

Mayo, David J.

From: Mayo, David J.
Sent: Monday, February 25, 2019 11:18 AM
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Cc: Sponsored Research Dept; 'fr@caltech.edu'; Seligman, Richard P.; Bhattacharya, Kaushik; Tirrell, David A.
Subject: Postdoctoral Scholars

Dear Grant Management Personnel:

The Provost's Office recently sent the memorandum below to Caltech faculty; the Memorandum pertains to postdoctoral scholars, their salary, benefits and eligibility to act as PI. The Provost's Office has asked the Office of Research Administration (ORA) to distribute it to the broader research management community.

Please note the following clarifications that ORA has confirmed with the Provost's Office.

- With regard to the recommendation that Divisions follow the NIH NRSA postdoctoral scale for years of service (section 1.b), the Provost's Office understands that on October 1, 2019 Caltech's minimum wage for postdocs will fall just below a postdoc with 4 years of experience. Therefore, the NIH scale can only be followed for Postdocs of 4 years of experience or more.
- With regard to the term "outside fellowships" (section 3), this refers to fellowship awards made directly by the sponsor to the postdoc (e.g., where the funds paid to postdocs do not pass through Caltech's financial system).

Thanks,

David

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Date: February 15, 2019
To: Caltech Faculty
From: David Tirrell and Kaushik Bhattacharya

We are writing to you about a number of decisions that the IACC has made regarding postdoctoral scholars and senior postdoctoral scholars at Caltech.

1. **Minimum Salary**

a/ The minimum annual salary of a postdoctoral/senior postdoctoral scholar effective October 1, 2019 will be \$54,080. This decision reflects State of California law that mandates the minimum salary for “exempt” employees (see Table 1)[[1](#)]. The law mandates that this minimum will increase again in January 2021 and 2022 as shown in the table. It is likely that the IACC will be further increasing the minimum in the future years to reflect this mandate. So we urge you to plan accordingly.

We appreciate that this minimum will create a financial stress on existing grants and funds. At the same time, please note that the cost of living in Pasadena has gone up substantially in recent years and financial stress is one of the common concerns of our postdoctoral scholars. Further, postdoctoral scholars have always been considered to be exempt employees. This enables them to work flexible hours without maintaining time cards. A change from flexible to hourly employee status would fundamentally change the postdoctoral

experience.

b/ The IACC recommends following the National Institutes of Health Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) guidelines for salary with years of experience.

2. Classification

All postdoctoral scholars supported from Caltech funds, including grants and endowments, will be classified as employees starting October 1, 2020. This will make them eligible for employee benefits. This will affect some prize postdoctoral fellowship programs on campus which provide a stipend instead of a salary.

3. Benefits for postdoctoral scholars supported by outside fellowships

Effective, October 1, 2020, the sponsoring faculty member will be responsible for funding the Caltech portion of the Caltech health, vision and dental benefits for those postdoctoral scholars who are funded directly by an outside organization to the extent that the funding organization does not provide an equivalent contribution toward those benefits.

4. Postdoctoral scholars as Principal Investigators

Postdoctoral scholars can be Principal Investigators under the following conditions.

- The division chair supports it, and agrees that it is consistent with the normal practice in the field;
- A member of the professorial faculty agrees to continue to mentor the postdoc, and the postdoc agrees to be mentored by this faculty member;
- The mentor assumes responsibility for the validity and importance of the research, for providing facilities, the management of the budget and timely submission of all reports;
- There are no graduate students or other postdocs on the proposal; and

- There is a plan to administer the funds if the postdoc tenure ends before the grant runs out:
 - The grant is transferred to the new institution if the postdoc takes an academic position following their tenure at Caltech;
 - The remainder funds are returned to the granting agency if the postdoc leaves Caltech without an academic position.

The proposals will require the approval of the Vice Provost.

[1] Even though the minimum salary/stipend rises to \$54,080 effective January 1, 2020, the IACC decided to make the change at the beginning of the fiscal year instead of waiting for the calendar year. This change will make us consistent with the National Institutes of Health Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) guidelines which recommend a minimum salary of \$50,004 effective October 1, 2018.

Table 1: State of California mandated minimum salary for exempt employees

Effective Date	Salary Threshold
1/1/2019	\$49,920
1/1/2020	\$54,080
1/1/2021	\$58,240
1/1/2022	\$62,400

Table 2: NIH Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) guidelines

Career Level	Years of Experience	Stipend for FY2019	Monthly Stipend
Postdoctoral			
	0	\$50,004	\$ 4,167
	1	\$50,376	\$ 4,198
	2	\$50,760	\$ 4,230
	3	\$52,896	\$ 4,408
	4	\$54,756	\$ 4,563
	5	\$56,880	\$ 4,740
	6	\$59,100	\$ 4,925
	7 or More	\$61,308	\$ 5,109

