Beth Fields, PhD, OTR/L

Manifesto for the Position of Career Development Chair

I would like to nominate myself for the position of Career Development Chair for the 2017-2018 University of Pittsburgh Postdoctoral Association (UPPDA) Executive Board. I am an occupational therapist and a first-year postdoctoral associate in the Department of Occupational Therapy. I am collaborating with the Health Policy Institute to examine systems and methods that are designed to support independence and enhance quality of life for aging adults and their caregivers. Through this work, we will raise awareness for caregivers to receive recognition, information and meaningful support.

My research training started at Colorado State University (CSU), where I earned my PhD in Occupation and Rehabilitation Science. During my time at CSU, I developed a research program focused on non-pharmacological, environmentally-focused approaches for older adults with dementia. This research was informed by occupational therapy and science, disability studies, rehabilitation science, gerontology, psychology, and nursing. I attained skills in intervention development and testing and I am now acquiring skills in health services research through my postdoctoral training.

My commitment to the Career Development Chair is evident in my leadership abilities. As a graduate student I served as a project manager within the Integrative Rehabilitation Laboratory-funded by the Carl and Caroline Swanson Foundation. Here, I managed team deliverables including project plans, research schedules, and progress reports, brokered collaborative partnerships and facilitated research meetings and trainings. Additionally, I was a student leader in the Graduate Student Assembly, Student Organization for Occupational Therapy, and the Northern Colorado Occupational Therapy Forum with the Occupational Therapy Association of Colorado. I have participated in leadership-focused retreats and service projects to apply my knowledge and training in occupational therapy and science, disability studies, rehabilitation science, and gerontology.

I firmly believe that I am a strong candidate for the Career Development Chair. I am self-directed and active, and I have a passion and enthusiasm for science. While I am only in the first-year of my postdoctoral position, I have already taken advantage of a variety of physical and intellectual resources available to postdoctoral trainees at the University of Pittsburgh. These include the Foundations of Successful Career Planning and Development Course and workshops and seminars offered through the University Center for Teaching and Learning, the Institute for Clinical Research Education and the Office of Academic Career Development, Health Sciences.

To enhance the postdoctoral experience, I would like to set three priorities for the 2017-2018 year:

1) Organize opportunities to gain experience in communicating and disseminating research and academic work within the institution and public platforms.
2) Identify and share information on seminars and workshops that promote interdisciplinary professional skills.

3) Facilitate career exploration opportunities through informal informational interviews and meetings with leaders in academia, industry, and policy.

I look forward to the opportunity to join the UPPDA Executive Board and serve as the Career Development Chair.