

2025

INAUGURAL ANNUAL REPORT

Laying the Foundation

M | OFFICE OF POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Director's Welcome

As inaugural director of the University of Michigan Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA), I'm honored to share an update for Fiscal Year 24-25.

Launched in 2023 and fully staffed by 2024, the OPA supports the more than 1,400 postdoctoral fellows across all three University of Michigan campuses, including Michigan Medicine, as they prepare for future careers. This includes guiding and advising departments and programs about leading-practice policies and processes and providing services to support postdoctoral well-being.

Supported jointly by Rackham Graduate School and the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR), the launch of OPA has positioned U-M's postdoctoral fellow research and training opportunities for sustainable advancement.

Throughout Fiscal Year 24-25, research institutions across the nation faced a multitude of challenges. Though some remain ongoing, OPA is committed, along with U-M, to serving the state, nation and world through groundbreaking research and education.

Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to meet postdoctoral fellows, faculty members and staff from across the university. Our campus community is passionate, supportive and dedicated to making a difference.

I am excited by the dedication of our researchers and their teams, including postdoctoral fellows, to continue advancing solutions to pressing challenges.

Throughout this inaugural annual report, we will highlight the formation of OPA and share information on its mission, accomplishments and goals. We invite you to participate and partner with us.

Mark Moldwin, Ph.D.

Director, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

Faculty Director and Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of
Climate and Space Sciences and Engineering





History and Mission

Mission Statement

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs partners with postdoctoral fellows, faculty, administrators, and external entities to assist postdoctoral fellows at the University of Michigan as they grow toward their own independent research, professional, and academic careers.

Until the formation of the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs at the University of Michigan, support services were decentralized across campus. In 2019, Rackham Graduate School and OVPR conducted a formal review of U-M's postdoctoral support services and examined those offered by several peer institutions.

This internal evaluation, coupled with timely reports from the [National Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine \(NASEM\)](#) and the [National Postdoctoral Association \(2021\)](#),

formed a basis for the U-M 2022 report which recommended formation of a central postdoctoral office to provide a single point of contact for postdoctoral fellows across all three U-M campuses.

A new postdoctoral office's charge was to coordinate and provide professional development and career advising programs and services that support dispute resolution. Through a commitment from the Provost's Office, OPA was created in 2023 with initial funding for four years.

Roles and Responsibilities of the OPA

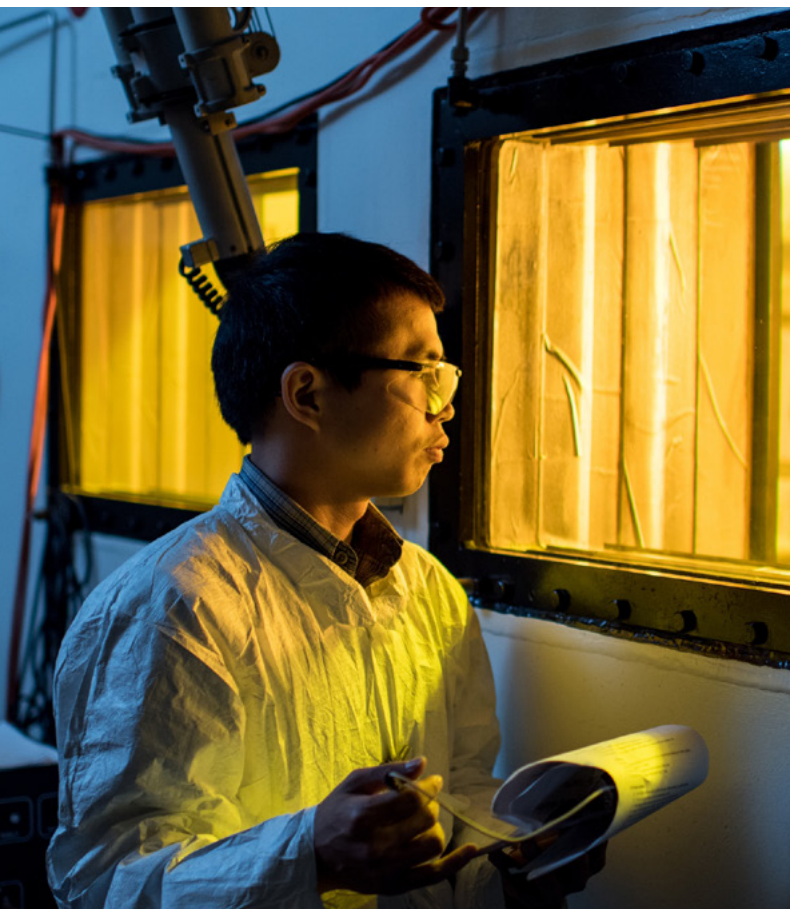
The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs provides necessary leadership and guidance for developing policy and programs related to the support and infrastructure for postdoctoral fellow services at U-M. This includes:

