

Meet the PLC: the PLC and year-end review

The BWH Postdoctoral Leadership Council (PLC) consists of several different committees who work hard to advocate for post docs, organize seminars, celebrate the community, and increase post doc visibility within BWH. The PLC works hard throughout the year, and the Communications Committee is taking time to recognize all of the accomplishments of the PLC over the past year. This year has been particularly successful and I want to take some time to highlight the hard work and dedication of the PLC as a whole with the hope to highlight the individual members of the committees in the coming months. Two general things that the PLC has developed is the Travel Grant Program where post docs can apply for small funding grant to attend conferences, as well as developing a [post doc resource page](#). While this is not a comprehensive list of all of the activities and changes made by our committees, it does emphasize the strides we have made over the past year.

Advocacy

As many of you are aware, the Advocacy Committee has been hard at work over the last year, expressing the need for better benefits and higher wages for post docs at BWH. The work from this committee has led to the recent 20% above NIH minimum pay bump that will become ubiquitous for all post docs at BWH starting in October 2024, a 2% default contribution to a 403b account, and 100% subsidization of the basic healthcare plan. Additionally, BWH is going to implement a system for automatic increases in salary each year, as the current system does not always increase pay. While this provides a much needed pay increase for post docs, the new changes are a huge success for the Advocacy Committee. Over the last year, the Advocacy Committee also conducted its first ever pilot survey of the post doc community, gauging general happiness of the post docs, as well as some basic demographic information, and how prepared post docs feel for the next stage in their careers. Overall, the results from this survey provided the foundation for advocating the benefits above that we received as well as implementation of a BWH online system to ensure annual performance reviews are required and convenient to fill out. Over the next year, the committee hopes to continue to improve the environment for all post docs in the community as well as conduct another survey in October of this year so be on the lookout! If you have questions or are interested in joining the committee, please contact Hadas Pahima (hpahima@bwh.harvard.edu) or Kisha Sivanathan (ksivanathan@bwh.harvard.edu)

Career Development

In the past year, the Career Development Committee has organized 5 different seminars. Three of which have focused on alternative career pathways with a STEM degree, and two have focused on tips for writing. One of the writing panels has focused on tips for writing grants through a variety of different government institutions, and the second writing panel was tips for preparing a teaching statement. Additionally, the Career Development team has started a new seminar series for post docs: the Journal Club Series. The goal of the Journal Club Series is to provide a platform for post docs to present either recent publications from themselves/their labs or to present groundbreaking research in their respective fields. If you have ideas for events or if you are interested in helping to organize more events like these, the Career Development Committee is actively recruiting new members. Contact Mingyu Ye for more information (mye@bwh.harvard.edu).

Communications

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The Communications committee has had a lot of turnover in the last year, meaning that there is room to grow and revamp the committee. For the last year, the Communications Committee has focused mostly on increasing awareness of events by advertising them on several social media channels including X, Instagram, and LinkedIn. However, over the next “transition” year, the committee is hoping to expand into several new roles. These positions include: documenting events with pictures and summaries to report to the post doc community, writers to complete articles like the ones you are reading in this newsletter, and a webmaster to maintain the PLC website and help to advertise events. If you are interested in any of these positions, or have anything you want to communicate to the post doc community at large, please contact Allison Williams (awilliams118@bwh.harvard.edu).

Mentoring Circles Program (MCP)

The Mentoring Circles Program (MCP) has been around for 10 years now and is primarily a platform to provide peer-to-peer mentorship amongst the post doc community at BWH. The program offers junior postdocs a platform to network outside of their respective research fields and find mentorship on issues outside of scientific research. It has grown since its inception, initially starting as 3 groups of 6-7 post docs led by two senior post docs, it has ballooned to 9 groups consisting of about 49 mentees and 18 mentors. The groups are matched based on the interests of the mentees and focus strengthening soft skills and different aspects of career development including circles for academic tracks, industry tracks, residency tracks, as well as diversity focused circles such as discussing difficulties as women in STEM and how to best approach career development from that perspective. MCP begins taking applications starting now through September 22 (link to applications [here](#)), with the mentoring circles starting in October. Over the course of the year, groups will meet once a month to discuss different topics of their interest. Additionally, each group is required to host a speaker from outside academia as a way to explore alternative career paths. Overall, the goal for this year is to increase retention of mentees as well as develop a new writing focused mentoring circle. If you have any questions about the program, email the new chairs: Lien Nguyen (lnghuyen53@bwh.harvard.edu) or Camila Zanella (czanella@bwh.harvard.edu).

Networking

Networking has provided several opportunities over the past year to meet other post docs within the BWH community. In previous years, Networking has hosted events such as Zoom trivia, hiking, river walks, and museum visits. More recently, Networking has started hosting regular happy hours once a month to help provide a relaxed environment and food to members of our community. These happy hours have been a huge success with an attendance of 80-100 people per event over the last several months. The happy hours have also had different themes to provide either activities or talking points. Networking also hosted two social events in the early fall of last year with a trip to Salem as well as a potluck dinner within the post doc community. Over the next year, Networking hopes to organize more events like these, as well as continue the happy hours. If you are interested in proposing ideas for social events or organizing future events, reach out to members of Networking, or the new chair Agustina Mena (hamena@bwh.harvard.edu).

NEW ad hoc committee: Committee for Cultural Inclusivity and Representation

In May of this year, the PLC elected to begin an ad hoc committee to increase awareness of the diversity of our post doc community and facilitate connections between our unique identities.

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The Committee for Cultural Inclusivity and Representation currently is made up of a small group of devoted members of our community (and is actively recruiting new members!!!). The committee has hosted an event for pride month, providing food and drinks, as well as a safe space to celebrate the LGBTQIA+ members of BWH, and enhance visibility for LGBTQIA+ in STEM. The event also hosted activities such as yard games, tie-dyeing, a photo booth and face painting. The event had a small break out session with members of the community who identify as LGBTQIA+ to share some of their thoughts and experiences as post docs at BWH. Overall, the first event hosted by the committee was a success, and demonstrated a need not only for a way to bring together a specific community, but also a need to introduce other post docs to communities with which they share an identity.

The current chair of the Committee for Cultural Inclusivity and Representation, Stecia-Marie Fletcher, as well as the members serving on the committee are striving to break the isolation often felt by post docs and provide a platform, not just to bring a sense of community between people who identify with a specific group, but find leaders willing to initiate social events.

The Committee for Cultural Inclusivity and Representation is also organizing a Mid-Autumn festival event which will take place in late September. The event will have a lantern making contest, moon cakes, and music. Make sure to stop by this event and join in on the fun!

If you identify with a particular group including but not limited to cultural or racial identity, sex or gender identity, marital or parental identity, or if you have a hobby or interest that you are particularly passionate about and you want to find your people, contact the Committee to Enhance Cultural Inclusivity and Representation. They will provide you with potential contacts of others in that community or platforms to host events. Stay tuned for an upcoming August event where they plan to have a community "open house" to help you identify colleagues going through a similar experience. And if you are not willing to become a group "initiator", that's ok, still let them know who you are and what types of groups or identities you think have a need or a want for a platform.