Introductory Editorial

Postdoctoral scholars make up an important component of academic research. Today’s cutting-edge research is often based on results and findings generated by postdoctoral researchers. However, the postdoctoral experience is not limited to the research dimension. Looking back, scientists often describe their postdoctoral years as a marvelous experience that provided a chance to explore and find their own direction. Postdoctoral appointments were intended to be a short and intense period of transition between graduate school and the ‘academy’ when they were first started about a century ago.

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**Ask Adam**

**Question:** I am a postdoc in biology and want to attend an important scientific conference in London this summer. My work visa has expired and in order to return will need to apply for a new visa. Will the visa be issued so that I can return to the U.S?

**Answer:** If you are working or a postdoc in the sciences or engineering fields there is a possibility that the consulate will perform extra security checks about you and the work that you are performing before the visa will be issued to you and your dependents, if any.

You can assume that the visa will not be issued as quickly as to those in the humanities or other non-science related fields. This can apply any time it is necessary to apply for a new visa to return to the US. It does not matter your reason for leaving the US, such as to attend a conference or to visit family.

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Know It All?!  
Editor’s Column By Natalia Belfiore

Sam Castañeda, Director of the Visiting Scholar and Postdoc Affairs Program at UC Berkeley and UC Council of Postdoctoral Scholars advisor, recently published an article in the International Educator entitled "Who Cares About Postdocs?" (Jan+Feb 2009). In this short but substantial piece, Sam summarizes the status and importance of postdocs in science, and projects and programs currently working to improve the postdoc experience. http://www.nafsa.org/_/File/_/janfeb09_forum.pdf

Sam was also interviewed in an article last year in the East Bay Express entitled “Not Exactly Students, Not Exactly Employees” by Anrica Deb (April 30, 2008; http://www.eastbayexpress.com/news/not_exactly_students__not_exactly_employees/Content?oid=717595). The article does a great job of trying to articulate what a postdoc is, what the life of a postdoc is like, and what decisions postdocs face.

Even in the midst of a national economic crisis, California stands out. The state of California has only recently passed the 2009 budget, which makes enormous cuts on all levels, including education and research. The sudden freeze this winter on bond funds has hit the news because of the screeching halt this move has brought to research across the state. This affects faculty, students, and postdocs at all California research institutions, leaving many projects—and researchers—seeking alternative funding to keep going. The article "California researchers chilled by sudden freeze on bond funds" can be found in /Science /325:698-699/.

The UC Los Angeles Graduate Division awards between 3 and 5 prizes of $4,000 a year to postdocs who have shown exceptional abilities in terms of research innovation, productivity and creativity. This program, known as the Chancellor’s Award for Postdoctoral Research, has been in place since 1998, and reviews faculty nominations, with considerable supporting documentation, to select the prize winners, annually.

INVITATION TO SUBMIT:
The UC Postdoc Newsletter invites contributions from any UC postdoc, as well as administrators, faculty, or other UC personnel who want to share a story, viewpoint, piece of advice, or inquiry with others in the postdoctoral community. Please submit your written piece, question, or idea, to uc_postdoc_newsletter@berkeley.edu or contact us with questions.
These career-oriented workshops have been immensely helpful in demystifying the job market process for our postdocs. We also run workshops to help postdocs work through the daily issues of their current jobs. In the fall of 2008, we partnered with the Office of International Students and Scholars for a Green Card/Immigration Issues Workshop, and we collaborated with the Human Resources Department for Financial Planning and Open Enrollment Workshops.

The UC Santa Barbara SoPS is currently in the midst of an impressive academic publishing series that covers topics such as writer’s block, citation management software, and publishing academic articles and books. These faculty-led sessions help to foster a smooth transition to professional life beyond the postdoc tenure.

Building a social network of postdoctoral scholars is another goal of UC Santa Barbara SoPS. This has been achieved through a Fall Welcome Luncheon and periodic happy hour evenings, where postdocs get to know one another as well as familiarize themselves with campus resources for postdocs. These events have strengthened the postdoc community at UC Santa Barbara.

UC Santa Barbara SoPS events would not be possible without the generous support of several offices such as the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor, the Office of the Associate Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Academic Policy, the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO), UC Santa Barbara Human Resources, the Office of International Students and Scholars, and our home division, the Graduate Division.

The 2009 Annual Meeting will be held March 27-29 at the University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas.

Registration, available online, is open until March 13. Some highlights of the meeting include:

- **Keynote speaker:** Dr. Peter Doherty, Nobel Prize Laureate and author of *The Beginners Guide to Winning the Nobel Prize.*
- **Plenary speaker:** Dr. Peter Fiske, on “Putting Your Science to Work: Creating New Options and Opportunities Via the Postdoc.”
- **A pre-meeting, PDA and PDO Leadership Workshop,** will offer great opportunities to collaborate with other PDA and PDO representatives from across the country.
- **A good old-fashioned Texas BBQ** at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston!

The NPA Board of Directors is composed of volunteer professionals, nearly all of whom are or have been postdocs, elected by individual dues-paying members. The Board oversees the NPA staff, the four membership committees (Advocacy, Meetings, Outreach, and Resource Development) and the Diversity and International Officers. Members volunteer to serve on these very active committees. The Officers work closely with the membership committees to provide an organization-wide awareness of diverse constituencies and an emphasis on inclusion. *All postdocs,* as well as interested graduate students, are invited to join the NPA to help with its mission and contribute your point of view to the national agenda.

