the form of a poster or a talk to an audience with different backgrounds, and to participate in activities to learn how to effectively present their work to individuals outside their field. Six selected postdoctoral fellows presented brief 7 minute talks, with the goal of demonstrating how to best explain complex topics to a broad audience in a limited amount of time. The winner of the Symposium was Adam Jakus with his presentation entitled: 3D-Printing After Plastic: From Biological Tissues to the Moon and Beyond. He was also given the opportunity to present at the EURAXESS Science Slam 2015 competition held in Chicago in October 2015. The keynote lecture was given by Dr. Rebecca Daugherty, Assistant Director, Northwestern University Science in Society, who illustrated successful strategies to become an effective science communicator and engage the audience. The symposium concluded with a reception to encourage networking and interaction between postdoctoral fellows.

### High Impact Publishing Panel

This event was designed for postdocs and graduate students with the goal to discuss how to publish their research in high impact journals. The discussion covered many topics, such as what to expect when submitting papers to high impact journals and how to make a paper stand out. The panelists for this event were Prof. Shilatifard, Prof. Longnecker and Prof. Schumacker, all editors for the high-impact, including *Science*, *PLOS Pathogens* and *Cancer Cell*. The panelists discussed with the audience some basic information on their editorial experience and shared general tips for high impact publishing. The panel was followed by a vivid discussion. About 50 people attended the panel discussion. The panel was held October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015 on the Chicago campus.

### 2015 EURAXESS Science Slam Finals

CAP was involved in the organization of the EURAXESS Science Slam Finals for North America together with EURAXESS and University of Chicago. Scientists from all over North America participated in a science communication context and the finalists competed for the title of North America's best science communicator. The event was held on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015, in the Prentice Women's Hospital with an attendance of about 50 people. The finalists included two graduate students from Northwestern University: Ashty Karim and Kavita Chandra. The winner was Kavita Chandra a PhD Candidate in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at Northwestern University with a presentation entitled "A Gold Star for Cancer Research". She also won a round trip to Europe to visit a research lab of her choice anywhere in the European Union. The winner of the 2015 NUPF symposium was a guest speaker for this event. Adam Jakus, from the Simpson Querrey Institute for Bio Nanotechnology, presented his work about 3D-Printing.

## II Social Committee

The social subcommittee serves to bring together postdoctoral fellows and their families in a relaxed and friendly environment. The main focus of the committee is to provide a framework for postdoctoral fellows to:

- Adjust to life at Northwestern University

- Meet postdoctoral fellows outside the work/lab environment
- Find volunteer opportunities to help the community at large
- Promote a healthy sense of community at the university

With these goals in mind, NUPF will host social events open to the postdoctoral fellows and the larger Northwestern University community. This sub-committee has already successfully hosted a number of events on the Chicago and Evanston campuses:

### Coffee Hours

Coffee hours are a roughly monthly event on both the Evanston and Chicago campuses and are regularly held in the afternoon of the last Wednesday of every month. This year, coffee hours were held on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, May 28<sup>th</sup>, June 24<sup>th</sup>, July 30<sup>th</sup>, August 27<sup>th</sup>, and October 28<sup>th</sup> on both campuses simultaneously. Evanston Coffee hours were held at Einstein's Bros. Bagels in Pancoe Building, at Jacobs Center Atrium in the Kellogg building, or the Tech Patio, weather permitting. Chicago Coffee hours were typically held in the Method Atrium in the Tarry Building. Pastries, coffee, and juice were provided at all events. On average, 15 postdocs attended these events on either campus for a total of 30 postdocs for each coffee hour. These events are simple to plan, are always quite popular, and lead to innumerable beneficial connections between postdocs. Thus, we will continue coffee hours in 2016.

