Postdoc contributions to some health insurance and other benefits premiums are changing. The open enrollment period, which is the ONLY time postdocs can change their coverage from one kind of plan to another (other than new appointees), begins Monday, October 31, 2011, and runs through Tuesday, November 22, 2011. Garnett-Powers and Associates (GPA), the third party administrator for postdoc plans, along with representatives from your campus, will hold sessions on each campus to educate postdocs on their options for 2012; the times and dates of informational sessions are listed on the GPA website and the UAW website. Questions about costs and how to change your coverage can also be asked in your departmental benefits office.

Specifically, in accordance with changes being implemented as a result of the UC Postdoc Union (UAW Local 5810) contract, postdocs will begin contributing a small percentage of the total premium for Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) insurance. Beginning in 2012, postdocs will contribute 2% of the cost of premiums.

The National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) is hosting its 2012 Annual Meeting in San Francisco! This is a fitting location as the first Annual Meeting, 10 years ago, was held in Berkeley. The NPA Annual Meeting is the largest meeting and networking event in the postdoctoral community. Each meeting is highly engaging and productive for postdoctoral scholars, administrators, and other individuals working to enhance the postdoctoral experience.

The Annual Meeting Keynote Speaker will be Alan I. Leshner, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and Executive Publisher, Science.

The meeting will be March 16-18, 2012, in downtown San Francisco at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel. Meeting registration will open on or about November 14, 2011, so keep checking the NPA website!
Know It All?! 
Editor’s Column, by Natalia M. Belfiore

Did you know...?
Perhaps it pays to be nice after all. Allison M. Vaillancourt opined in a column in the Chronicle of Higher Education (August 17, 2011; How About Being Nice Before You Need Me?) that when a consistently mean and unpleasant colleague asked, no, rather, practically demanded, that she drop everything and help him find a job, he was undeserving. Yes, she said, she would pass him leads as she saw them, but she was not going to go out of her way. Kindness, she insists, goes a long way; unkindness is a bit of a non-starter.

Is it self-esteem or is it entitlement? David Evans (August 11, 2011; First, Know Thyself, Chronicle of Higher Education) quotes Jean Twenge’s book on the “me” generation, “This is where self-esteem crosses over into entitlement: the idea that we deserve more. And why shouldn’t we? We’ve been told all of our lives that we are special.” In his discussion of some of the mistakes young academics can make when searching for a tenure track job, he notes that it really serves no one to apply to, and then interview at institutions that you turn your nose down on, whether because of location, culture, or job characteristics. Instead, it is better to do some self-examination and determine exactly what types of institutions will clearly make you miserable, and not apply there. That said, he, and others, remark that it is important to be open minded and not draw that exclusion circle too broadly. Ms. Mentor weighs in reminding newbies to learn from whatever job they end up getting. I, as well as commenters, would add that these sentiments apply to other kinds of potential employment as well.

Rachel Connelly and Kristen Ghodsee are moms, and professors, and are writing a book on being a mother and an academic (July 24, 2011; Professor Mom: Finding Work-Family Balance Despite the Odds, Chronicle of Higher Education). They make arguments for why women who want to be mothers should not make this the reason not to try for an academic job. Things have changed in the past couple of decades, but not enough, they admit. Indeed, as Dr. Isis blogs, “We are the first generation of women with our fathers’ job and our mothers’ responsibilities.” Nevertheless, we should be moms and professors, if that is what we want to be.

The President and the National Science Foundation agree with Connelly, Ghodsee, and Dr. Isis. New policy guidelines have just been formulated (September 26, 2011) to encourage workplace flexibility to help families of scientists. This is good, and is likely to have been an outcome of research like that of Mason et al. from UC Berkeley (Keeping Women in the Science Pipeline) which documents how uneven the situation is for women in the sciences, more so for women with children. Things have changed since in the past decade, but not enough.

This column is a regular feature of the UC Postdoc Newsletter and provides brief comments and notices about articles, events, and resources that are of interest to postdocs.

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 vspa@berkeley.edu or contact us with questions.