- Creating and supporting a thriving and successful postdoctoral experience across schools and units.
- Developing and standardizing policies and practices for postdoctoral fellows across U-M
- Promoting equitable access and support for postdoctoral fellows in units or departments with limited postdoctoral representation; for those who are not U.S. citizens; for individuals underrepresented in their disciplines; and for those from marginalized backgrounds.

The OPA offers the following services:

- Support for units and principal investigator (PI) postdoctoral fellow recruitment
- Orientation for new fellows
- Professional development, mentor training and career counseling
- Development and implementation of postdoc-related policies
- Information on available benefits
- Guidance to departments on appointments, salaries and leading practices
- Emergency and professional development funding
- Conflict resolution and/or consultation for postdoctoral fellows and mentors
- Partnership with U-M Postdoctoral Association (UMPDA) and Michigan Postdoctoral Association in the College of Engineering (M-PACE)

Partnering with university units, including Rackham Graduate School for training opportunities and OVPR for a series of skill-building workshops.

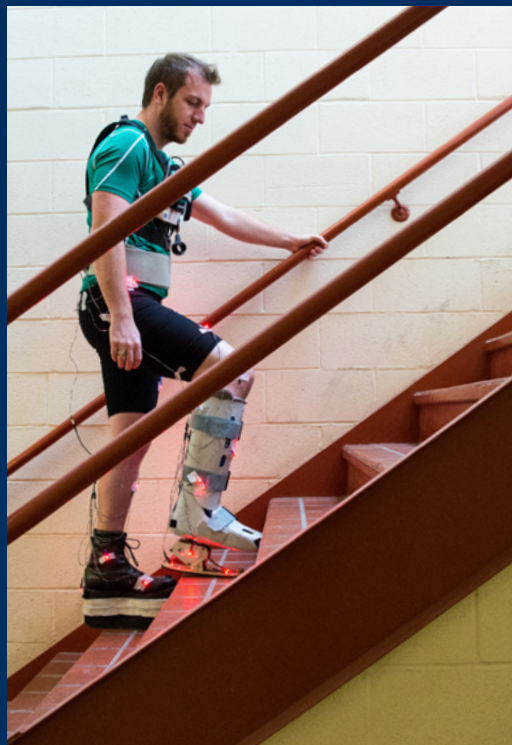




What is a Postdoctoral Fellow?

The University of Michigan's SPG defines a postdoctoral research fellow as:

Individuals who already possess either a terminal doctoral degree (i.e. Ph.D.) or a professional doctorate (e.g., M.D., D.D.S., D.V.M.) and who are pursuing advanced scientific or scholarly training.



