



Position Description

Working Title: Research Assistant I

Last Updated: 8/9/2019

Home Department: Biochemistry > School of Medicine

Position Summary:

The Research Assistant I position provides support to the Center for Structural Biology. The role will perform research and technical duties for the laboratory. The individual will work closely with graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and laboratory managers in a dynamic laboratory environment. The ability to function independently, as well as part of a team, is critical.

About the Work Unit:

The Vanderbilt Biochemistry research laboratory investigates the structural basis for recognition, biochemical function and biological specificity of proteins and nucleic acids. Specifically, we study systems involved in bacterial pathogenesis, cell signaling, and cancer at the molecular level. Rather than focusing on specific techniques, we take a problem-oriented approach and use whichever techniques are necessary to answer the question at hand. Often, this requires complementary application of structural approaches including spectroscopy, scattering, crystallography, and microscopy.

The work unit is made up of faculty, research staff, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate students.

Key Functions and Expected Performance:

Assists in Research and Development:

- Researches and collects data using appropriate lab experiments, procedures, and techniques
- Preparation of buffers and reagents
- Primary tasks involve sub-cloning, mutagenesis, and production of DNA vectors for protein expression
- Large-scale bacterial overexpression and purification of proteins using FPLC and HPLC
- Synthesizes, analyzes and interprets data with assistance of other members of the laboratory
- Writes and updates laboratory protocols
- Reports on status of research activities in oral and written formats
- Assembles and compile research data for presentation and/or reports

Maintenance

- Conducts lab space maintenance
- Assists in set up, operation, and maintenance of laboratory equipment including, but not limited to – centrifuges, incubated shakers, FPLC, etc.
- Proper storage and maintenance of protein stocks
- Assists in general lab maintenance

Performs administrative duties

- Monitors inventory of supplies and assists with ordering
- Participate in weekly and bimonthly meetings to discuss project progress

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- Other tasks as directed by supervisor

Supervisory Relationships:

- This position does not have supervisory responsibility.
- The position reports administratively and functionally to the PI.

Education and Certifications:

- A Bachelor's degree in biochemistry, biological sciences, chemistry, or related field from an accredited institution of higher education is necessary.
- A Master's degree in biochemistry, biological sciences, chemistry, or related field from an accredited institution of higher education is preferred.

Experience and Skills:

- Knowledge and experience with microbiology, bacterial protein expression and purification is preferred
- Knowledge of chromatography instrumentation a plus
- Knowledge and experience with PCR and cloning a plus
- Experience in a structural biology laboratory is preferred
- Experience with organization, inventory, and record keeping is preferred
- Excellent organizational and communications skills (both verbal and written) are preferred
- Attention to detail is preferred

General Characteristics of a Successful Vanderbilt University Staff Member:

ACCOUNTABILITY: Owns decisions, outcomes, work products, etc. that are within the scope of one's role.

- **Works through Issues** – Recognizes that the work is about successful outcomes, if things aren't going well, outcomes suffer; is willing to have crucial conversations if things aren't going well; doesn't just complain to management... does everything possible to remedy the situation directly first
- **Reliable** – Does what they say they will do, when they say they will do it; shows up for work when expected; doesn't push the burden of work volume or deadlines to others
- **Integrity** – Holds oneself accountable; takes responsibility for failures as well as successes, recognizes that trust is required to hold a team together

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- **Acceptance of Feedback** – Takes constructive criticism with grace, and makes improvements without taking it personally or holding grudges; when wrong, owns it – freely admits mistakes

COLLABORATION: *Works inclusively to build trust and accomplish tasks, goals, and initiatives.*

Understands, anticipates, and appropriately responds to internal and/or external customers' needs.

