How to successfully create or revive a PDA in a university

Case study based on the creation of Yale Postdoctoral Association
Hello!

I AM FLORIAN CARLE
I am here because I want to help you have the best years of your life as a postdoc!
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I AM JENS JÄGER
I am here because I love to give presentations.
You can contact me at jens.jaeger@yale.edu
1. CASE STUDY
   Duration: 25 minutes

2. YPA PRESENTATION
   Duration: 15 minutes

3. OPEN DISCUSSION
   Duration: 20 minutes
CASE STUDY

You land your dream-job: a postdoc! You accept and realize the university is not as organized as you might like it to be.
"There is nothing organized for the postdocs and it’s so unfair!"
INSTRUCTIONS

Split in small groups of 4-5 people
Introduce yourself to the group and read the handout
Try to find solutions to create a PDA

CASE 1 - Revive a PDA
You arrive at NPA University and you discover that a small group of postdocs used to have regular meetings a year ago but nothing has happened since then.

CASE 2 - Create a PDA
You arrive at NPA University and you discover that no postdoc group exists.

You decide to do something about it...

- Come up with a list of about 10 actions that you will do to create or revive a postdoctoral association.
- Pick up a group representative to share the actions with the audience.
Number and repartition of Postdocs in NPA University

- **Total:** 2,114 Postdocs
- **Average contract:** 3.9 years
- **Average age:** 33
- **Age range:** 26 - 38
- **Gender:** 53% Male - 47% Female

Know your audience. Who are you organizing things for? Single young postdocs or postdocs with families?
Listing of departments at NPA university

- Office for Postdoctoral Affairs
- Office for Internationals
- Career Office
- University bar
- Graduate student group
- Center for research
- Technology transfer office

Most of the time, resources exist already, no need to duplicate them.
Contact the previous steering committee group

They give you:

- The contact information of anyone who worked with them
- A lead for funding opportunities
- A contact point to make PDA t-shirts

Contact anyone who participated in the previous PDA. They might have useful information for you.
Getting some fundings

Office for Postdoctoral Affairs

- The budget is closed. No funding available for the first year

You need money to organize events, you need events to get more funding. Find a way to demonstrate the legitimacy of your association.
## Comparison with other university PDA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Working with</th>
<th>2015 Funding</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SURPAS</td>
<td>Stanford</td>
<td>Office of Postdoctoral Affairs</td>
<td>$14,000</td>
<td>Office of Postdoctoral Affairs Medical School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins Postdoc Association</td>
<td>Johns Hopkins University</td>
<td>Postdoctoral Office</td>
<td>$11 per postdoc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSM PDA</td>
<td>Harvard School of Medicine</td>
<td>HMS Postdoctoral Office</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
<td>HMS Postdoctoral Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biomedical Postdoctoral Council</td>
<td>UPenn</td>
<td>Biomedical Postdoctoral Programs Office</td>
<td>$12,000</td>
<td>Vendor Fair, BPP Office</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why not get some ideas from successful PDAs? Show your research to your Postdoc Office to convince them to give you funding.

Thank you to all the PDA listed who took the time to answer and were extremely helpful!
Getting some fundings

Office for Postdoctoral Affairs
- No funding available for the first year

- You need money to organize events, you need events to get funding. Find a way to demonstrate the legitimacy of your association.

Graduate Student group
- Allocate you a small amount of money for an event that is open to all

- Make sure your events are targeted at postdocs but open to all to increase your visibility and encourage co-organizations.
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Research center
- They try to attract graduates and postdocs and are giving you $500 per event

Contact organizations or departments that want to meet postdocs, you will have more chances to get funding if you bring them their targeted audience.
YPA PRESENTATION

We have created and launched a postdoc association. Here is how...
1. **Data review and informal survey**
   From zero to almost not zero

2. **Creation of the association**
   Becoming official

3. **What’s next?**
   How to grow the association
New Haven, CT
Founded in 1701
1,153 acres
12,336 students
19% International
9,357 employees

Desperately trying to beat Harvard at, at least, something
YALE POSTDOCS

1235 Postdocs

74% Associate
26% Fellow

Average time spent at Yale: 2.2 years

Average age: 32

Gender: 58% Male - 42% Female

70 % international (66 countries)
Top 5: China, India, Germany, South Korea, Italy

41% have dependants (spouse or children)

Know your audience. Who are you organizing things for? Single young postdocs or postdocs with kids and families?
January 31, 2015
Postdoctoral Advisory Committee dissolution
FROM PAC TO YPA

**PAC**
Committee with a full time advisor, a consistent budget and resources to help postdocs with their careers. Social events were also organized by this Committee.

