



Arthee Jahangir

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- BIOMEDICAL
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- UNIVERSITY-BASED

“ I enjoy pushing the envelope for academic workplace culture change. ”

COULD YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO OUR READERS? TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF AND THE COMMUNITY YOU MANAGE.

Hello, my name is Arthee Jahangir, and I am the Associate Director of Postdoctoral Affairs at [NYU Grossman School of Medicine](https://www.nyu.edu/grossman-school-of-medicine). Our office manages a community of about 500 biomedical science postdocs. Our main goal is to provide career development and support for their research training.

WHAT WAS YOUR PATH TO SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT? WERE YOU TRAINED AS A SCIENTIST OR DID YOU COME BY ANOTHER ROUTE?

I completed my PhD training in cancer immunology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. While I was in graduate school, I led several student-run organizations, which gave me my first opportunities in community management. Like most post-grads, I was doing a little career soul-searching, so after graduating I accepted an administrative postdoctoral fellowship at Einstein. I worked in the lab and ran a career development program for about 600 graduate students and postdocs, trying to figure out which path to take. You know how the story ends! After my postdoc, I stayed at Einstein for just under a year as the Assistant Director of Career and Professional Development. Then, in 2015, I joined NYU Grossman School of Medicine as a Senior Research Analyst. After a year, I transitioned into my current role in the postdoc office.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUR ROLE? HOW DO YOU TYPICALLY SPEND YOUR TIME?

I wear several hats since our office is small. My primary responsibility is managing our career development program, which involves organizing career exploration courses, skills-building workshops, networking events, and leadership opportunities for NYU postdocs. From conception to launching each program, I am involved in every step. Pre-pandemic, we had about 40 events a year, including a conference. My other responsibilities are explaining university policies to postdocs, administrators, and faculty, conflict management, community building, and testing out innovative career building strategies. A typical week in my life: editing a weekly newsletter, training administrative postdoc interns, running team meetings concerning budgets and programming, overseeing a weekly postdoc coffee hour, managing registrations for our programming, and communicating with postdocs, faculty, administrators, and our collaborators.

LOOKING BACK ON THE LAST YEAR, WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE PROJECT YOU'VE WORKED ON?

My passion project is our NYU [Women's Intensive Leadership Development \(WILD\) program](#). It is a seven-month program that uses the complexities and demands of hiking in the wilderness to empower early-career women scientists. The end of the program is a ~140 mile hike over ten days. I manage and facilitate the program, and since 2017 I've also been a trail guide. WILD combines my deep interests in addressing DEI in STEM and going on adventures. I'm fortunate that our office has the creative spirit and capacity to get programs like this off the ground.



KEY

- INTERPERSONAL
- PROGRAM MANAGEMENT
- PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
- COMMUNICATION
- TECHNICAL



ARTHEE'S SKILLS WHEEL SIGNATURE

The CSCCE skills wheel is composed of five core competencies, with nine skills within each competency. Skills wheels are a common way of visualizing and curating information about skills that also allow for the creation of a job "signature" or "fingerprint" based on the particular skills in use. This wheel is representative of the skills Arthee used over the last 12 months.

► For more information, see [the CSCCE skills wheel](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6415631).

DO YOU SHARE COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT DUTIES WITH ANYONE ELSE? WHERE DOES YOUR POSITION FIT WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Yes, I am fortunate to be a part of a great team that includes three to four NYU employees at any given time, plus dedicated postdoc volunteers. I share many of my duties with my supervisor, the Assistant Dean. The Postdoc Affairs Office is within the Office of Science and Research, the research arm of NYU Langone Health.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT BEING A COMMUNITY MANAGER?

I enjoy pushing the envelope for academic workplace culture change. Historically, postdocs have been the underdogs of scientific progress. Since they are transient trainees, leadership tends to overlook their needs. It may sound simple, but I am intrinsically motivated by helping postdocs plan their scientific careers and build supportive peer networks.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOU HAVE FACED AS A SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY MANAGER? ARE THERE WAYS IN WHICH YOUR ROLE COULD BE MADE EASIER – SUCH AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES OR SOMETHING ELSE?

Postdocs lack visibility within the organizations they work for. And since postdocs are considered trainees rather than students, their roles can be confusing to the rest of the organization, especially to admins, HR, clinical staff, etc. When creating or updating policies (i.e., salaries, housing, family leave), the lack of visibility and clarity naturally deprioritizes postdocs. If there were intentional efforts to increase awareness of these positions, and include them during policy development, I think many of our hurdles would be smaller.

AND ZOOMING OUT A LITTLE, WHY DO YOU THINK COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT TO SCIENCE? HOW HAVE YOU SEEN ACTIVE MANAGEMENT IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNITY?

Science is a collaborative endeavor, and community management can be an impactful mechanism to promote healthy and meaningful networking. This is especially important for postdocs, who are still developing their professional skills, and need a psychologically safe space to discuss their career pursuits. We're working on normalizing the use of technology for community building to compensate for opportunities that our community lost during lockdown. Postdocs are notably susceptible to burnout, and a community can also address this concern by increasing overall well-being, so we have at least one social event each month. Our postdocs notice and appreciate active community management, and this is reflected in our annual engagement surveys, participation in events, and - anecdotally - as postdocs transition to their first professional jobs.

Last updated April 2022



This case study is part of a series created by the Center for Scientific Collaboration and Community Engagement.

Cite this case study as: Center for Scientific Collaboration and Community Engagement (2022) CSCCE Community Manager Case Study: Arthee Jahangir. Jahangir, Pratt, Sidik, and Woodley doi: [10.5281/zenodo.6415631](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6415631)