Postdoctoral Outlook

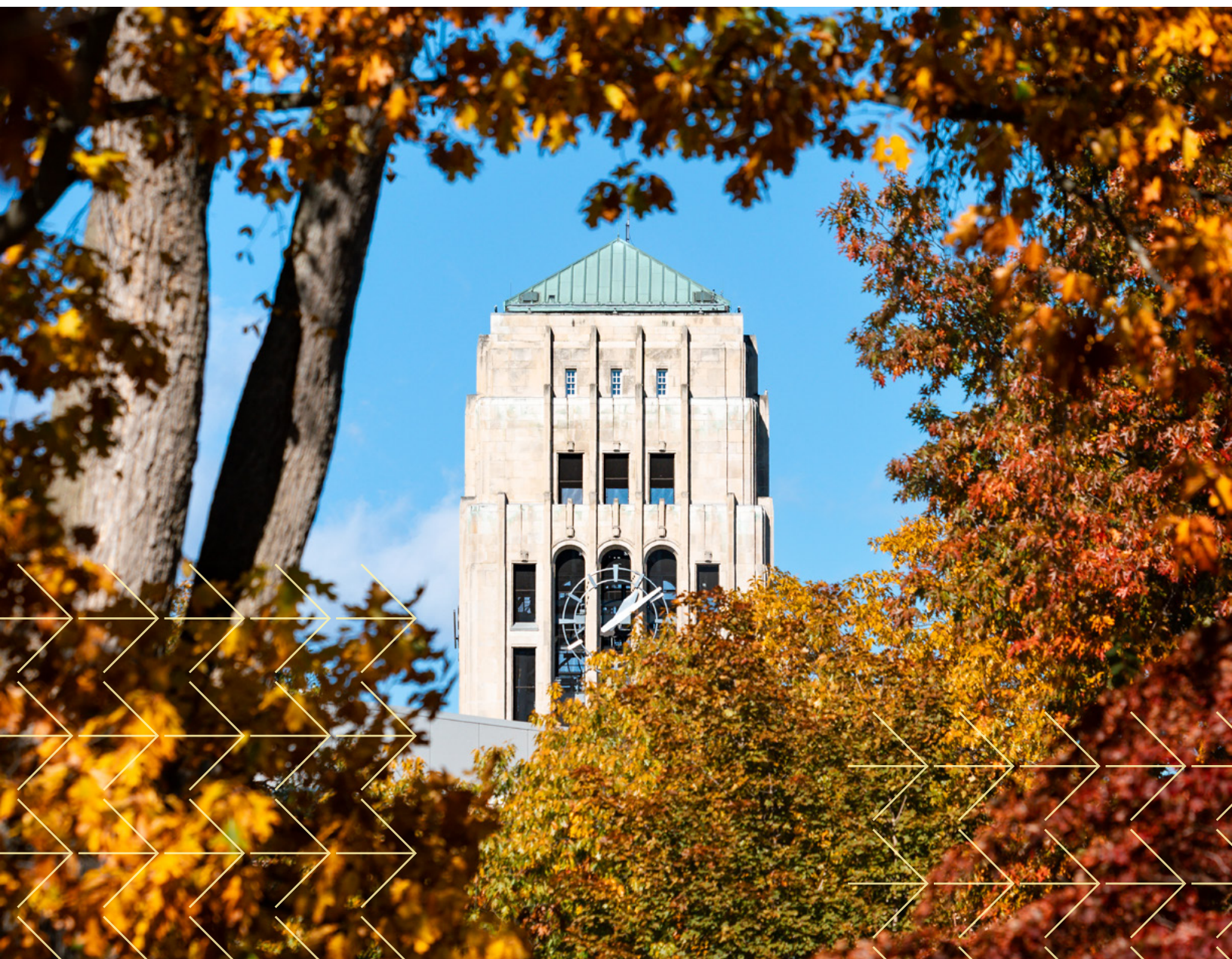
Postdoctoral fellows make significant contributions to the University of Michigan's research enterprise and have played a significant role in helping to establish the preeminence of American research [over the past 40 years](#).

However, despite the growth in the number of postdoctoral fellows, these scholars continue to experience increasing difficulty, [according to the American Association for the Advancement of Science](#).

In recent years, both the [National Postdoctoral Association](#) (NPA) and [National Institutes of](#)

[Health](#) (NIH) published papers recommending measures to improve issues that many postdoctoral fellows are confronting. These now inform OPA efforts to address the postdoctoral fellow experience at U-M.

Areas of focus include mentorship, professional development and well-being, the requirement of a centralized office, onboarding and comprehensive communication.



