Welcoming International Scholars: Programs to Aid in the Transition to Postdoctoral Studies in the US

Lindsay Wallace, PhD, Ken Brockman, PhD, Sara Marchionda
The Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s Hospital
The Research Institute: Structure

14 Research Centers of Emphasis
- Center for Cardiovascular & Pulmonary
- Center for Childhood Cancer
- Center for Microbial Pathogenesis
- Center for Molecular & Human Genetics
- Center for Gene Therapy
- Center for Vaccine & Immunity
- Institute for Genomic Medicine
- Center for Biobehavioral Health
- Center for Injury Research & Policy
- Center for Innovation in Pediatric Practice
- Center for Perinatal Research
- Center for Clinical & Translation
- Center for Biopathology
- Battelle Center for Mathematical Medicine

Research Trainees
- Postdocs 75
- Grad Students 42
- Clinical Fellows 15
Trainee Support at The Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s Hospital

- FT dedicated to trainees/students
- Initial trainee contact
  - Welcome email/meeting
- Constant trainee support post-arrival
- Logistics/Administrative duties
- Overarching trainee programming
Trainee Support at The Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s Hospital

- Trainee driven program
- Trainees decide all relevant programming and events
- All international programs were initiated and implemented by the trainee association
The age old question: How do you get people to come?
Typical NCH attendance

• Programing and attendance at ~40%

• We were still not engaging international trainees
  – 44% of trainees are international
Reaching the international trainees

- Get representation from your entire population
  - New officer position
    - International Representative
  - New program
    - Center Representatives
What we learned

• Trainees lacked support during the transition to the US
• International trainees assumed our programing was not relevant to their needs
  – (it is!)

• Goals
  – Advertise our program
  – Aid in the transition to the United States
  – Provide important city and institutional specific information
Welcome Booklet

• What did we want to achieve?
  – One-stop source for consistent information

• What it also provided:
  – Tool for PIs & departmental staff
Welcome Booklet

• How we went about creating it?
  – Initiated a trainee-based committee
  – Brainstormed needs/content
    1. Compile pre-existing
    2. Modify and rework available
    3. Synthesize from scratch
  – Generate outline
    • Individual sections assigned to trainees
  – Combined sections for initial version
  – Multiple rounds of editing
Welcome To Buckeye Country!

RITA is the Research Institute's Trainee Association at Nationwide Children's Hospital (NCH). Our members are here to assist you during your stay in Columbus, Ohio. During check-in and orientation, we will review multiple policies and procedures, including your immigration documents. We will also share information about the NCH campus and the city of Columbus. We wish you much success while here at Nationwide Children's Hospital.

Booklet Table of Contents:

Before Arrival ........................................ 3
Post Arrival Checklist ................................ 7
Immigration Regulations ............................ 9
NCH Campus and Facilities .......................... 12
The Research Institute at NCH: Training in Responsible Conduct of Research ...................... 13
Safety Tips ............................................ 14
Opening a Bank Account .............................. 17
Health Care .......................................... 20
Paying Your Taxes .................................... 24
Shopping Near NCH ................................. 25
Shopping Near OSU Campus ....................... 26
Housing/Renting ..................................... 27
Bus .................................................... 29
Driver's License ..................................... 30
English Conversation & Classes .................... 31
Recreational Activities ............................... 33
Telephone, Internet and Television Services ...... 35
Useful Websites ..................................... 35
Sizing and Measurement Equivalents .............. 36
Before Arrival

- Work Visa Information
  - H-1 B, J-1 & F-1
  - Time of Stay Limits
  - Employment Status
  - Travel Restrictions
  - Extensions & Petitions

- Also includes information for hiring PI/manager
Post Arrival

- Combination of US, State & Institute specific information
  - Contacts, addresses & websites included as available
  - Social Security #, Driver’s License
  - Pre-employment screening, Orientation
  - Public transport
Immigration Regulations

