

Advanced Study Program (ASP)

Postdoc Handbook

4 May 2009

This handbook is intended to provide you, a new postdoc, with information about the ASP program and other topics of interest that should be useful to you before you arrive. This handbook is intended to be an overview, and you will be referred in many cases to other websites that can provide more detail on the topic at hand.

General Information about ASP and NCAR

NCAR and UCAR

The National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) is composed of 5 Laboratories, some of which have multiple divisions. For more information about the organization of NCAR, please see <http://www.ncar.ucar.edu/>.

UCAR, which stands for the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, is the managing organization for NCAR. Technically, if you are paid, you will be a UCAR employee, even though you are working at NCAR.

The distinction between NCAR and UCAR can be challenging to understand at times. Technically, NCAR and UCAR are separate entities that could operate independently. UCAR manages NCAR and as such provides many services such as Human Resources, Payroll, Financial Management, Accounting, etc. UCAR also has programs that conduct research and produce scientific data and products. For more information, please see <http://www.ucar.edu/>.

The Advanced Study Program (ASP)

If you have been selected as an ASP fellow, your appointment at NCAR will be through ASP, but you will be working with scientists in one or more of the scientific divisions or programs. You will be located in the division or program that matches your research interests, not with other ASP postdocs. That division will be referred to as the host division in this document.

Because of its large postdoc program and because postdocs are located throughout the organization, the ASP sponsors activities that are open to all postdocs in the organization. ASP supports a Graduate Student Postdoc Fellows Association as well as the Early Career Scientists Assembly. In addition to postdocs, ASP supports a handful of graduate students and senior research associates. ASP also supports an annual two-week summer colloquium, a sabbatical exchange program called the Faculty Fellowship Program, and a Graduate Visitor Program.

NCAR/UCAR Campuses

NCAR currently has 4 campuses:

- The Mesa Lab (ML)

Located in South Boulder. Houses the Advanced Study Program (ASP), the Climate and Global Dynamics Division (CGD), and the Computational & Information Systems Laboratory (CISL). Also has a library.

- The Foothills Lab (FL)
Located in Northeast Boulder. Houses the Atmospheric Chemistry Division (ACD), the Mesoscale & Microscale Meteorology Division (MMM), The Institute for Multidisciplinary Earth Studies (TIMES), the Research Applications Library (RAL), the Earth Observing Laboratory (EOL), and several UCAR Programs. Also has a library.
- The Center Green Campus (CG)
This campus is located about 5 minutes away from the Foothills Lab Campus and is connected by a bike path. Houses the High Altitude Observatory (HAO) and many of the UCAR administrative offices such as Human Resources. Also has a library.
- Research Aviation Facility
This facility is located at the Jefferson County Airport and is part of EOL. This is the location of NCAR's aircraft.

The three main campuses are ML, FL, and CG.

Moving to Boulder

General

Travel to Boulder

ASP Fellows: ASP will pay up to \$1000 for domestic fellows and their families to travel to Boulder. Up to \$2500 will be provided to international fellows and their families to come to Boulder and to return home at the end of two years. The maximum shipping allowance allowed is \$750 for both domestic and foreign fellows. Domestic fellows may be reimbursed for either airfare to Boulder, or if they choose to drive, may be reimbursed at the current mileage rate for one-way mileage from their current home to Boulder. For those flying, please work with Kathleen Barney (leeney@ucar.edu) to purchase your ticket to Denver International Airport (DIA). Your travel must be ticketed on a U.S. Carrier in order to fly with the mandatory Fly America Act.

Other NCAR Fellows: Relocation expenses should be negotiated directly with your sponsor or with her/his designate in your host division.

Housing

UCAR has a housing office in Human Resources that will help you locate appropriate housing for just a short time, or for the length of your stay. Please visit the housing office webpage at <http://www.fin.ucar.edu/housing/> to find out information on rentals in the Boulder area. The housing office is extremely good at finding suitable housing for postdocs, and has access to many properties that are only available to them. It is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED that you work through the housing office to find a place to live.

In addition to the housing office, some postdocs have recommended Housing Helpers: <http://www.housinghelpers.com/>. Another source might be the classified section of the local Boulder Newspaper, The Boulder Daily Camera: <http://www.dailycamera.com/>.

More helpful websites include:

BCN Housing <http://bcn.boulder.co.us/housing>

Boulder Corporate Rentals <http://www.bouldercorporate.com>

Cort Furniture <http://www.cort1.com> (for furniture rentals)

HSH Boulder <http://www.hshboulder.com>

Remington Post <http://www.remingtonpost.com>

Boulder Tenant Guide <http://www.colorado.edu/OCSS/resources/downloads.html>

You will be required to provide a security deposit on any type of property that you rent. Work with the landlord or management company to determine who your water, gas, and electric service providers are. Also, find out how trash and recycling removal are handled at the property.

