



Universities bested by government, private institutions in list of Best Places for Postdocs

But most postdocs express strong workplace dissatisfaction

(Philadelphia, PA) – The United States Environmental Protection Agency campus in Research Triangle Park, NC, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, and the National Cancer Institute campuses in Maryland provide the best work environments for life science postdocs in the US, according to the rankings in *The Scientist's* 3rd annual Best Places to Work for Postdocs survey.

The University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, landed the top three spots for US academic institutions, while Umea Plant Science Center and Uppsala University, both in Sweden, and the Netherlands Cancer Institute earned top honors for institutions outside the US.

The more than 3500 postdocs who responded to this year's survey rated a valuable training experience, access to research equipment and library resources, and a good mentoring relationship as the ingredients that make for a great workplace, but most respondents are unhappy with how their institutions measure up. Full survey results will be detailed in the article "Best Places to Work for Postdocs: 2005," appearing in *The Scientist* on February 14, 2005.

"*The Scientist* is pleased to be able to provide these survey results to our readers again this year," says Richard Gallagher, editor and publisher of *The Scientist*. "But the results shouldn't solidify the status quo at top institutions. We hope that they can serve as a challenge to all institutions to continuously improve the sometimes appalling working conditions for postdocs, arguably science's most valuable players."

In the United States, government institutions and private research centers landed 11 of the top 15 places. "In general, there's more incentive for government and for-profit institutions to take care of their employees," says Keith Micoli, chair of the National Postdoctoral Association and a postdoc in pathology at the University of Alabama, Birmingham.

Twelve of the US top 15 have a postdoc office, association, or advisor to help raise awareness of postdocs' needs and facilitate dialogue between postdocs and administrators. Micoli says that the number of postdoc associations has tripled in the past 15 years.

Institutions in Canada, Scandinavia, and The Netherlands occupy 11 of the top 15 slots for non-US institutions. Each of these institutions has adequate funding resources, and good networking and career development opportunities, which foreign postdocs consider important factors for workplace satisfaction, according to *The Scientist's* survey.

But, most postdocs express displeasure with their work situations. Some of the respondents' concerns, like receiving adequate compensation, have been voiced before; but others, such as transitioning to independence within a reasonable time frame, might be indicative of new problems. "The abuse of postdoc researchers originates from their lack of recognition and place in the system," explains Christine Heller del Riego of EuroScience, a grassroots organization that aims to be the voice of science in Europe.

More than 40,000 survey invitations were sent to individuals who had registered at www.the-scientist.com and identified themselves as a non-tenured life scientist working at a non-commercial research institution in the United States, Canada, Western Europe, or Israel, the magazine received 3,533 valid responses representing 769 individual institutions. Overall, *The Scientist* evaluated the 125 US institutions and 66 non-US institutions that had five or more responses.

The full text of the article and survey methodology is available online to *The Scientist* subscribers. Members of the press who would like access to the full text should contact pr@the-scientist.com. For more information about *The Scientist's* Best Places to Work surveys, visit us online at http://www.the-scientist.com/info/bptw/bptw_home.

The top overall results for US institutions are:

1. US Environmental Protection Agency, Research Triangle Park, NC
2. Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle, WA
3. National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, Rockville, Frederick, MD
4. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, Research Triangle Park, NC
5. Trudea Institute, Saranac Lake, NY
6. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC
7. Wadsworth Center, Albany, NY
8. Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA
9. Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole, MA
10. Washington University, Saint Louis, MO
11. The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, TX
12. The J. David Gladstone Institutes, San Francisco, CA
13. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA
14. Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
15. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, Bethesda, MD

The top 10 US academic institutions are:

1. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC
2. Washington University, Saint Louis, MO
3. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA

4. Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
5. Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI
6. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
7. Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA
8. University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL
9. Emory University, Atlanta, GA
10. University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS

The top overall results for non-US institutions are:

1. Umea Plant Science Center, Umea, Sweden
2. Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden
3. Netherlands Cancer Institute, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
4. Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada
5. University of Bristol, Bristol, UK
6. Mount Sinai Hospital, Toronto, Canada
7. University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland
8. University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada
9. Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Copenhagen, Denmark
10. University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada
11. University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway
12. Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK
13. Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands
14. Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands
15. Centro de Investigaciones Biológicas—CSIC, Madrid, Spain

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