### Happy Hours

We also have roughly monthly happy hours which rotate neighborhoods: Evanston, Chicago, and Lakeview for an intermediate region. The happy hours are held at restaurants and bars off-campus to give postdocs a more relaxed environment in which to meet and network. NUPF provides appetizers and organizes drink specials for members. Events in Evanston were held on July 16<sup>th</sup> and November 17<sup>th</sup> at Prairie Moon and Bat 17 respectively. Events downtown Chicago were held on June 18<sup>th</sup>, August 20<sup>th</sup>, and October 22<sup>nd</sup> at D4 Irish Pub, 52eighty Rooftop Bar, and Troquet River North respectively. One event was held on April 16 at Matilda in Lakeview close to the Belmont red line and purple line stop allow for convenient public transport from either campus. Roughly 10-20 postdocs were in attendance at each event. Going forward, our happy hours will evolve into bimonthly events not necessarily bar-centered. For February, in collaboration with our International Committee, our event will be hosted on Evanston campus with food catered from a Chinese restaurant to celebrate the Lunar New Year. There has been more of a response to more interactive events, so our goal is to plan a cooking class event and a brewery tour event, to name a couple ideas.

### Jazzin' at the Shedd

On September 9, 2015, NUPF in collaboration with the DGP organized a trip to the Shedd Aquarium for the evening event Jazzin' at the Shedd from 5-10 pm. The night included full range of the Shedd as well as multiple locations for live Jazz music. There was also optional purchase of food and drink available. NUPF was able to obtain group rates of \$15 and provided tickets free to postdocs, but \$15 for anyone outside of Northwestern. Young children were free for this event which provided a good opportunity for families. This event was quite popular with 16 postdocs, 5 significant others, and 3 children in attendance. This event will likely be repeated next year in collaboration with other postdoc societies at Argonne, UIC, and U of C. A meet up of everyone either before the event or during the event would have been a good idea. The event was very crowded and it was difficult to find people. Despite that, the feedback was very positive.

## NUPF Welcome Event

On January 28<sup>th</sup> and January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015, we held the annual start-of-the-year NUPF event. The January 28<sup>th</sup> event was held in the Ryan Atrium in the Lurie Research Center on the Chicago campus. The January 29<sup>th</sup> event was held in TGS Commons on the Evanston campus. Both events provided food and drink from Northwestern's catering. We had roughly 30 people at each event, for a total of 60 people over the two campuses. Overall, the event was positively received. Going forward, we are continuing our annual New Year event on January 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> on the Evanston and Chicago campuses respectively. At this event, we also plan to introduce postdocs to our new social media platforms, twitter and Instagram, as well our new NUPF website. We expect that postdocs will use this as an opportunity to learn about each other and the NUPF organization.

## Executive Committee Meetings

Two NUPF executive committee meetings were held in 2015. The first meeting included the 2015 officers and some committee members totaling 22 people. This meeting was held on July 7<sup>th</sup> at Noodles in the Pot near the Fullerton CTA stop. The second meeting on December 10<sup>th</sup> welcomed the 2016 officers and past, present, and potential committee members totaling 20 people. The event was held at Zizi's Café in lakeview close to the Diversey CTA stop. The food was well received and the location will likely be chosen again for one of the meetings in 2016. This meeting allowed for new and previous members to meet each other face to face, and also discuss each person's vision for the future of NUPF. Some such ideas are discussed in this section, but another included reaching out to postdocs outside of the NUPF committees to get their opinion on what is most needed for the postdoctoral populous which we hope to achieve through social media and social events.

## New Ideas for Events

- To date, we have hosted few volunteer events. In 2016, we plan to organize connections with volunteer organizations at Northwestern and the greater Chicago area to increase our community involvement. By connecting with other organizations, we can minimize redundant events and increase awareness of volunteer organizations that need the most help.
- We also plan incorporate more informal events that are low time-commitment and low cost. This will focus less on drawing a large crowd and more reaching out to groups of people with diverse interests. A couple such ideas are a movie night in February to go to the theater and see Oscar nominated films and also a meet up at the St. Patrick's Day parade. These events would not be financed by NUPF, but would be organized and encouraged. As postdocs, we are at many different stages of life, from settled with families to enjoying the single life. We will target subsets of postdocs to complement our more general events which draw a larger crowd but it seems to be the same postdocs who repeatedly attend these events. Through these group-specific events, we will reach out to a wider variety of postdocs while not overly burdening our social committee members or the budget.

