

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



VANDERBILT  
Office of Postdoctoral  
Affairs

# YEAR IN REVIEW

**The 2022-2023 academic year brought increased programming and engagement for postdocs at Vanderbilt.**

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) had an event-filled week during the 16th annual National Postdoc Appreciation Week. We again offered postdoc headshots, a family picnic, a de-stress event in partnership with Graduate and Postdoc Academic Success (GPAS), and daily coffee breaks on campus, among other events. Throughout the week, offices across campus came together to celebrate our postdocs.

The 16th annual Postdoc Symposium was organized by the Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association (VPA) and took place at the Student Life Center on October 27. The symposium featured the return of a resource fair where postdocs learned about campus partner services and support.

Our partnership with the English Language Center also grew with programming offered both in the fall and spring semesters. The fall featured “Academic Communication for Postdocs,” a semester-long course aimed to refine academic communication skills. The spring virtual modules focused on postdoc resources, professional relationships, and research communications.

In welcoming the first cohort of the Vanderbilt Collaborative Humanities postdocs, we collaborated with several campus partners to provide grant and fellowship programming specific to the humanities. We look forward to expanding the career and professional development opportunities for this group of postdocs as the Collaborative Humanities program grows.

Throughout the academic year, we continued to bridge the gap between Vanderbilt University (VU) and Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) processes and procedures. A new, monthly postdoc orientation for VUMC postdocs began in January to provide information on the postdoc experience and introduce key partners across the university and medical center. We also offered a new postdoc coffee hour for postdocs to socialize with each other.

The last event of the year was our Postdoc Awards Ceremony and reception. This year included an outstanding number of nominees who were recognized for exceptional postdoctoral research, mentorship, and service as well as faculty mentorship.





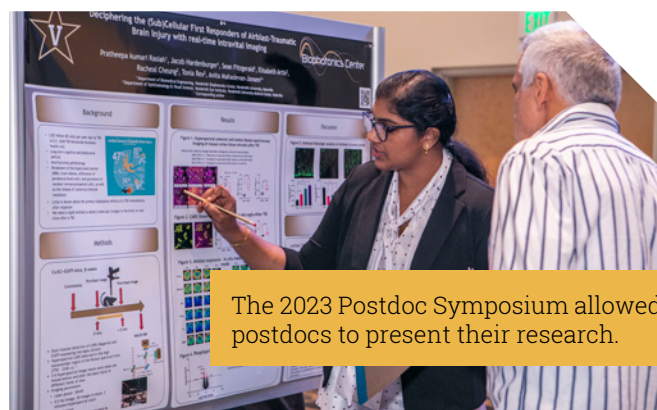
2023 Postdoc Awards Reception.

We welcomed to campus more than 200 new postdocs in the 2022-2023 academic year and held 19 new postdoc orientations. We had more than 50 meetings with administrative staff, faculty, and current or prospective postdocs to support research and scholarship on Vanderbilt's campus.

## LOOKING FORWARD

We are excited about continued programming in the 2023-2024 academic year. Our partnerships with campus departments continue to grow, allowing us to provide more offerings to postdocs. We look forward to our continued collaborations with the Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association to help meet the needs of all postdocs on campus and provide an atmosphere to encourage personal and professional growth. We also intend to focus our efforts on collecting robust data on the outcomes of current and former postdocs in order to help connect future postdocs with opportunities both during and after their time at Vanderbilt.

**We are your OPA, and we are working on your behalf.**



The 2023 Postdoc Symposium allowed postdocs to present their research.



Happy Hour with the VPA included snacks, drinks, and board games.

# OPA

# LEADERSHIP

## 2022-2023



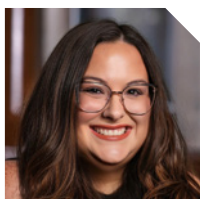
**C. André Christie-Mizell**

Vice Provost for Graduate Education  
Dean of the Graduate School  
Director, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs  
Centennial Professor of Sociology



**Faith Bishop**

Associate Director



**Annie Evans**

Program and Communications Manager

# VPA BOARD MEMBERS

2022-2023



**Daniel Fehrenbach**  
President



**Nestor de la Visitación**  
**Pastor**  
Scholarly Advancement  
Co-Chair



**Jeanne Ishimwe**  
Vice President



**Markie Sneed**  
Scholarly Advancement  
Co-Chair



**Kasey Schalich**  
Community Building  
Co-Chair



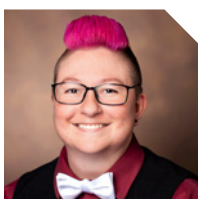
**Brandon Baer**  
Career Development  
Co-Chair