Office of Postdoctoral Affairs Team



Mark Moldwin

**Faculty Director and Arthur F. Thurnau
Professor of Climate and Space
Sciences and Engineering**

Professor Mark Moldwin, a space physicist and engineer who has served as the principal investigator on multiple space missions, leads the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs as inaugural faculty director.

Moldwin oversees the team providing core services, support, and resources to postdoctoral fellows across the University of Michigan, including Michigan Medicine. He coordinates efforts between Rackham Graduate School and the Office of the Vice President for Research, and interfaces with university academic and staff leadership.



Anne-Sophie Bohrer

**Professional and
Career Development Program Manager
for Postdoctoral Fellows**

Anne-Sophie received her Ph.D. in plant biochemistry from the Université Paris-Sud in 2012 and continued her training at Michigan State University as a postdoctoral researcher for nine years.

During her postdoc, Anne-Sophie became interested in pursuing a career in higher education administration, specifically in postdoctoral affairs.

Prior to joining the OPA, Anne-Sophie was the inaugural training coordinator for the Great Lakes Bioenergy Research Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she developed recruitment strategies and led professional development programs.

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs Team



Joel Devonshire

Conflict Resolution Specialist

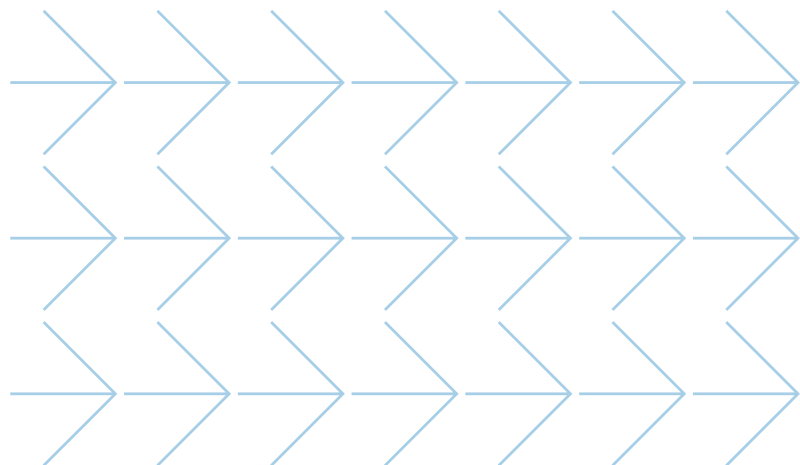
Joel is a trained mediator and facilitator who received his Ph.D. in peace studies and psychology from the Kroc Institute of International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame. He also obtained a master's degree in social psychology from the University of Connecticut and a graduate certificate in conflict resolution from Dominican University. After receiving his doctorate, Joel held a postdoctoral fellowship as an associate ombudsperson for the University of Notre Dame Graduate School, where he provided support to graduate students and postdoctoral scholars.



Ruthie Freeman

Admin/Project Coordinator

Ruthie is a “double Wolverine,” graduating with a bachelor's degree in social science and master's degree in information from the University of Michigan. Ruthie has worked in education since 2009, serving students in Detroit and Chicago before returning to her alma mater, where she has since focused on the needs of graduate students and postdocs.



OPA Services

Acting as a central hub, OPA services complement business processes at the department or program level across U-M schools and colleges. These efficiencies ensure a positive, more cohesive employment experience for postdoctoral fellows across the university.

In addition to well-being and professional development programming tailored specifically to the needs of fellows, OPA also provides core administrative services.



Orientation

Unlike students and faculty that arrive on campus mostly aligned with the academic year, postdocs join U-M year round. To support a smooth onboarding for postdocs, OPA provides a monthly incoming orientation.

These orientation events indirectly support faculty and unit staff administrators by providing additional assistance with onboarding.

During these in-person events, attendees are encouraged to network and engage with colleagues from across disciplines. These events have been shown to be especially helpful for international postdoctoral fellows. For many, coming to the University of Michigan is their first experience with living and working in the United States.

Family Travel Grant

Demands of parenting present special challenges to postdoctoral fellows who desire to participate in academic conferences as part of research and scholarship.