Natalia M. Belfiore, Editor-in-Chief; UC Berkeley, Visiting Scholar
Xiaqing Cao, Ph.D., Former Postdoctoral Scholar, UC Los Angeles, and President, UAW Local 5810
Sam Castañeda, Managing Editor, UC Berkeley, Director, Visiting Scholar and Postdoc Affairs Program
Shelley Claridge, Ph.D., Postdoctoral scholar, and President of the Society of Postdoctoral Scholars, UC Los Angeles
Kathleen Flint Ehms Ph.D., NPA ADVANCE Project Manager, National Postdoctoral Association
Adam Green, Law Offices of Adam Green
Sandra Holley, Ph.D., Postdoctoral Scholar, UC Los Angeles
Greg Pawin, Ph.D., Postdoctoral Scholar, UC Los Angeles
Neal Sweeney, Ph.D., Postdoctoral Scholar, UC Santa Cruz and Vice-President, UAW Local 5810

All articles are written by Editor-in-Chief, Natalia M. Belfiore, except where otherwise noted.

SACNAS

Attracts the Attention of UC

AT ITS 2011 CONFERENCE

The Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) held its 2011 Annual Conference in San Jose, California, in late October. SACNAS is a society of scientists dedicated to advancing Hispanics/Chicanos and Native Americans in science, although its members have an inclusive, practical emphasis on enhancing diversity of all types. Beginning in 2004, SACNAS placed an increasing focus on the importance of postdocs through the concerted and persistent efforts of some SACNAS postdoctoral...
UC Los Angeles Shifts Responsibility for Postdocs

a liaison to faculty, in particular to educate them and encourage them to embrace the new measures affecting the postdoc community. Shideler believes a cultural shift is occurring with respect to where postdocs fit in the Academy, and is enthusiastic about the prospects.

April de Stefano’s position, as responsible for postdoctoral affairs under the former Associate Dean, Belinda Tucker, was elevated to Director of Academic Services, in which she wears many more hats, including overseeing the OPVSS, Graduate Admissions and Student Academic Services. Dr. de Stefano’s staff includes Mike Flaxman, Coordinator, and Brittany Howell, Administrative Specialist.

The new team (Figure 1) is just as committed to enhancing the postdoctoral experience, and streamlining the ever-increasing administration associated with postdoctoral scholars. In her new position, de Stefano has less less time for working directly with postdocs, but her ideas and strategies are ably carried out by Flaxman and Howell. Dr. de Stefano works closely with Dean Garrell, who is herself committed to postdocs.

The OPVSS offers workshops for departmental administrators and a postdoctoral scholar orientation. In addition, the office maintains two listservs for postdocs and administrators, and a website. It provides material and logistical support for the Society of Postdoctoral Scholars (SoPS) and works with them to implement the cross-campus collaboration to program career development events for postdoctoral scholars. Career development services have expanded greatly in recent years, largely as a result of the cross-campus collaborative efforts, but also internally on the UC Los Angeles campus through work with the various institutes. Upcoming career workshops address subjects such as interview skills, getting research positions in industry, and facilitation of small group discussions. Other opportunities made available to postdocs include lunchtime Q&A with faculty, and participation in a leadership institute designed to teach young scientists how to run research laboratories.

A concerted effort also is ongoing by Flaxman to adapt and improve an online application system whereby postdocs can be entered in to the computer database and managed more efficiently. The office also is set to run two quarterly workshops, one for administrators and one for postdocs. The former would ensure administrators and departmental personnel are fully up to date on the policies and practices as they relate to postdocs. The latter is to train postdocs on the details of their eligible benefits, retirement options, payroll, and contracts.

On the docket are a continued effort to expand career development resources for postdocs in all disciplines, and to encourage postdocs to create Individual Development Plans with their postdoc advisors at the start of their postdoctoral appointments.

Dr. de Stefano and her team, as well as the administrators in charge, are dedicated to enhancing the daily and overall experiences of postdocs in the UC Los Angeles system. The OPVSS assisted SoPS in printing stickers last year that proclaimed “I love postdoctoral scholars” for Postdoc Appreciation Day, a sentiment that de Stefano wants to underscore at UC Los Angeles.

**Ask Adam**

**QUESTION:**

I am a postdoc from China at a UC campus and am experiencing a big problem: Yesterday, my faculty sponsor told me that things are not working out and that I should start to look for another position. I know there are UC postdoc policies that relate to performance improvement that he must follow. However, I was wondering what my possibilities are for staying in the U.S. after my termination? In other words, can I stay for one or two months and look for another postdoc position? Please help me and provide me with options. I really need an answer right away.