- Detailed immigration regulations
  - Important facts & tips
  - Required forms and information
  - Succinct bullet points
  - Easily searchable & digestible format
Safety Tips

- Local emergency contact numbers
- Home safety
- Walking around campus and Columbus
- US drinking regulations and best practices
Taxes

- General overview of US taxes and requirements
  - General filing requirements
  - Exemptions for J-1 scholars
  - Links to more information & services
# Local Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recreational Activities</th>
<th>Shopping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Housing &amp; Rental options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Neighborhoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Internet/Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Busses, Shuttles, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Driver’s Licenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Resident &amp; Non-Resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recreation Activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Recreational Activities**

- [ ] [Link to Local Recreation Center]
- [ ] [Link to Local Park]
- [ ] [Link to Local Library]

**Shopping**

- [ ] [Link to Local Mall]
- [ ] [Link to Local Shopping District]

**Housing & Rental options**

- [ ] [Link to Local Real Estate Agency]
- [ ] [Link to Local Rental Properties]

**Public Transport**

- [ ] [Link to Local Bus Schedule]
- [ ] [Link to Local Shuttle Service]

**Driver’s Licenses**

- [ ] [Link to Local Driver’s License Office]
- [ ] [Link to Local Non-Resident Driver’s License]

---

**Outdoor Activities**

- [ ] [Link to Local Hiking Trails]
- [ ] [Link to Local Cycling Routes]

---

**Nationwide Children’s**

When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.
English Conversation & Classes

- Institutional & community English as a Second Language groups & classes.
### Equivalents & Conversions

#### Weights & Measures

**Weights & Measures**

When it comes to weights and measures, it's important to understand the units used in different contexts. Here are some common equivalences:

- **Volume (Liquids)**: Ounces, Cups, Pints, Quarts, and Gallons
- **Dry Goods**: Pounds and Ounces

#### Temperatures

**Weather**

- **Fahrenheit** vs. **Celsius**

**Cooking/Baking**

- **Fahrenheit** vs. **Celsius**

#### Clothing sizes

**Men's & Woman's**

- **Sizing chart**

#### Shoe sizes

- **European to US conversion**

---

#### Equivalents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lengths and Distances</th>
<th>Inches</th>
<th>Feet</th>
<th>Kilometers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 inch</td>
<td>1.07cm</td>
<td>0.083ft</td>
<td>0.00254m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 foot</td>
<td>12in</td>
<td>0.333yd</td>
<td>0.3048m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 mile</td>
<td>5280ft</td>
<td>1.609km</td>
<td>1.609km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Weights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pounds</th>
<th>Ounces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Conversions

- **Weight (Dry Goods)**: Pounds and Ounces
- **Lengths and Distances**: Inches, Feet, Yards, and Miles
- **Volume (Liquids)**: Ounces, Cups, Pints, Quarts, and Gallons
- **Temperatures**: Fahrenheit vs. Celsius
- **Clothing sizes**: Men's & Woman's
- **Shoe sizes**

---

### Nationwid Childrren's Hospital

When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.
Group Brainstorm

What resources or content would be important to trainees at your university or institute?
Ambassador Program

• “Big Brother / Big Sister” like program

• New trainees paired with current trainee/staff member
  – Paired before arrival
  – Non-academic / scientific mentor
  – Try to match language spoken and visa type
Implementation

1. Notification of new trainee arrival
   - PIs (or assistants) notify RITA of when hired

2. New trainee contacted
   - Trainee Office contacts new trainee by email
     - Trainee receives Welcome Booklet

3. Trainee and Institute staff utilized booklet for needs leading up to arrival
Implementation

• Roll out:

1. Presented Welcome Booklet to administrative assistants
   • Received positive feedback & suggestions

2. Hand delivered copy of Welcome Booklet to all assistants

3. Welcome Booklet & Ambassador Program presented to institute at Quarterly ‘Town Hall’
Group Discussion

What does or does not work for your institute?