The NPA continued on its path of growth in 2018. Some of the accomplishments for the year include:

- The NPA conducted its Annual Conference in Cleveland and sold out its networking event at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
- The NPA presented the 2017 NPA Institutional Policy Report study at the Annual Conference
- Customized postdoc policy reports were created for institutional members
- National Postdoctoral Appreciation Week was the largest ever. Over 410 events occurred at 104 institutions in 31 states throughout the United States
- Kryste Ferguson, M.Ed., became a full-time employee
- Samantha Black, Ph.D., was hired as a part-time employee
- The NPA office moved to beautiful new offices in Rockville, MD
- New Board of Director members were elected in 2018: Natalia Martin, Ph.D., Claudia Spani, Ph.D, Re-elected was Tracy Costello, Ph.D.
The NPA Achievements in 2018

The NPA and the postdoc community continue to maximize opportunities, overcome challenges and seek achievements as we endeavor to improve the postdoctoral experience.

Indeed, 2018 has been another year of growth and expansion for the NPA! We were excited to welcome a new staff member, Samantha Black, Ph.D., as a program associate and to promote Kryste Ferguson, M.Ed., to manager of membership and special projects. We launched our new logo at the 2018 Annual Conference and have been actively creating an updated website that will launch at the 2019 Annual Conference in Orlando! In late November, the staff moved into the brand new Nonprofit Village facility in Rockville, MD, to allow NPA to grow and expand our offerings to all members.

We are focused on establishing and sustaining programs that are imperative to improving the postdoc experience. The NPA is grateful for Burroughs Welcome Fund for support of expanded career and professional development resources, most notably a new postdoc office (PDO) mentoring program! In addition, we have rolled out new leadership training for our committee leaders and Board members, continued the myPostdoc and myPDO webinar series, and worked to develop our members through leadership opportunities. Expanded publication of The POSTDOCket (the NPA’s monthly newsletter) has been instrumental to all of these efforts by providing timely information critical to our members professional growth. Additionally, we’ve developed new partnerships with professional societies and nonprofits that enable us to continue to enhance the postdoctoral experience.

Several key reports and policies were issued in 2018. Less than a week after the 2018 Annual Conference in Cleveland, OH, “The Next Generation of Biomedical and Behavioral Sciences Researchers: Breaking Through” was issued by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM). This report examined national programs and policies that affect postdoctoral scholars and early-career biomedical researchers and provided a number of recommendations, several of which focused on the importance of career development training for these early career professionals. The NPA response to the NASEM report led to the “NextGen postdocs” editorial in Science and an invitation to present at the NIH Training Directors Committee in July. The NIH continues to work toward sustaining existing research programs by balancing the needs of early-career researchers who represent the future of the biomedical workforce with the needs of the current workforce. Importantly, in November, a key benchmark for which the NPA has long advocated was finally realized as the NIH stepped across the $50K threshold for 2018-2019 postdoctoral stipends (NOT-OD-19-036).

This year also marked historic changes with regard to higher education academic culture and the intolerance of sexual harassment. The NASEM report “Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering and Medicine” concluded that sexual harassment results in loss of academic talent and erodes research integrity and that current policies are not effective. Indeed, preliminary data from the NPA’s 2017 survey of sexual harassment among postdoctoral fellows was presented to the National Academies’ Committee on Impacts of Sexual Harassment in Academia, as well as during our 2018 conference and supports this conclusion. We anticipate that the results from our 2016 sexual harassment research will be accepted for publication soon. Most recently, the NSF issued an updated sexual harassment policy and committed to partnering with the NIH to identify and implement uniform policies to combat harassment in academia. We look forward to continuing to support these efforts to create a positive and productive work environment for postdoc fellows.

The NPA is currently preparing for the release of the third installment of the Institutional Policy Survey to better understand the changing landscape of postdoc policies at our member institutions, and plans for additional surveys of postdoctoral fellows to gain greater understanding of the current challenges they face. As always, your input is vital to our mission.

We look forward to continued growth in 2019 and thank everyone for their continued support enabling us to achieve our mission and to positively enrich the postdoctoral experience. All of your donations are welcomed and will support the talented individuals who push research limits every single day to improve the lives of others.

Sincerely,

Tracy Costello, Ph.D., Chair of the Board