Transportation

Many people find that they can get around just fine in Boulder without a car. UCAR has its own shuttle system that runs between the main campuses and picks up at other convenient locations around Boulder. In addition, there are many bicycle paths and buses, and as a UCAR employee, you are entitled to a free bus pass. For more information about the bus system, please see <http://www.rtd-denver.com/>.

Some bikes are available for loan through the UCAR “blue bike” program.

<http://www.fin.ucar.edu/sustainability/bluebikes>.

Shopping

Boulder has many large grocery stores and natural food grocery stores. The two large grocery store chains are King Soopers and Safeway. If you prefer a natural foods grocery store, you may wish to shop at Vitamin Cottage or Whole Foods.

For household supplies, clothing, and even food, you may find the store Target to have most of what you are looking for. Another possibility for other odd items is McGuckins Hardware Store.

The cost of living in Boulder tends to be a bit higher than the national average. You may find some great used bargains on craigslist, located at <http://denver.craigslist.org/>.

If you need to look up a phone number, try <http://www.dexknows.com/>.

Information Specific to International Employees/Visitors

It is HIGHLY recommended that you go to the UCAR international Visitor & Scholar Services page at <http://www.fin.ucar.edu/hr/foreignvisitors/>. Much of the information below is summarized from that page.

Visas

Acquiring a visa to work in the U.S. can sometimes take as long as 3 months, so it is important to begin working on this process as soon as possible. UCAR employs a visa specialist who will help you through this process. Please go to <http://www.fin.ucar.edu/hr/foreignvisitors/visatypes.html> to learn more.

It is important for you to understand the different types of visas and determine which type is best for you. It can also be difficult to get correct information. One postdoc reported getting misinformation from the US Embassy in his country, so try to back up anything you hear by obtaining official written documentation.

Social Security Card

Getting your social security card is probably one of the highest priorities once you get here. All foreign visitors and scholars who will be on UCAR's payroll must have a social security number. A social security card can be applied for at any local Social Security office. The Social Security office in Boulder is located at 4949 Pearl East Circle, Suite 101, Boulder, CO 80301. You must apply in person, but only after you have been in the country for two weeks.

A visiting scholar must have a social security number to get on the payroll. However, sometimes your card may not be received before your hire date. In that case, please present the receipt from the Social Security office to the Human Resources office to prevent any delays in receiving a paycheck. Additional information and Social Security office locations can be found at: <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10002.html>.

You will need to bring the following to the Social Security office:

- Your DS-2019 form,
- Your offer letter,
- Your I-94 card,
- Social Security Form SS-5, available here: <http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf>,
- At least two documents that establish your identity and age. One of those documents must be your passport.

PLEASE NOTE: Your Social Security number may be requested and used by many agencies, specifically, financial agencies. Be cautious in giving your number out.

Once you receive your social security number, please give that number to Human Resources by phone.

For additional information, please see UCAR's web page on Social Security numbers for foreign visitors at <http://www.fin.ucar.edu/hr/foreignvisitors/ssn.html>

Driver's License

Driving: The Colorado driver's handbook can be obtained from the NCAR library. You are allowed to drive using an international license for 6 months, but after that you need to take a driving test. There is only one place to get driving lessons in Boulder: the Colorado Driving

Institute, 2850 Iris Avenue, Boulder. The Boulder Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) is located at 2850 Iris Avenue, tel: (303) 442-3006. For more information about obtaining a driver's license, please go to http://www.revenue.state.co.us/mv_dir/home.asp. Several postdocs have noted that car insurance is much cheaper if you have a Colorado Driver's License rather than an international license.

Bank Accounts

Many banks require you to have some credit history in the US before you open an account with them. However, it is easy for non-US visitors to open an account at the Elevations Federal Credit Union. The main branch is located at 30th St. and Iris, or there is a smaller branch located in the Table Mesa shopping center (Table Mesa and Broadway).

You will probably need to get your social security number before you will be able to open a bank account.

You may cash UCAR checks at any Chase bank branch in Boulder even if you do not have an account. You will be required to present identification.

Tax Treaties

Many countries have a tax treaty with the US. This means that you do not pay tax for two years. (Note that if you are in the US longer than two years, the tax treaty does not apply). However, it is vital that you fill out the appropriate tax forms in April to avoid a large fine.

For more information, please go to www.irs.gov and look for IRS publication 519, *U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens*, or go to <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p519.pdf> to get the publication directly as a PDF document.

