

Deans, Directors, Department Chairs, and Administrative Officers

Dear Colleagues:

The recently enacted America COMPETES (America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science) Act, will affect the National Science Foundation in several ways. Most immediately, the Principal Investigator of each NSF application that includes support for postdoctoral scholars must include a mentoring plan within the 15-page project description section of the application. The annual reports and the final report for research grants that include funding to support postdoctoral trainees must also describe the mentoring activities provided to these personnel. This requirement will be in effect for all NSF proposals with due dates of January 5, 2009, and beyond.

During the transitional period between graduate school and the assumption of independent careers, postdoctoral scholars are expected to work under the oversight of a faculty mentor. Effective mentoring is an essential element of a successful postdoctoral experience. In addition to active research supervision, examples of mentoring activities include, but are not limited to: career counseling; training in preparation of grant proposals, publications, and presentations; guidance on ways to improve teaching and mentoring skills; guidance on how to effectively collaborate with researchers from diverse backgrounds and disciplinary areas, training in responsible professional practices, and training in research ethics.

Faculty working with postdoctoral scholars should be aware of the *Tool Kit for Postdoctoral Scholars and Faculty Mentors* that was just published by the UCLA Graduate Division. Included in the *Tool Kit* are "Guidelines for Postdoctoral Scholar and Faculty Mentor Relations" which outline various aspects of the mentor-mentee relationship, and which suggest ways of establishing and maintaining that relationship based on open communication, honest appraisal and feedback, encouragement and scholarly development. This *Tool Kit* will be useful to Principal Investigators submitting NSF grants on which postdoctoral scholars will be supported. Copies of the *Tool Kit* will be distributed shortly to all current postdoctoral scholars and mentors, as well as the primary administrative office for each academic department. It will also be available on-line at <http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/postdocs.html>.

NSF will evaluate proposed mentoring activities as part of the merit review process under the Foundation's "broader impacts" merit review criterion. NSF representatives suggest that applicants make it easy for reviewers to identify the information by clearly labeling the subsection within the Project Description, as proposals that do not include a separate section on mentoring activities within the Project Description will be returned without review.

Please see the NSF *Grant Proposal Guide*, Chapter II – Section C.2d(i) at http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf09_1/gpg_2.jsp#IIC2d for additional information on the postdoctoral mentoring component of the America COMPETES Act, or contact your OCGA Grant Analyst. Questions or comments about the *Tool Kit for Postdoctoral Scholars and Faculty Mentors* should be addressed to Lisa Itagaki in the Graduate Division's Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Services at litagaki@gdnet.ucla.edu, or x 5-0636.

Sincerely,

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