To address these challenges, the OPA administers a family travel grant, which is designed to assist postdoctoral fellows working to balance family obligations and scholarly research.

The grant provides assistance with travel expenses for children under the age of six who must accompany a postdoctoral parent to a professional meeting.

Allowable travel expenses when children accompany postdoctoral fellows to academic conferences may include:

- **Child's airfare**
- **Car seat rental for ground transportation**
- **Hotel crib rental**
- **Conference daycare services**

Completion Certificate

In an effort to recognize the contributions of postdoctoral fellows, the OPA awards certificates of completion to each fellow as they finish their appointments at the University of Michigan.

These certificates recognize postdoctoral fellows’ dedication to advancing research and scholarly achievements regardless of the employment sector or career path they choose to pursue.

The process of awarding certificates of completion to departing postdoctoral fellows also allows OPA to grow a database of postdoctoral “alumni.” By creating this database, OPA can connect with former U-M fellows, particularly relating to future institutional development or professional mentorship opportunities.

Total Number of Postdocs at U-M by Year

Calendar Year	Postdocs
2021	1,363
2022	1,274
2023	1,419
2024	1,442
2025	1,448

Postdocs by Citizenship Group

Calendar Year	Postdocs	International Postdocs
2021	1,363	54%
2022	1,274	56%
2023	1,419	59%
2024	1,442	60%
2025	1,448	58%

Conflict Resolution

Through individual consultations and group mediations and facilitations, OPA offers confidential, informal, and impartial support for addressing a range of conflicts and concerns encountered by postdoctoral fellows. The OPA’s conflict resolution specialist serves as both a conflict coach and neutral third party for handling sensitive disputes and communication difficulties. As an informal adjunct to formal university-level reporting structures and unit-level grievance procedures, the OPA can help facilitate resolution flexibly and efficiently by working directly with postdoctoral fellows and the staff and faculty members who work with them.

Additionally, in concert with campus partners, the OPA coordinates policies and procedures, case referral, and workshops and training focused on conflict resolution and postdoctoral fellows’ well-being.

Individual and Group Consultations

From January to October 2025, OPA provided 50 consultation meetings with 21 postdoctoral fellows and two faculty members. The average number of consultation appointments per case was 2.5.

Similar to the overall proportion of international postdoctoral fellows at U-M, 61% of office visitors (n = 14) were international postdocs.

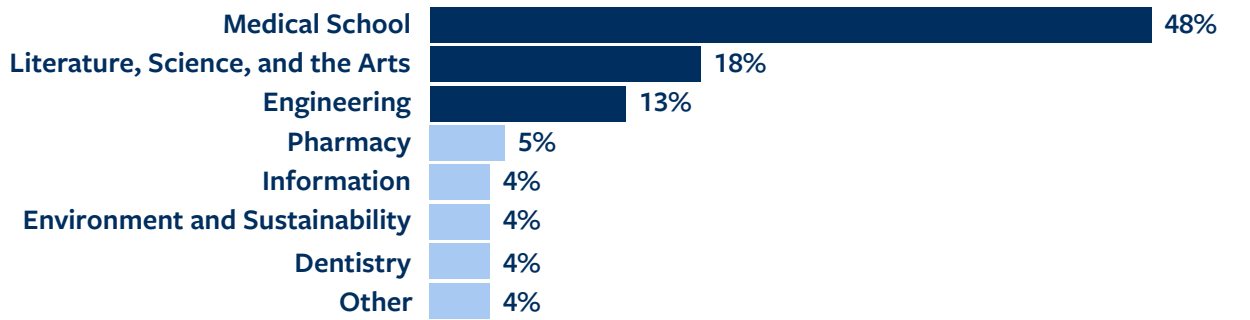
Almost half (48%) were from the U-M School of Medicine, with the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and the College of Engineering accounting for another 31%, combined.

The most common conflict resolution concern brought to the OPA was communication difficulty between postdoctoral fellows and their principal investigator (PI) or other mentors.

This was followed by concerns about work assignments and schedules, as well as career development, coaching and mentoring.

Visitor by Unit

The distribution of visitors by college or unit.



