

Postdoctoral Mentoring

The Cary Institute provides a collegial and productive environment for postdoctoral researchers. New postdocs are encouraged to give either a formal academic or less formal lunchtime seminar within the first three months of arrival. Postdocs are encouraged to attend monthly Scientific Staff meetings, to serve on Institutional committees, as interested, and they actively participate in our weekly seminar program by inviting speakers (at Institute expense). Postdocs also participate in Institutional programs on Responsible Conduct in Research, which include online training modules, discussion groups and seminars. They are also invited to all Institute social events such as picnics and pot-lucks. The success of our mentoring program is evidenced by the numerous, ongoing collaborative relationships among Cary scientists and former postdoctoral researchers.

In addition to becoming part of the Institute, the postdoc will become a key part of the laboratory and the research community, with an emphasis on providing the postdoc with collegial interactions and opportunities for leadership and independent initiative. Special effort is made to define expectations for the position in a detailed appointment letter. Specific tasks that need to be accomplished are listed, but the position is structured so that the postdoc has the opportunity to design aspects of the research themselves and to publish it as principal author. Postdocs are provided travel funds to present papers at a conference, which allows practice in presentation skills as well as networking opportunities. Practice talks are reviewed and critiqued beforehand to provide instruction in how to give a presentation. Postdocs are also encouraged to co-mentor undergraduate students through the Cary Institute's well-regarded REU program, which allows development of mentoring skills as well as a means of exploring new research directions. Postdocs may also contribute to mentoring of grad students. Opportunities for collaborative proposal writing are explored throughout the postdoc's tenure.