Change of Address

If you are here on a visa and you change your address, you must complete an AR-11 form. You may find the form here: <http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/ar-11.htm>

International News

For international news, KUNC 91.5 (and see <http://www.kunc.org/coverage.html>) broadcasts National Public Radio news on the hour with summaries on the half-hour each morning while the television station PBS broadcasts BBC World Service news.

Working at NCAR/UCAR

UCAR Policies

Orientation

All employees at UCAR are required to attend orientation. At orientation, you will learn about the retirement plan, the various health insurance plans, and about many of the other benefits and

opportunities available to you as an employee. Orientation occurs every other Monday. Find out more at <http://www.fin.ucar.edu/hr/orient.html>.

Travel

ASP Fellows: You receive a travel budget of \$2000/year. If funding permits, you will also be given the opportunity to write a proposal to ASP for additional travel funds. The call for proposals for additional travel funds will occur once or twice every fiscal year.

Before you will be reimbursed for your travel and upon return, you must provide one of the following three items:

- a pdf file of the presentation that you made while on travel
- a pdf file of the poster that you presented while on travel
- a detailed trip report, outlining the purpose of your trip and its impact on your research and/or professional development (ALL acronyms need to be defined in this report).

Other NCAR Fellows: You should negotiate your travel opportunities directly with your sponsor or with her/his designate in your host division.

All Fellows: You are eligible for travel and visitor funds in the Early Career Scientists Assembly (ECSA) budget. The ECSA announces calls for travel/visitor applications 2-3 times/year. All Travel must be pre-approved before you go, and travel must be on a U.S. Carrier unless none is available.

Manuscripts

Before you submit a manuscript to a journal based on the work that you have done at NCAR, you must have the manuscript reviewed by at least two NCAR colleagues, whose comments should be addressed before the manuscript is submitted. You should also inquire about and conform to any requirements established by your host division or program. *ASP fellows must follow these guidelines when submitting ASP-related work even after you have left ASP.*

You must acknowledge NCAR on any of your NCAR publications. Please put your name and affiliation (NCAR) at the top, and put a * next to NCAR. In the footnote please include **The National Center for Atmospheric Research is supported by the National Science Foundation.* That statement can be in smaller print, but it must be there.

Timecards

Employees are required to complete timecards every two weeks. Your first timecard will be a paper timecard, but any timecards after that will be done electronically. In order to submit your timecard electronically, you will need what is called a UCAS password. Please work with your host division to get that password. You may complete your timecard at any time during the pay period; you do not need to wait until the end. If you are going to be away, please make sure that you have electronic access to the timecard system, or arrange to have ASP staff fill in your hours for you.

You will receive a paycheck every two weeks. Generally, paychecks are deposited directly into your bank account. To see the payroll schedule, along with a list of all the UCAR holidays, please go to http://www.fin.ucar.edu/b_f/payrollsched.html.

Employee Identification Numbers

All employees are assigned an employee identification number (ID #). You may use your employee ID # to charge personal phone calls and shipping. Any charges will be deducted directly from your paycheck.

Shipping/Mailing

Anything that you are mailing for business must have an account key on it. Please work with ASP staff or your host division, as appropriate, to determine what that number should be. As a UCAR employee, you can take advantage of the cheaper negotiated shipping rates that UCAR enjoys for your personal packages. Simply put your employee ID # on the package and the charges will come from your paycheck. Please note that the Shipping department may charge a small fee for this service on top of the shipping costs.

<http://www.fin.ucar.edu/sass/logistics/index.html>

Benefits

You will learn a lot more about your benefits at orientation, or you can go to <http://www.fin.ucar.edu/hr/benefits/gtbenes.html>. You will be entitled to 20 paid days off per year in addition to holidays. That is for both sick leave and vacation leave and it is called Paid Time Off (PTO). Also, participation in the UCAR retirement plan is mandatory. Every pay period, 5% of your salary will be deducted automatically from your paycheck for retirement; UCAR matches that by contributing 10% of your salary per pay period to the plan. The 5% is deducted from your pay before taxes.

Resources at NCAR/UCAR

General Computing

You will be provided with the computing equipment you need to perform your research. Generally, your logins and computer support for all fellows (ASP included) will come from your host division. Personal laptops must be approved for use before they may be connected to NCAR networks.

Supercomputing and General Accounting Units (GAUs)

ASP Fellows: ASP has limited GAUs available to postdocs in order to supplement those provided by your host division for NCAR supercomputer use.

Other NCAR Fellows: Access to NCAR supercomputers should be negotiated directly with your sponsor or with her/his designate in your host division.

All Fellows: For more information about GAUs and NCAR supercomputers, please review the materials including the links at <http://www.asp.ucar.edu/gau.jsp>.

Library Services

Each of the main campuses of NCAR has a library. The library staff are very helpful and provide many services, including online journals. Library staff are also available to come to your office and provide individual instruction. For more information about the library please see <http://www.ucar.edu/libraries/>.