Workshop and Training Facilitation

In May 2025, OPA facilitated an online listening/support circle entitled *Coping with Postdoctoral Stress & Isolation During Turbulent Times*.

In October 2025, OPA facilitated an in-person workshop entitled *Finding Your Postdoctoral Voice: Navigating Culture, Power, and Difficult Conversations*.

In 2026, OPA plans to offer a wider range of conflict prevention-focused interactive workshops and web content.

Professional Development

Individual Career Advising

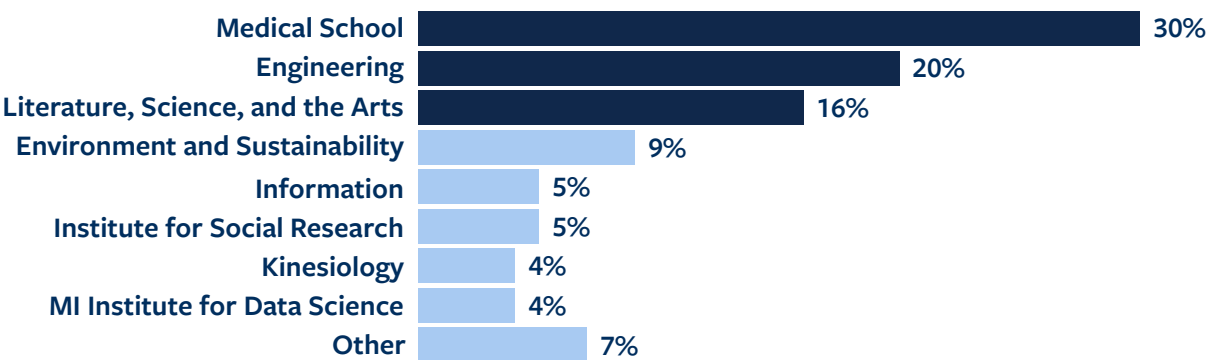
The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs offers advising services designed for U-M postdoctoral fellows seeking support in career exploration and preparation. Topics addressed during these individual meetings include: discussing career prospects after the postdoctoral training phase, defining career goals and realistic timelines to achieve them, strategizing the job search, and reviewing application materials for jobs in academia and industry.

From January to October 2025, the OPA met with 56 postdoctoral fellows from 12 U-M schools and colleges for career guidance. The majority of visitors worked in the Medical School (30%), College of Engineering (20%) and College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (16%).

Postdoctoral fellows who sought support ranged from the newly recruited (less than one month in their postdoctoral role) to senior level postdoctoral fellows (in their 5th year).

Where Our Postdocs Work

Distribution of career advising across colleges and units.



2025 Programs at a Glance

11
Events organized

246
Unique attendees

43
Repeat attendees

New OPA Programs and Initiatives

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs launched a recurring workshop called “Taking Charge of Your Postdoc Experience.” This workshop was designed to assist postdoctoral fellows with improving engagement in productive conversations with mentors and develop research and career plans aligned with career aspirations.

To support these mentorship conversations, OPA developed the career optimization and mentoring planning assessment for scholarly success, or COMPASS, a tool for defining expectations and goals.

OPA collaborated with the U-M Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) to develop a free, self-paced online course for postdoctoral fellows. This course, “Postdoc Teaching Essentials: Building Your Instructional Toolkit at U-M and Beyond,” complements an annual, cohort-based [program for postdoctoral fellows also offered by CRLT](#).

The OPA-led course covers teaching at the University of Michigan and other higher education institutions across the United States, providing learners with an opportunity to become familiar with principles of equity-focused teaching, class planning, student engagement and student learning assessment.

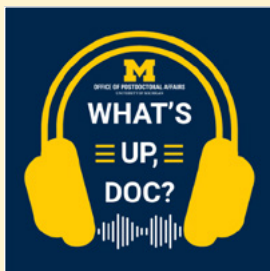
In partnership with the Office of the Vice President for Research, OPA designed and launched “Foundations of Grant Writing,” a webinar series teaching participants essentials of the grant application process. The series covered topics such as: finding research funding, engaging in successful grant writing, building effective collaborative partnerships, and building a strategic personal research strategy.