**Zhiyu Wan**  
Community Building  
Co-Chair



**Hani Chanbour**  
Career Development Co-  
Chair



**Victoria Nasci**  
Postdoc Advocacy & EDI  
Chair



# BY THE NUMBERS



**9**

**SCHOOLS**

**72**

**DEPARTMENTS**





# POSTDOC POPULATION

**AY 2022-2023**

## SCHOOL NUMBERS

Blair	1
Arts and Science	124
Divinity School	2
Law School	1
Owen	7
Peabody College	43
School of Engineering	74
School of Medicine	388
School of Nursing	3
Other (Centers/Institutes)	1

**TOTAL 644**

**102**

**POSTDOCS ON  
TRAINING  
GRANTS OR  
INDIVIDUAL  
FELLOWSHIPS**



**323**  
**INTERNATIONAL**

**321**  
**US CITIZENS**







# WHAT IS A POSTDOC?

Vanderbilt postdoctoral fellows, commonly known as postdocs, are professionals who have earned doctoral degrees and are temporarily pursuing additional scholarly training, experience and research that is necessary for a wide range of career paths. Postdocs play an important role in Vanderbilt's research enterprise and are integral to the discovery and learning mission of Vanderbilt University and Medical Center. At any given time, **Vanderbilt has approximately 450 postdocs across both VU and VUMC.**

## MISSION

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs is responsible for planning and managing programs and services for Vanderbilt's postdoctoral community. OPA supports Vanderbilt-affiliated postdocs as well as faculty and staff administrators who work with the postdoctoral population. OPA is the central resource for postdoctoral services and serves as a liaison among postdocs and central university administrative offices. OPA also works closely with the Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association to address the interests and concerns of postdocs.







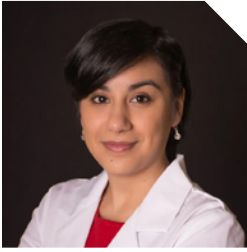
# **VANDERBILT-FISK** **POSTDOCTORAL** **FELLOWSHIP** **PROGRAM**

The Vanderbilt-Fisk Postdoctoral Fellowship program was designed during the 2022-2023 academic year to offer opportunities for Vanderbilt Ph.D. students to build their teaching and scholarship portfolios. Fellows are also offered the opportunity to receive dedicated mentoring from faculty at Vanderbilt University and Fisk University while allowing time for publishing their dissertations or preparing other research papers.

This partnership creates opportunities for engagement and mentoring across Vanderbilt and beyond. The program aims to serve as a national model for collaborations between predominantly white institutions and historically Black colleges and universities in preparing new generations for the professoriate.

The inaugural cohort was announced in June 2023.





### **Velia Garcia**

Velia Garcia is a structural biologist interested in the fundamental mechanisms of structure-function relationships of proteins involved in inflammation. Her current research is focused on understanding cell signaling interaction at the host-pathogen interface.

While in her postdoctoral fellowship, she will be mentored by Dr. Jennifer A. Gaddy, Associate Professor at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, and Dr. Steven M. Damo, Assistant Professor of Chemistry at Fisk University.



### **Meagan Rainock**

Meagan Rainock is a sociologist investigating three lines of inquiry: the social determinants of health, racial and ethnic inequality and empowerment, and deviance and social control. Her research aims to illuminate the role of racial stratification in the criminalization of mental illness.

While in her postdoctoral fellowship, she will be mentored by Dr. Jonathan Metzl, Frederick B. Rentschler II Professor of Sociology and Psychiatry and Director of the Department of Medicine, Health, and Society at Vanderbilt University, and Dr. Shirley Brown, Dean of the School of Humanities and Behavioral Social Sciences and Professor of Sociology at Fisk University.



### **Anne Taylor**

Anne Taylor is a neuroscientist studying addiction. Her goal in this research is to uncover the neurophysiological mechanisms of short and long-term drug use and its relation to negative affective behaviors. She wants to use her work to create and disseminate educational tools for the broader community. She believes, as part of her duty as a scientist, she should enrich the lives of individuals who have experienced adversity to minimize their risk for future negative health outcomes.

While in her postdoctoral fellowship, she will be mentored by Dr. Danny Winder, Director of the Vanderbilt Center for Addiction Research and Professor of Molecular Physiology and Biophysics at Vanderbilt University, and Dr. Brian Nelms, Dean of the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics and Associate Professor of Biology at Fisk University.