NPA Annual Meetings are designed to support the postdoctoral community through providing networking opportunities and informative sessions on the most current issues facing postdoctoral scholars.
Introductory Editorial

As soon as they begin their appointments, postdoctoral scholars quickly need to learn how to navigate a new environment, to apply for junior faculty positions, to write their first grant, all in addition to getting their research published in top-rated journals.

The University of California, as a 10-campus system, maintains one of the largest postdoctoral training programs across the nation and is committed to delivering the highest standards of research and education essential for pursuing a successful career. The Council of Postdoctoral Scholars (CPS) is a volunteer committee, which provides system-wide representation for postdoctoral scholars of the University of California (UC). The Council is comprised of representatives from the ten UC campuses, and works collaboratively with the UC administration to improve the training and scholarship of postdoctoral researchers. In order to be able to act as a voice of UC’s postdoctoral scholars, as well as to communicate among postdocs and those we work with in the UC system, the Council of Postdoctoral Scholars has created this newsletter. It is with great enthusiasm that the inaugural issue of the UC Postdoc Newsletter is introduced. This newsletter will provide information on career development, highlight stories about specific programs or resources at different campuses within the UC system, and feature a variety of research endeavors by postdoctoral scholars. At the same time, the newsletter will literally put a face on the over-6000 researchers who are part of the UC postdoc community.

Although the criteria for initiating a security check is unpredictable, it appears that a major concern is whether or not your work relates to the production of weapons, including biological, chemical or nuclear weapons. In addition, they are concerned about work relating to a technology that is restricted or controlled by the U.S. government.

The consul will pass on your application to either a Defense or Science attaché at the Embassy, or forward the application to the State Department for a decision before the visa will be issued.

REMEMBER: It is very important for you to visit your international scholar advisor before you depart the United States. This person will be able to provide you with helpful suggestions if a new visa is required for you to return to the U.S. Also, Canadians are exempt from ever applying for a visa to return to the U.S. and simply present their passport and DS2019, I20 form, or other appropriate work permit.

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www.employment-family-sponsoredimmigration.com

Inception of a New UC Postdoctoral Society:

The University of California, Santa Barbara has few postdoctoral scholars, which is perhaps why creating a community was difficult. Upon her appointment as the Director of Communications and Relations in the Graduate Division at UC Santa Barbara, Dr. Barbara K. Ige, formerly an administrator at UCLA, was asked if she would like to work with postdocs. Dr. Ige’s keen commitment to her job and constituencies, led her to quickly understand what was, and was not, available to enhance the experience of postdocs at the university. She realized that, albeit small, there was a body of postdocs whose training, experience, and success could be enhanced by creating a community, and providing some infrastructure to bring in supplementary activities of tremendous

Innovation, Persistence, and Success!

By Natalia Belfiore
importance to this group.

Dr. Ige, with the support of Graduate Division Dean Gale M. Morrison, made a persuasive case to Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor, and others responsible for postdocs, for funding for the UC Santa Barbara Society of Postdoctoral Scholars (SoPS). The Society received a generous startup grant from EVC Gene Lucas and has never looked back. Since no clear path was laid out, Dr. Ige wisely drew on her expert contacts at UCLA. At the inaugural dinner meeting in November 2007, former UCLA SoPS President Dr. Ajay Gopal and Kyle Cunningham, UCLA’s Graduate Division’s first Postdoctoral Coordinator (1999) (currently a Staff Analyst in the Academic Senate) presented invaluable information on establishing a postdoctoral society. Following their presentations, focusing, respectively, on the people as well as the university support system necessary to bring together the postdoc community, two UC Santa Barbara postdocs, Dr. Lachelle Hannickel (Feminist Studies) and Dr. Teri Robinson (Chemistry), stepped forward to co-chair the UC Santa Barbara SoPS.

What followed was a flurry of ideas and efforts to provide guidance and support to postdocs above and beyond the professional training provided in laboratories or host offices. Having Lachelle, a social scientist, and Teri, a chemist, co-chairing the Society has guaranteed a cross-disciplinary approach to organizing services, social functions, and recruitment efforts (see companion article about the UC Santa Barbara SoPS recent activities).

Of course, understanding that communication is the key to all endeavors, Dr. Ige established a listserv for SoPS. The listerv is the primary means of advertising workshops and social gatherings. This virtual community became a key resource to stay connected to the postdocs’ interests and needs. Dr. Ige also created a FAQs and Q&A section on the Graduate Division website so that postdocs can not only refer to frequent topics of concern, but they may also post their own questions to be answered.

Dr. Ige credits the success of this new Society to a combination of factors, including: the generosity of those at the UCLA postdoc society for sharing their knowledge and expertise; the talents and enthusiasm of co-chairs, Lachelle and Teri; and the willingness of the UC Santa Barbara administration to give the Society a chance to get off the ground. Its future success will depend on leadership and participation of current and future generations of UC Santa Barbara postdocs. Building a campus community through social, professional, and training events will undoubtedly prove to be the key to the future success of the UC Santa Barbara SoPS.