In collaboration with the Rackham professional development and engagement team, OPA developed “Preparing Ph.D.s for Postdocs,” a workshop aimed at enabling senior-level Ph.D. students and junior-level postdoctoral fellows to move more confidently into postdoctoral research roles.

The workshop encouraged participants to evaluate how a postdoctoral fellowship furthers their career goals. Importantly, it also helped participants recognize inherent personal and professional adjustments necessary when transitioning from graduate student to postdoctoral research fellow.

In an effort to reach postdoctoral fellows across all three campuses in alternate, easy to access formats, OPA also launched a podcast in fall 2025 called, “What’s Up, Doc?”

The podcast leverages OPA’s postdoctoral fellow alumni network to engage in relaxed, enriching dialogues. Guests are former U-M postdoctoral fellows who discuss their careers and their experiences in navigating diverse fields of study while sharing advice and insights to help current postdoctoral fellows on their own paths.



What’s Up, Doc?

PODCAST

Launched: Fall 2025

Learn more and listen:

postdocs.umich.edu/new-and-current-postdocs/whats-up-doc/

Community Building

Many postdoctoral fellows may be the only one in their research group or department. To counteract potential feelings of isolation, the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs helps connect postdoctoral fellows not only to resources for well-being, but to each other.

Website

In the spring 2024, the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs [launched a new website](#) in collaboration with the Office of the Vice President for Research and the Rackham Graduate School.

Serving as the central resource for postdoctoral fellows at U-M, the site offers information on the postdoctoral lifecycle, event registration, outreach, and easy access to the OPA weekly newsletter.

It is designed to foster engagement, streamline support and facilitate feedback from current and prospective postdocs and their colleagues.

Number of Website Views

May 1 - Nov. 14, 2025

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs	3,518
Prospective Postdocs	651
Funding	503
Outstanding Postdoctoral Fellow Award	480
Incoming Postdocs	436
Resources	390
Faculty and Administrators	262
What's Up, Doc?	150
New and Current Postdocs	148
International Scholars	114

Number of Unique Website Views

May 1 - Nov. 14, 2025

7,394

Top 5 Visitor Countries

United States	83.92%	6,274 sessions
India	2.49%	186 sessions
Other	13.59%	1,016 sessions
Canada	1.57%	117 sessions
France	1.27%	95 sessions
Japan	0.91%	68 sessions

Newsletter

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs seeks to unite the University of Michigan research community by keeping stakeholders and interested staff and faculty informed about events and updates for postdoctoral fellows.

OPA staff coordinate a weekly newsletter distributed to all postdoctoral fellows (across all three U-M campuses) who are automatically enrolled in the listserv during the onboarding process. Faculty, staff and prospective postdoctoral fellows are also encouraged to sign up to receive news and updates.

Since January 2025, OPA has increased its newsletter's reach while broadening content in order to build community and share information about career opportunities, professional development workshops, funding support and networking events.



Attendees visiting tables of campus partners at the 2025 NPAW Postdoc Info Fair

National Postdoc Appreciation Week

National Postdoc Appreciation Week (NPAW) is an annual celebration held during the third week of September, recognizing contributions of postdoctoral researchers to their own fields as well as, broadly, the American research establishment.

Sponsored by the National Postdoctoral Association, NPAW features events hosted by universities and research centers across the country, such as professional development workshops and social gatherings.

Together with the University of Michigan Postdoctoral Association and Michigan Medicine's Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, the OPA co-sponsored NPAW 2025 at U-M from September 15-20, 2025.