# EVENTS

## 2022

### Jul 21

#### Speak Easy

*Vanderbilt Postdoc Association*

### Aug 30-Dec 3

#### Academic Communication for Postdocs Fall Course

*English Language Center*

### Sep 19-23

#### National Postdoc Appreciation Week

### Oct 4

#### Immigration Workshop

*International Student and Scholar Services*

### Oct 18

#### Considerations for Sponsoring International Postdocs for VU Administrators

*International Student and Scholar Services, Global Support Services*

### Oct 20

#### Individual Development Plan Workshop

*Presented by Duco Jansen*

### Oct 27

#### 16th Annual VPA Symposium

*Vanderbilt Postdoc Association*

### Oct 28

#### Halloween Social

*International  
Student and  
Scholar Services*



### Nov 9

#### Managing Up for Postdocs

*Graduate and Postdoc Academic Success Program*

### Nov 17

#### Speak Easy

*Vanderbilt Postdoc Association*

### Nov 28

#### Humanities Grant Writing Workshop Series: Grants in the Real World

*Presented by David Wright, College of Arts & Science  
Dean's Office*

### Dec 5

#### Postdoc Holiday Luncheon

*Vanderbilt Postdoc Association*

### Dec 8

#### Humanities Grant Writing Workshop Series: Writing Compelling Grant Narratives

*College of Arts & Science Dean's Office, Writing Studio and  
Tutoring Services*

# 2023

## Jan 19

### Speak Easy

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association

## Feb 2-Mar 30

### International Postdoc Workshop Series

English Language Center

## Feb 17

### Best Pizza Nashville

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association



## Feb 28

### Humanities Grant Writing Workshop Series: Career Center Fellowship Talk

College of Arts & Science Dean's Office, The Career Center

## Mar 9

### Career Development Discussion and Dinner with Dr. Isaac Rodriguez

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association

## Mar 16

### Speak Easy

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association

## Apr 4

### Diversity Statement Workshop

Center for Teaching

## Apr 11

### Managing Up for Postdocs

Graduate and Postdoc Academic Success

## Apr 14

### VPA Happy Hour

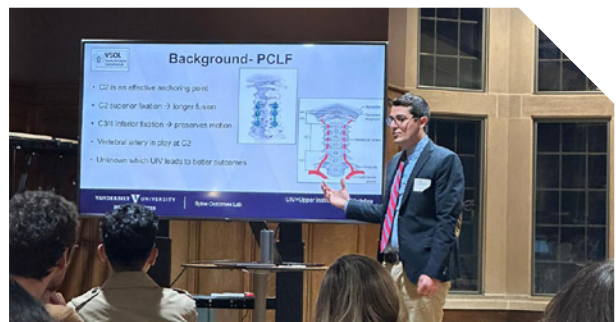
Vanderbilt Postdoc Association



## May 17

### Speak Easy

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association



## May 23

### Annual Postdoc Awards Ceremony and Reception



# NATIONAL POSTDOC APPRECIATION WEEK

## September 19-23, 2022

National Postdoc Appreciation Week recognizes the significant contributions that postdoctoral fellows make to U.S. research and discovery. The 13th Annual National Postdoc Appreciation Week was held September 19-23, 2022. The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs partnered with other campus departments to host daily events for the postdoc community.



The annual postdoc picnic brings together postdocs and their families to enjoy time together in Fannie Mae Dees park.



## EVENTS INCLUDED:

### **Monday:**

Postdoc Coffee Stop with OPA at Stevenson Center Courtyard

### **Tuesday:**

Postdoc Coffee Stop with the BRET Office

Complimentary Postdoc Headshots

Treats at the Women's Center

Annual Postdoc Appreciation Picnic at Fannie Mae Dees Park



### **Wednesday:**

Postdoc Coffee Stop with OPA and the Career Center at Wyatt Center Lawn

Complimentary Postdoc Headshots

Destress and Decompress with Graduate and Postdoc Academic Success

### **Thursday:**

Postdoc Coffee Stop with OPA at Alumni Hall

VPA Speak Easy Talk Series



### **Friday:**

Sweets and Treats on Library Lawn





The Annual Postdoc Symposium gives postdocs the opportunity to share their research with the Vanderbilt community.

