

Christopher T. Smith, Ph.D.

[LinkedIn](#) [Website](#) [Blog](#)

Leader in Graduate & Postdoc Career & Professional Development, Supporter of Research Workforce

A neuroscientist by training, I now work to unlock human potential by assisting Ph.D.-trained researchers in their career transitions and advocating for more holistic career and professional development in higher education.

Education

2014 Doctor of Philosophy, Neurobiology
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

2008 Bachelor of Science, Neuroscience
magna cum laude, Furman University, Greenville, SC

PROFESSIONAL & WORK EXPERIENCE

Postdoctoral Affairs Program Administrator, Office of the Vice President for Research & Innovation

Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, **January 2022 – present**

Leading the formation of an [Office of Postdoctoral Affairs](#) at Virginia Tech. Working with campus stakeholders, I assessed the needs of our postdoctoral population and created a [strategic plan](#) focused on 1) Creating a vibrant, engaged, and connected postdoctoral community; 2) Offering an exceptional postdoctoral training experience; 3) Making Virginia Tech a destination for talent; and 4) Building support and infrastructure for a new Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. Currently, I manage our [Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship Program](#) at the university, with an annual budget of \$500,000+ to support the recruitment and development of promising talent that will advance key university research areas and further the commercialization potential of our intellectual property. [Follow our progress via VTx news.](#)

Metrics of Progress: ~33% growth in the number of postdoctoral associates from Fall 2022 to Fall 2025; 88% of postdocs are satisfied or very satisfied with their professional experience; satisfaction with postdoc social experience up 230%+ in 3 years

Postdoctoral Affairs Program Manager, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA), The Graduate School

North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, **January 2019 – January 2022**

Assisted North Carolina State University's 400+ postdoctoral scholars & house officers (DVM interns & residents) with issues in their current training roles at the University as well as in their career and professional development. Developed programming & resources to assist graduate students & postdocs in career exploration, the job search, & journal article publication.

Relevant Accomplishments:

CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

Organized & ran three [Postdoc Academy](#) Learning Communities at NC State and three at Virginia Tech to help support new postdocs at these institutions and across the country (2 virtual communities in 2020).

At Virginia Tech, facilitated Writing & Publishing High Impact Journal Articles training program using online content from [Publication Academy](#) (now Higher Ed+) for graduate students, postdocs, & researchers (176 online learners; ~28 at weekly discussion sessions). Worked with Office of Research and Innovation, Faculty Affairs, Career and Professional Development, and the Graduate School to bring Higher Ed+ content to all Virginia Tech students, staff, and faculty via Canvas Learning Management System in 2025.

At NC State University, co-taught two sections of writing for journal article publication ([trainee reviews](#)); developed a new career exploration series, Career PACKways ([trainee reviews Fall 2020](#); [Spring 2021](#)), for graduate students and postdocs. Delivered workshops on [navigating the academic job market](#), [career exploration](#), & [informational interviewing/networking](#). Partnered with: 1) Office for Institutional Equity and Diversity to organize a webinar focused on [Factors that Affect Career Choice and Diversity in Science](#). 2) College of Engineering on [Engineering Your Post-Postdoc Career event](#)

DATA COLLECTION & REPORTING

Developed postdoc [entry](#), [exit](#), & [climate surveys](#) at both NC State and Virginia Tech to connect postdocs with professional development opportunities, document the postdoc experience to effect change, & measure [career outcomes](#).

Published OPA [2019](#) & [2020](#) Year in Review documents at NC State to highlight accomplishments & metrics.

Publish annual Virginia Tech Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship Program Annual Report for sponsors & university leadership. Annual present results and trends from our yearly Virginia Tech Postdoc Climate Survey to our Postdoctoral Affairs Advisory Board ([see example presentation](#))

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES

Created a [Welcome Packet](#) sent to each new Virginia Tech postdoctoral associate and their faculty mentor to make them aware of important policies, procedures, and resources available to them.

Created an [Initial Career & Professional Development Plan for Postdoctoral Appointment](#) document for new postdocs to Virginia Tech to complete with their faculty mentors.

Founder, writer, & manager of [ImPACKful Blog](#) focused on highlighting [current](#) & [past](#) NC State graduate students & postdocs; sharing [tips](#) & [resources](#) to assist trainees in their career & professional development; and featuring [informational interview write-ups](#) by current trainees.

From its inception in August 2019 to my departure from NC State in January 2022, [ImPACKful](#) content received 41,000+ unique page views.

Have authored or co-authored a [total of 15 pieces in Inside Higher Ed's Carpe Careers column](#).

Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Psychology

Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, August 2014 - January 2019

Graduate Research Assistant, Neurobiology Curriculum

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, August 2008 - May 2014

SERVICE IN ADVANCING GRADUATE STUDENT & POSTDOC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

[National Postdoctoral Association \(NPA\)](#)

Board of Directors, January 2020 – December 2025

Liaised with a variety of stakeholders (postdocs, administrators, & industry) to improve the postdoctoral experience across the United States. Worked with *The POSTDOCKET* leadership to share stories, resources, and highlights with our membership.

Read: [2025 National Postdoctoral Association Year in Review: An Extraordinary Year in Community and the Road Ahead](#)

Served as NPA Treasurer in 2023, Vice Chair of the Board in 2024, and Chair of the Board in 2025.

As Chair of the Board, I guided the strategic direction of the NPA including developing agendas and discussion items for our Board of Directors Meetings. I also worked closely with the Executive Director to ensure the organization is making progress on its strategic priorities. I, along with the Executive Director, also acted as the representative of the NPA to the outside world.

As Vice Chair, I coordinated communication of the NPA's Committees of the Membership to ensure alignment with our larger strategic priorities & goals; ensured effective cross-committee collaboration on over-arching NPA initiatives.

As Treasurer, I provided oversight of the NPA's finances and worked with Finance Committee to construct our annual budget.

NPA Strategic Planning Chair 2021

As Chair of the NPA's Strategic Planning Committee in 2021, I worked to synthesize and organize feedback from NPA membership (postdocs and administrators) and stakeholders with key pillars and strategies as outlined by the NPA Board of Directors to draft, along with the NPA Executive Director and staff, the [2021-2024 NPA Strategic Plan](#) and, as Chair, contributed to our updated [2025-2027 Strategic Plan](#) for the organization.

[Graduate Career Consortium \(GCC\)](#)

Communications Chair, August 2020 - July 2022

In this role, I seek to improve internal communications within a fast-growing nonprofit organization as well as increase its brand and visibility to potential new members and external stakeholders. During my time as Communications Officer, [GCC LinkedIn](#) followers increased by 345%+ while total Twitter followers across our three handles, [@Grad_Careers](#), [@imaginephd](#), [@CarpeCareers](#), passed 8,400 in July 2022 (a 28%+ increase from August 2020).

Faculty Job Market Collaboration Research Group, 2019 - present

Interdisciplinary and diverse group of postdocs, faculty, and administrators seeking to understand predictors of faculty job market success. [Visit our website for updates](#), including our [full list of publications from this work](#).

For scholarly publications, see [NCBI Bibliography](#) & my [Virginia Tech Experts Profile](#)

A collection of my other writings can be found on my [personal website](#) and [LinkedIn](#).