- **Optimism** – Is friendly, tirelessly cordial, polite, and genial; comes in to work with a good attitude and doesn't bring their own personal "little black clouds" into the work environment
- **Teamwork** – Genuinely values teamwork and co-workers, makes them feel valuable and important by acknowledging what they do well; doesn't expect from others effort that one is unwilling to do themselves, finds ways to acknowledge other's strong suits
- **Honest and Transparent** – Doesn't have hidden agendas, doesn't play people against each other; is authentic and forthright
- **Helpful Nature** – Offers to help lighten the load for others in times of need; volunteers rather than waiting to be asked; understands that almost no one works in a silo and needs the help of others to do their job well; recognizes that by helping others first, others will likely reciprocate

COMMUNICATION: *Provides information clearly and accurately in various settings, ensuring understanding and participation. Understands how best to present information to different audiences and understands how information may be perceived.*

- **Shares** – Shares information. Communicates proactively. Transmits knowledge; recognizes that "knowledge is power" is less effective than "sharing knowledge is power." Asks for advice, and considers it thoughtfully
- **Is Nice** – Asks caring, interested questions and is a good listener -- smiles and is grateful; sends appropriate notes of thanks to others who have helped; avoids gossip or saying negative things about co-workers; patient and generous; makes suggestions rather than stating hard and fast opinions. Avoids being negative, sarcastic, and cynical
- **Praises Publicly; Criticizes Privately** – When dealing with a difficult co-workers or customers, "pretend your children are watching" how the situation is handled; good manners help keep a cool head; gives credit where credit is due
- **Responds Promptly** – Recognizes that when emails and phone messages aren't returned in a timely way, it sends the message that the other party is not important; responds even if just to acknowledge receipt and provide a timeframe by which the requester can expect a full response

DRIVE & GRIT: *Is focused on professional excellence and strives to facilitate and support the same for colleagues in and outside their team, effectively manages through challenges and opportunities while seeking to understand and learn from professional experiences.*

- **Perspective** – Maintains a sense of humor and perspective; can laugh first and foremost at oneself
- **Raises the Bar** – Expects and delivers excellence; is a creative problem solver; is proactive; welcomes input on making things better -- places a high value on learning and getting better

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- **Resilience** – Is resilient in the face of daunting challenges and setbacks; bounces back readily.
- **Adaptability** – Reads cues and adapt accordingly; adjusts style and approach to accommodate the styles and needs of others; can anticipate and effectively de-escalate potential conflicts

ENGAGED: *Appreciates the values and mission of the organization, works to contribute to the university, and understands how their work affects the university and university community.*

- **Eager** – Enthusiastic, wanting to learn, wanting to continue one's personal and professional development and expertise
- **Hard-Working** – Is industrious as well as efficient (busy isn't the same as productive); can juggle multiple competing priorities simultaneously without becoming overwhelmed
- **Believes** – Believes in the work being done and in the importance of the organization's mission
- **Creative Thinking** – Goes beyond the boundaries of the job description, willingly takes on new challenges, and finds creative solutions rather than always awaiting direct instructions

JUDGMENT & PROFESSIONAL ACUMEN: *Makes appropriate decisions and evaluates risk and uncertainty to create ideal outcomes, exhibits an eye for the macro and the micro, and works to ensure others are able to do the same.*

- **Autonomous** – Self-managing; self-motivated; manages time, activities and outcomes well so that progress stays on track; cleans up after themselves
- **Maturity** – Exhibits professional maturity; doesn't pass the buck to dodge accountability; doesn't engage in petty office politics or inappropriate social conduct
- **Detail-Oriented** – Even small mistakes can create big issues; attention to detail work indicates care about the outcomes
- **Assumes the Best** – Assumes that others are working as hard as you are on things that are as important as what you are working on; just because you don't know what someone does, it doesn't mean they're not doing anything

JCAT:	POSITION #: 00124038	INFORMATION FOR HR INTERNAL TRACKING USE
JCODE: 3180	HR ASSIGNER:	
RCODE:	DATE:	
ASSIGNMENT CATEGORY: Staff (Non-Exempt)		

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