NCAR Fellows Association

The NCAR Fellows Association was started in 2006 to provide a means by which all postdocs and graduate students in the organization could meet, socialize, and support one another. This group has an email list, and you may sign up here <http://mailman.acd.ucar.edu/mailman/listinfo/grad-postdoc-assn>. ASP postdocs are automatically subscribed.

NCAR Cafeteria

Each of the main campuses of NCAR (ML, FL, CG) has a cafeteria that is open for breakfast and lunch daily. Employees receive a 10% discount off published prices and a 15% discount if an employee badge is used to pay. Any charges to your employee badge come out of your paycheck.

Child Care

UCAR sponsors a child care center which gives a discount and priority to UCAR employees. For more information, please see http://www.cclc.com/corp_fam/ucar/reg.html.

ASP Activities for NCAR Fellows

Please note that almost all of ASP's activities are open to any postdoc or graduate student in the organization. These activities will be announced via the postdoc association mailing list.

Seminar Series

During the academic year (September – June), ASP invites speakers of the postdocs' choosing to give presentations on their research. The seminars are presented at a level appropriate for the non-specialist. Immediately following the seminar, any interested postdocs join the speaker for lunch in the NCAR cafeteria. 3-4 postdocs serve on a committee that selects and hosts the seminar speaker.

Phil Thompson Lecture Series

Every year, postdocs are asked to provide names of distinguished scientists to be the invited speaker of the Phil Thompson Lecture Series. From the list of possible presenters, one or two are selected to come and serve as the distinguished speaker of the series. The series generally lasts for 2-3 days and includes a.) seminars given by the speaker, b.) discussion forums with the postdocs and c.) individual one-on-one meetings. Similar to the seminar committee, there is a committee that manages the selection of the speaker and hosts the NCAR visit.

Research Reviews

ASP Research Reviews are presented every other week from September to June. ASP fellows are expected to present one Research Review each year. The purposes of these research reviews are

- a.) to survey areas of NCAR research,
- b.) to foster scientific communication and discussion among the postdoctoral fellows,
- c.) to help develop mutual understanding of the research projects being conducted in ASP, and
- d.) to provide advice and develop new collaborations where appropriate.

These reviews give fellows opportunities to discuss the research strategies others are following and to consider how they might apply to their own projects.

The Research Reviews are not intended to be mini-seminars, and should not emphasize results. Instead, they should focus on motivation and strategy and on the broad significance of the research endeavor. They may describe research currently underway or plans for new projects. A good strategy is to emphasize *why* the research is being conducted.

Monthly Socials

The ASP office plans monthly socials for all the postdocs and graduate students at NCAR. Often times, these socials will have an educational or career development segment followed by socializing. Other times, the purpose will be purely social. ASP postdocs are expected to attend the socials whenever possible.

Community Service

ASP Postdocs are expected to participate in some form of community service during their two year term. For many postdocs, this means serving on the Research Reviews, Seminar Series, or Phil Thompson Lecture Series committees. Others prefer to engage in Education and Outreach activities. The possibilities are fairly broad, but the expectation is that you will be an engaged member of the ASP community.

Any NCAR postdoc who wants to be involved in an education and outreach activity is encouraged to contact the ASP office to learn about the range of opportunities available at NCAR and UCAR. These include the semi-annual Girl Scouts at NCAR day that is led by female fellows. In addition, the ASP has put together science kits containing experiments that postdocs can take into the classroom.

What to do before you arrive

All Fellows: Work with your host division to identify when and where you should go on your first day. Sometimes your first day will be orientation.

Work with your host division to ensure that you have a computer login and a UCAS password **before** you arrive.

Review the New Employee Assistance page at <http://www.fin.ucar.edu/hr/newemployee/>.

ASP Fellows: Work with Paula Fisher in ASP if you have questions about computer equipment or special needs.

What to do once you get here

All Fellows:

1. Within the first 72 hours, you must present documentation to Human Resources that proves that you may legally work in the United States. This is called the I9 form. Please go to <http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/i-9.htm> for more information.
2. Check in with your host division.
3. Get an Access Card and key from your host division.

ASP Fellows:

4. Check in with ASP at the Mesa Lab Campus. Please work with Kathleen Barney (leeney@ucar.edu) to set up a time to meet with the ASP Director, Maura Hagan.
5. Take some time to review the ASP policies and procedures manual <http://www.asp.ucar.edu/policies.jsp>.

Please feel free to contact any of the ASP staff at any time with questions:

Paula Fisher: paulad@ucar.edu, 303-497-1328

Kathleen Barney: leeney@ucar.edu, 303-497-1434

Scott Briggs: sbriggs@ucar.edu, 303-497-1607