INTRODUCTION

20 Years of SURPAS: An Organizational and Procedural Model for Postdoctoral Advocacy

ANAND RAO 1, IOANA MARIN 2
1 DEPARTMENT OF ANESTHESIOLOGY, STANFORD SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, STANFORD, CA 94305
2 STANFORD UNIVERSITY POSTDOCTORAL ASSOCIATION

STANFORD POSTDOCS SNAPSHOT

SURPAS CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

STEPS FOR FORMING AND RUNNING A POSTDOCTORAL ASSOCIATION

CONCLUSIONS

The Stanford University Postdoctoral Association (SURPAS) is a volunteer organization run by postdocs and which represents and advocates for the best interests of all Stanford postdocs. Over the past 20 years, the interests of the postdoctoral community have varied, often in response to factors largely out of their control. For example, the number of Stanford postdocs has increased from 1200 to over 2000, cost-of-living and tuition costs have increased, and housing options available to postdocs have become increasingly limited. In an effort to best serve its constituency, SURPAS has established a dynamic organizational model. SURPAS is comprised of three arms: an executive board, a council, and action committees. SURPAS regularly engages the postdoc climate through the use of surveys and social events that connect SURPAS members with the larger postdoc community and, through this process, identifies major areas of need. Then they use this data to adapt their bylaws, create and/or dissolve committees, and engage with administrators. Since 2010, SURPAS has revised its bylaws five times, adding important elements such as an executive committee, criteria for conflict of interest and conflict resolution clauses, protection against discrimination, and, most recently, the inclusion of “diversity advisory” and “postdocs with families” committees. In collaboration with Stanford’s Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) and Stanford Administration and Faculty (SOF), efforts have yielded concrete benefits for postdocs, including subsidized commuter oil transportation (SOF), salary increases, and postdoc representatives in Stanford’s long-range planning, a formal process that will chart the future for Stanford for decades to come. The organizational and procedural model developed by SURPAS effectively serves Stanford’s postdoctoral community and can be easily implemented at other institutions that may be looking to form or restructure a postdoc association.

1. **School Growth**

   - MED: 41%
   - HBS: 31%
   - ENGR: 32.1%
   - IND: 74%
   - EARTH: 28.8%
   - EDUC: 12.2%

   School Growth:

   - 1998 SURPAS works closely with the Office of Postdocs and PACPA
   - Stanford increases to over 153k per year.

   **SURPAS Current Organizational Structure**

   - Administrators and Advocates
   - Co-Chairs
   - Leadership
   - Events Coordinator
   - Advocacy Coordinator
   - Treasurer
   - Social Media
   - Secretary
   - Webmaster

   **SURPAS Current Organizational Structure**

   - Council Members
   - Chair: Isaacman-Moree
     FORMER Co-Chair
   - Treasurer: Morris
   - Events Coordinator: Calvert
   - Advocacy Coordinator: Elliott
   - Secretary: Gonsalves
   - Social Media: Matthews
   - Webmaster: King

   **Committee Oversight**

   - Diversity Committee
   - Professional Development Committee
   - Publications Committee
   - Social Media Committee
   - Student and Postdoc Support Committee
   - Teaching and Outreach Committee

   **Postdocs contribute in many ways**

   - Mentors
   - Contributed to Funding
   - Teachers
   - Performed Administrative Duties

   - 70%
   - 57%
   - 21%
   - 68%

   **Steps for Forming and Running a Postdoctoral Association**

   - Run Your Postdoctoral Association With Success
   - Structure
   - Establish a core mission and values
   - Create by-laws that will guide your organization (for an example see SURPAS by-laws posted here: www.SURPAS.org)
   - Collecting Data
   - Detail Data! Detail! You cannot make brick without clay.
   - Organize town halls, surveys, petitions to demonstrate the need for change
   - Working with other groups with aligned interests to build your base.
   - Advocating
   - Identify your allies at all levels of your institution. Who in your department works with postdocs? School? Institution?
   - Work to have postdoc representation on key committees and legislative bodies. It pays to have a seat at the table!
   - Establish a working relationship through respectful interactions. The data you collect makes the best arguments when advocating for change
   - Communicating
   - Cultivate a culture of openness and inclusivity
   - Communicate with your allies to ensure efforts are not redundant or contradictory and that you are not blinding them.
   - Consider documenting your efforts in the form of blog entries, articles in your school newspaper, or publications in peer-reviewed journals

   **Political Engagement**

   - Work closely with other groups to unify your message
   - Advocate for postdocs (e.g. SURPAS)
   - Advocates on behalf of the OPA is our strongest ally
   - They provide guidance on how to pursue various initiatives
   - Advocates on behalf of the postdocs and SURPAS

   **Contact Information**

   - Anand Rao
   - Email: anandrao@stanford.edu

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   - Work closely with other groups to unify your message.

   - Advocate for postdocs.

   - Advancing the interests of postdocs, SURPAS creates two

   - Effective communication with your teammates and allies shows respect and helps to

   - Circumvent common advocacy pain points.