## III International Affairs Committee

The International Committee seeks to enhance the experience of the large number of postdocs coming from outside the U.S. to Northwestern University. In particular, we strive to achieve the following:

- Facilitate the transition of international postdocs to the U.S., and to Northwestern University in particular
- Provide resources for incoming postdocs in need of establishing basic services in the U.S.
- Provide a forum for foreign postdocs to communicate and network outside of their immediate research environment

- Provide for the social well-being of international postdocs
- Strengthen diversity among the postdoctoral community

In its efforts to develop a program that emphasizes the needs of international postdocs, the committee closely collaborates with the International Office (IO) and the OPA. Key activities in FY2015 were the following:

### Resource Guide for International Postdocs

In February 2015, we completed and published – in consultation with IO, OPA, and Human Resources (HR) – a comprehensive resource guide for incoming international postdocs. The guide features websites, locations, and people that can be contacted for help with, e.g., government visas, establishing a bank account, obtaining a social security number and a driver's license, navigating U.S. tax regulations, as well as finding residence, day care, and local schools. This guide is now part of the welcome packages sent out to new international postdocs by Northwestern schools and departments.

### Intercultural Communication Workshop

Working as a postdoc at Northwestern University generally involves being part of a research group with members from different countries. This can be a challenging environment especially for international postdocs, who not only have to become familiar with U.S. language and culture, but also interact with colleagues from various other cultural backgrounds. In a joint effort with OPA and IO, the committee designed and organized a Professional Development Workshop on “Communicating With Success in Culturally Diverse Teams”, held by Tatyana Fertelmeyster, Founder and Principal of Connecting Differences LLC. Given the positive feedback we received from participants, we plan to expand on this topic in FY2016 through several workshop sessions covering various aspects of communication between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, including work-related and informal workplace conversations, as well as interpersonal interactions in job interviews and at international conferences.

### Cultures & Cuisines

Sharing aspects of their home culture with peers contributes to the emotional well-being of foreign postdocs while promoting social interactions and diversity among the community. With these goals in mind, the committee launched a new event series named “Cultures & Cuisines”, which expands upon the successful International Potluck/BBQ held in previous years. “Cultures & Cuisines” is hosted twice a year in a restaurant featuring a specific international cuisine, and is aimed at bringing together Northwestern postdocs (nationals and internationals) to learn more about foreign cultures through the combination of authentic food, authentic atmosphere, and a cultural entertainment program designed by the committee. Through promoting “Cultures & Cuisines” with a new logo and a novel type of advertisement, namely a scientific abstract/poster based invitation, we achieved one of the highest attendances of an NUPF event so far, with 80 sign-ups for the second edition of the series and more than 30 postdocs newly joining the NUPF listserv after the event. Having featured an Indian evening and a German “Oktoberfest” in FY2015, we are looking to continue the tremendously successful “Cultures & Cuisines” series in FY2016 with countries from the remaining continents.

### IV Collaborative Events

As our organization grows and continues to find its stride, we have realized that many events fall into the category of more than one subcommittee. It is still important to have the majority of the events planned by one committee for the sake of simplicity. However, a select few events will be organized collectively by the CAP, Social, and International Committees. One such event, currently in discussion, is hosting a science presentation in a nearby bar in Evanston that

is open to the public to watch. Science presentation at a bar is becoming a popular event and could be held in collaboration with other Chicago science organizations like Chicago Council on Science and Technology. This presentation will be comprised of five short talks given by postdocs and graduate students on their work. These short talks, referred to as elevator pitches, are popular for interviews and for explaining a poster at a conference. An elevator pitch has to clearly and concisely explain the research to a general listener. This event would be good for postdocs and graduate students to learn and practice this skill as well as providing a fun and educational opportunity for the general public. Before the launch of this event, we will host a workshop on elevator pitches through the CAP committee, for postdocs and graduate students to attempt this in a private environment before presenting in front of a general public.

## Looking to the future

We have had a very productive 2015 growing our membership, offering a variety of career, professional, and social events, listening to the postdoc community to better tailor our mission, and to establish the framework whereby NUPF will continue to grow and thrive after we current officials move on from Northwestern. We are planning a number of exciting events incorporating the experience we gained from organizing events last year and the feedback we have received from postdocs. We hope to establish recurring activities for those professional and social events which worked well in the past and to try new activities based on the needs of the current postdoc community. Enriching the lives and productivity of the postdoc community at Northwestern is a task we have just begun, but along with the dedication of the schools and departments also committed to this goal we are making great strides. We sincerely believe the health and happiness of all postdocs at Northwestern is essential to a productive environment for all faculty, staff, and students at Northwestern University.