

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**

I am 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.](#)

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

At Virginia Tech, facilitated Writing & Publishing High Impact Journal Articles training program using online content from [Publication Academy](#) for graduate students, postdocs, & researchers (176 online learners; ~28 at weekly discussion sessions).

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](#). Organized & ran three [Postdoc Academy](#) Learning Communities to help support new postdocs at NC State and across the country (2 virtual communities in 2020). 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](#); 30% of College's postdocs attended. Organized [Ph.D. professionals](#) and [postdoc alumni](#) career panels.

COMMUNITY BUILDING & CONNECTION

Oversight of [NC State Postdoctoral Association](#), creation of [postdoc Slack Group](#), launched [postdocs past & present LinkedIn group](#) (450+ members), publish bi-monthly [OPA newsletter](#), organize annual [postdoctoral research symposium](#) (including a [virtual event in 2021](#)), administer postdoc [professional development](#) & [travel](#) awards.

Maintain postdoc alumni database with 1,500+ records & leverage it as part of an [informational interviewing program](#) launched in January 2021 to assist graduate students & postdocs in their career exploration process.

DATA COLLECTION & REPORTING

Developed postdoc [entry](#), [exit](#), & climate surveys (for [19-20](#) & [20-21](#) academic years) to better connect NC State postdocs with professional development opportunities, document the postdoc experience to effect change, & measure [career outcomes](#).

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

COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES

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. I also [write for the Carpe Careers blog](#) on Inside Higher Ed's website.

Since its inception in August 2019, [ImPACKful](#) content has received 41,000+ unique page views ([see content repository](#)).

Utilized [NC State Postdoc Climate Survey](#) data to develop a [postdoc supervisor letter](#) sent to new postdocs & their supervisors that outlines the importance of communication, mentoring, & career development in maximizing the postdoc experience.

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 - present

Liaise with a variety of stakeholders (postdocs, administrators, & industry) to improve the postdoctoral experience across the United States. Work with *The POSTDOCKET* leadership to share stories & resources with our membership, including authoring pieces on [framing postdoc research experience for industry jobs](#), profiling [initiatives that expand training opportunities](#) (see [also](#)), highlighting [NPA resources](#), and diverse career paths ([faculty at undergraduate-serving institutions](#), [postdoc affairs](#)).

NPA Board Vice Chair 2024

Coordinate communication of the NPA's Committees of the Membership to ensure alignment with the organization's larger strategic priorities and goals. Ensure effective cross-committee collaboration on over-arching NPA initiatives.

NPA Treasurer and Chair of Finance Committee 2023

Provided oversight of the NPA's finances and work with the Finance Committee to construct organization's 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 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).

Benchmarking Committee, 2019 - present

The GCC's benchmarking surveys are a critical data product from the organization. They seek to collect important metrics from our members around how graduate-level career professionals and their offices are supported including staff size, staff salaries, office budgets, and challenges faced by professionals working in this space.

I have assisted with developing, editing, and reporting on the 2020 Institutional & 2021 Individual Member surveys.

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](#). [Read our publication of 2018-2019 faculty job market data](#).

Currently analyzing data from multiple job market cycles and collecting data from the 2022-2023 cycle.

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

A collection of my other writings can be found on my [personal website](#), [LinkedIn](#), [PassioInventa](#), & [LifeApps](#).