**YPA**
Association run by postdocs for postdocs, with no budget, no resources and no full time staff to help organize events.
Goal of the YPA

Be the contact point between postdocs and resources
January 31, 2015
Postdoctoral Advisory Committee dissolution

March 16, 2015
Registration of Yale Postdoctoral Association at the Provost Office
**People**
Advertise events efficiently to a dispersed community at orientation, post relevant things to the association website and Facebook group.

**Administration**
Define roles in the association to increase efficiency and anticipate turnover.

**Budget**
Universities tend to have strict rules about money that might make things difficult. Check how to have an account, how to spend the funds, overhead budget on benefits...
**LESSONS LEARNED**

**Registration**
- Registered YPA at Provost office → use Yale brand
- External or internal?

**Monthly meetings**
- Free food!
- Open to all postdocs, new postdocs can join any time.

**Communication**
- One YPA representative at every postdoc orientation to introduce the association
LESSONS LEARNED

Registration
- Registered YPA at Provost office → use Yale brand
- External or internal?

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Communication
- One YPA representative at every postdoc orientation to introduce the association

Facebook
- Took over the old facebook group to advertise all the events and meetings.
- Almost everyone is on Facebook and it is really easy

Budget
- $2,000 from PDO for our first year
- collected another $1,000 from International Office
- $1000 from research group
- Ask everyone for funding, even your friends!

Get feedback!
We used to only have alcohol related events (happy hours). People who don’t drink complained and we listened to them to propose other events.
January 31, 2015
Postdoctoral Advisory Committee dissolution

March 14, 2015
Registration of Yale Postdoctoral Association at the Provost Office

September 21, 2015
Launch of YPA during the National Postdoc Appreciation Week 2015
No matter how much work you do in the background, most of the postdocs will only see your events.
International Potluck Dinner party

A Cappella performance at Mory’s

Hike at Sleeping Giant

Reception at Yale Club of NYC

Last Saturdays at the Museum

Trip to “What Can You Be With a PhD?” conference

Ice Skating

Game Night

Salsa Night
Communication

- Creation of a stand-alone website linked to all resources useful to postdocs
- Newsletter sent monthly
- Reappropriation of the Facebook group
- Creation of a Yale Postdoc T-shirts

246 visits in February

675 members + 212 since launch
784 people have participated to our events so far!

15% of postdocs have signed up to our mailing list
DISCUSSION & IDEAS

You have ideas, experiences, advice...
Share them with everyone!
Do

- Find supporters
  Postdocs are a community hard to reach and people are trying to reach them. Talk to these people, they are likely to help you.

- Increase visibility
  Introduce yourself to postdocs: go to orientations, make t-shirts, organize events...

- Organise event you want to attend
  Organizing events is a lot of work. If you don’t want to attend your own event, others probably won’t go, either!

- Grow your membership
  Make sure to collect emails and affiliations at each event (RSVP, sign-up sheets, ...) to extend your mailing list.
Do

- Reduce all administrative tasks
  Use your time to organize nice events, not paperwork. Register your group within the university and not as a stand alone association.

- Use NPA toolbox
  Accessible on their website, the National Postdoctoral Association has a lot of useful tools.
Don’t

- Overwork your postdoc team
  People in your steering committee are postdocs like you and volunteer their time. Be nice about it and they will be likely to work more!

- Organize similar events
  Make sure other departments/associations didn’t have a similar event a few days before! Co-organize instead!

- Imitate your Postdoc Office
  OPAs are experts at programing for postdocs, you will lose the fight if you go head to head! Plan in advance to see how your association can be complementary.
DISCUSSION POINTERS

Some unanswered questions:

◦ How to assure continuity when there is so much turnover?

◦ Will your events interest the postdoc community?

◦ How to make sure your PDA is not doing the same thing as the Postdoc Office?

◦ Should your PDA be a stand-alone organization or a university entity?
Thanks!

ANY QUESTIONS?

You can find us at ypa.yale.edu
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