# 16TH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

Written by Nadia Markie Sneed, PhD, APRN, FNP-BC

*Dr. Sneed is the Vanderbilt Postdoc Association's Scholarly Learning Co-Chair for the 2022-2023 Academic Year.*

Planning for the 16th Annual Postdoc Symposium began in early February 2022. Preliminary planning was led by 2021-2022 VPA Scholarly Learning Chair Anirban Sengupta and Senior Co-Chair Brianna Yamasaki. In August 2022, the newly-elected Scholarly Learning Co-Chairs, Markie Sneed and Nestor de la Visitación Pastor, took responsibility for all planning operations in collaboration with the Symposium Planning Committee, which included 12 postdoc volunteers from across VU and VUMC. More than 75 attendees were present at the Symposium, including postdocs, presenters, faculty judges, panel presenters and campus partners.

Dr. Jack Dongarra presented the keynote address.



Dr. Jack Dongarra, a 2021 ACM Turing Award winner and professor emeritus at the University of Tennessee presented his keynote address titled, "A Not-so-simple Matter of Software." Harry Barbee, the 2022 Vanderbilt Postdoc of the Year, kicked off the conference with his presentation, "Developing Inclusive Institutions to Reduce Health Disparities: Lessons from Older LGBTQ+ Adults."

One highlight of this year's Symposium was a resource fair that connected postdocs with campus partners who offer special services and programming opportunities. Additionally, there were 39 poster and six lightning talk presentations at this year's Symposium, which gave postdocs an opportunity to share their research with fellow attendees.

To better support the career development needs of VU and VUMC postdocs, the Planning Committee invited Dr. Ashley Brady, Assistant Dean of Biomedical Career Engagement & Strategic Partnerships, to give a career talk. To round out the day's programming, concurrent discussion panels convened to offer insights on job roles and responsibilities in academia and industry. Overall, this year's event was a major success, and we look forward to making the experience even better for all VU and VUMC postdocs in 2023!



Breakout sessions focused on academic and non-academic career paths.





Katie Young receives a best poster award from Nestor de la Visitación Pastor.

Several award winners were recognized at this year's Symposium for their excellence in research:

## SYMPOSIUM AWARD WINNERS

### BEST LIGHTNING TALK

**Brandon Baer** (VUMC)  
Medicine

**Rebecca Moore** (VUMC)  
Medicine

### BEST POSTER PRESENTATION

**Bhawik Jain** (VU)  
Biological Sciences

**Samantha  
McClenahan** (VUMC)  
Anesthesiology

**Katherine Young** (VU)  
Biomedical Engineering

### PEOPLE'S CHOICE POSTER

**Rafay Ahmed** (VUMC)  
Orthopaedic Surgery

Kasey Schlich and Zhiyu Wan, VPA Community Building Co-Chairs organized the Speak Easy event series.



## THE *SPEAK EASY* TALK SERIES

### A Postdoc Talk Series to Tell Your Scientific Story

Hosted by the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and the Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association, the *Speak Easy* Talk Series seeks to offer a casual venue for scientific presentations that are accessible and digestible to the public through an evening happy hour event at Alumni Hall. *Speak Easy* presenters discuss a variety of topics including biology, neuroscience, mathematics, data science, health-related science, and more.

The goal of the *Speak Easy* Talk Series is to provide an opportunity for postdoctoral scholars to discuss their science with a broader audience, including postdoc peers, and to provide speakers the opportunity to highlight the amazing scientific discoveries happening across Vanderbilt.

5/18/23

**Juan Barraza, Ph.D.**

Applying of ecological theory to infectious disease imaging

3/16/23

**Sam Shepard, Ph.D.**

Groups of Symmetries

3/16/23

**Kate T. Snyder, Ph.D.**

Birdsong evolution and development

1/19/23

**Hani Chanbour, MD**

Is it better to stop at C2 or C3/4 in elective posterior cervical decompression and fusion?

11/17/22

**Brandon Baer, Ph.D.**

Agonism of the glucagon-like peptide 1 (GLP-1) receptor attenuates sepsis-induced acute lung injury

9/22/17

**Neelima Wagely, Ph.D.**

Investigating the development of language and literacy skills in children with diverse language backgrounds





Vice Provost and Dean Christie-Mizell addressing the awards ceremony attendees.

# 2023 SPRING POSTDOC AWARDS CEREMONY

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association announced its 2023 award winners at the Spring Postdoc Awards Ceremony on May 23..

# POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW OF THE YEAR

The Postdoctoral Fellow of the Year award recognizes a postdoctoral scholar who demonstrates excellence in research and scholarship. The nominee must demonstrate excellence in several criteria, including publications, presentations, awards/honors, service, and mentoring. The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs solicits nominations from faculty across all schools and colleges, and the Postdoctoral Fellow Advisory Committee reviews and votes on all nominations.



This year's recipient is **Siru Liu, Ph.D.**, mentored by Adam Wright, Ph.D..

Dr. Wright wrote, "*Siru is a passionate and talented biomedical informatics scientist with a clear vision for her research. (...) She stands out for her distinctive contributions to our research field, as well as her outstanding commitment to service and mentoring.*"

# POSTDOCTORAL MENTOR OF THE YEAR

Recipients of the Postdoctoral Mentor of the Year Award must demonstrate a willingness to share expertise and advice; service to the community at large, including other mentoring activities; and scholarship within the mentor's own career, including publications, awards, presentations and honors. The Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association solicits nominations, and the VPA Executive Board reviews and votes.



The year's recipient is **Jacob Feldman, Ph.D.**, mentored by Tiffany Woynaroski, Ph.D., and Mark Wallace Ph.D.

"*Dr. Feldman is not only a great-all around mentor, but he understands how to individualize his expertise and guidance for certain individuals and situations. (...) I would likely not be pursuing my Ph.D. currently if it were not for his guidance, encouragement, and support.*"

– Jennifer E. Markfeld, MS

"*Dr. Feldman has gone above and beyond in his role as a mentor and makes significant contributions to our field on a daily basis.*"

– Grace Pulliam



## POSTDOCTORAL SERVICE AWARD

The Postdoc Service Award is given to a postdoctoral scholar who has demonstrated sustained service to Vanderbilt through service to the community at large—through professional societies, scholarly work outside regular lab responsibilities, or by leading within and promoting the postdoc experience at Vanderbilt. The Vanderbilt Postdoc Association solicits nominations, and the VPA Executive Board reviews and votes.



This year's first recipient is **Elvira Aballí Morell, Ph.D.**, mentored by Jane Landers, Ph.D.

Landers wrote, *"Dr. Aballí's intelligence, achievements, interdisciplinary experience, work ethic, and inter-personal skills all commend her, as do her cultural and linguistic skills and her community and campus engagement."*

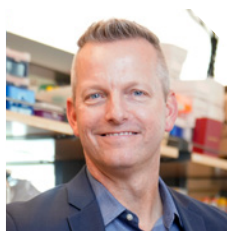


This year's second recipient is **Daniel Fehrenbach, Ph.D.**, mentored by Dr. Meena Madhur, Ph.D.

Dr. Fehrenbach is the current president of the Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association and helped create new initiatives as postdocs were returning to on-campus activities following the COVID-19 pandemic.

## FACULTY MENTOR OF THE YEAR

Recipients of the Faculty Mentor of the Year Award must demonstrate a willingness to share expertise and advice; service to the community at large, including other mentoring activities; and scholarship within the mentor's own career, including publications, awards, presentations and honors. The Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association solicits nominations from all Vanderbilt postdocs, and the VPA Executive Board reviews and votes.



This year's recipient is **Eric Skaar, Ph.D.**

*"[Dr. Skaar] has been reminding me of my accomplishments and*

*potential in moments of need and has provided access to his scientific network by introducing me to prominent scientists in the field. Eric's mentorship has allowed me to achieve things in my career that I didn't think were possible."*

– Valeria Reyes-Ruiz, Ph.D., Postdoc Fellow

*"While in his lab, he provided a very personalized mentoring experience tailored to the individual goals of every lab member, and he never considers his mentoring duties completely done once we leave. To this day, I still feel that I can turn to him for support when I need guidance."*

– Catherine Wakeman, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Texas Tech University

# **POSTDOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

## **2022-2023**

The Postdoctoral Fellow Advisory Committee serves as an advisory body to the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and includes faculty, staff, and postdocs from across Vanderbilt University and Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

**Faith Bishop**

**Ellen Goldring**

**Angela Sutton**

**James Booth**

**Kathy Gould**

**Chris Vanags**

**Elizabeth Boyd**

**E. Duco Jansen**

**Julie Wilbers**

**Tanya Brown**

**Amy F. Martinez**

**Richard H. Willis**

**David Calkins**

**Victoria Nasci**

**David W. Wright**

**C. André Christie-Mizell**

**Mariann R. Piano**

**Annie Evans**

**Jennifer Pietenpol**





**VANDERBILT**  
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