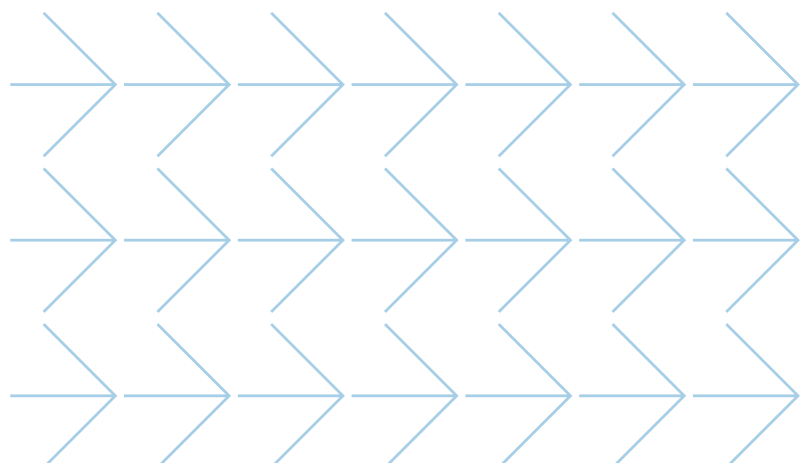
The OPA organized several events, including:

- a luncheon to celebrate winners of the 2025 Outstanding Postdoctoral Fellow Award
- a postdoc resource fair held at the Michigan League (on Central Campus)
- a professional development workshop hosted on North Campus

Other NPAW events this year included a coffee hour, a happy hour gathering, and a family picnic.



Campus leadership with 2025 Outstanding Postdoctoral Award Winners. Back row, left to right: Rackham Graduate School Dean Mike Solomon, OVPR Vice President for Research Arthur Lupia, OPA Director Mark Moldwin. Front row, left to right: Erez Cohen, Hannah Bell and Elder Garcia Varela





University of Michigan Postdoctoral Association (UMPDA)

The University of Michigan Postdoctoral Association (UMPDA) is the largest postdoctoral volunteer organization on campus, representing the interests of postdoctoral fellows at the University of Michigan.

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs helps financially sponsor UMPDA operations, giving guidance on best practices where university resources are involved to maintain transparency and accountability.

In return, UMPDA shares feedback from postdoctoral fellows to the OPA regarding key issues, concerns and proposed initiatives.

Events and programming

UMPDA offers a vibrant lineup of programs designed to support postdoctoral fellows throughout their U-M journey.

Signature initiatives include peer mentorship groups, which connect experienced postdoctoral fellows with newcomers to foster professional growth and networking.

UMPDA also hosts engaging professional development activities, such as STEM workshops and unique community outreach projects, most notably, teaching science lessons to incarcerated secondary students at the Macomb County Correctional Facility.

In 2026, OPA and UMPDA will launch regular coffee hours, providing informal opportunities for postdoctoral fellows to socialize, exchange ideas, and interact with campus partners and university administrators. These events aim to strengthen community ties and keep postdoctoral fellows informed on campus developments.

2025 UMPDA event highlights

- **Immigration attorney presentation**
- **National Postdoc Appreciation Week family picnic**
- **Dandiya Night to celebrate the Hindu festival of Navratri**
- **Fitness class(es)**
- **Post Ac (a capella group)**
- **Happy hour gatherings**
- **Coffee hour(s) at the U-M Medical School**

Financial Oversight

Since 2024, UMPDA's financial management has more adequately adhered to university financial management procedures. Currently, the board receives the majority of its funding from the OPA. OPA works closely with board members, who voluntarily serve, to educate and assist fellows, closely track record keeping, and, where appropriate, engage in discussion about funding priorities.

This additional oversight enables UMPDA to continue administering its own funds, which is critical for early career professional development, while maintaining continuity and good governance as board members join or depart.

Leaders



Manisha Agrawal
Co-Chair

Manisha Agrawal is a postdoctoral researcher in internal medicine using cutting-edge genomic tools like high-throughput CRISPR screening, massively parallel reporter assays and deep mutational scanning to explore the molecular foundations of health and disease.

Her work centers on atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, lipoprotein metabolism and acute lung injury and regeneration.



M. Javad Javaherian
Co-Chair

M. Javad Javaherian is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering.

His research centers on fluid-structure interactions and wave-ice modeling, with particular emphasis on naval architecture and offshore wind. Javad also integrates AI/ML with physics-based models for wave and ice prediction in the Great Lakes.

In addition to his scholarly pursuits, he serves as UMPDA co-chair and treasurer.



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