Thank you.

**ANSWER:**

First, you must have a meeting with your International Scholar Advisor at your institution’s international office. This person will be able to discuss with you the various options that you have.

You do not mention your visa status at this time so I will presume that you are in J-1 Research Scholar category. The maximum duration of your J-1 Research Scholar category is potentially 60 months. However, the maximum duration of your J-1 visa status depends on your position at the university and time remaining on your J-1 program. The J visa rules regarding the ending of your affiliation might allow you to stay on if you have funding to do so.

One alternative option is that perhaps your PI can keep you employed some additional time to allow you time to find another position at the same or at another institution. Or perhaps you need to find another faculty member who is willing to sponsor your stay. In that case, your J status can be transferred. Your International Scholar Advisor can assist you in either regard.

If you do not have any more J program time remaining, but you were to find another postdoc position, it might be necessary for a new employer to obtain the H-1B visa status on your behalf [see column on this topic]. If you have a J-2 spouse she or he would have to change to H-4 status. Unfortunately, unlike the J-2, the H-4 does not provide for employment authorization.

However, all people from China and many other countries who have been in J status are barred from changing to H-1B until they have either returned home for two years or obtained a waiver of the two-year home country physical presence requirement. For those who are unable to return home, or to obtain the waiver of the two-year home country physical presence requirement, the O-1 visa might be a possibility.

If you decide to totally end your postdoc, it is possible for you to go work for a private or academic employer in your field and obtain the H-1B. (This assumes that the two-year home country physical presence requirement does not apply to you.) However, unlike the J visa, the H-1B has a requirement that you be paid at least the prevailing wage for the position. It is for that reason that some PIs like the J visa.
members. Since then, some of the gains within SACNAS have been lost (for example, there is no longer a postdoc membership category), but much of the membership, including the current Director of Programs, Yvonne Rodriguez, has continued to recognize the importance of supporting and training postdocs in this tenuous but important career stage.

The conference grows by about 10% each year, with more attendees from all categories, as well as exhibitors recruiting minority graduate students and postdocs. This year, nearly 100 postdocs were pre-registered, at least 10% of them being UC postdocs representing eight of the UC campuses. One UC postdoc, Maria Mouchess from UC San Francisco, said of the conference “Attending has helped by providing inspiration and a valuable network of scientists and educators already navigating successfully through academia and industry. I had the opportunity to find several new mentors, some even on the UC San Francisco campus.”

UC had a strong presence at the conference in other ways as well: UC Berkeley and UC Davis were Platinum sponsors; UC Santa Cruz was a Gold sponsor; and UC San Francisco was a Bronze sponsor (financial contributors at different levels, up to $100,000). Dr. Robert Birgeneau, Chancellor of UC Berkeley and, himself, a descendent of the Metis Nation, a Canadian native tribe, gave a welcome speech before Dr. Alex Filippenko, Nobel Prize winner and UC Berkeley faculty, gave Friday’s keynote address.

SACNAS conferences offer multiple workshops and sessions geared to postdocs and young professionals. This year, in addition to a postdoc networking poster session and reception, there were workshops on training grants, work options outside of academia, and professional skills building, among others.

Outside of the conference setting, SACNAS has also sponsored a Leadership Institute each year for the past three years, to which 10 postdocs, 10 early career professionals, and 10 midcareer professionals are admitted. This intensive week-long training has proven to be greatly valuable to many. Long time SACNAS member, conference postdoc programming coordinator and UC Irvine postdoc, Teprinig Piquado said “As a participant of the SACNAS Leadership Institute, I asked for a very “hands on” role in developing the leadership sessions this year. I asked to organize the postdoc gathering room and postdoc reception. As I participate in SACNAS conferences, I recognize needs of different participants, and ask for change. Next year, I’ll be asking SACNAS for awards for our amazing postdoc poster presenters.”

Indeed, as the membership numbers grow, so will the postdoc membership, as the majority of science graduate student members become postdocs one day themselves. Next year’s conference will be held in Seattle, Washington, in mid-October. Keep an eye on the SACNAS web site for registration deadlines, travel award possibilities, and the opportunity to present your research and meet hundreds of talented and enthusiastic Chicanos, Latinos, and Native Americans, and others.

The UC Postdoc Newsletter features postdoctoral research from the postdoc’s perspective in each issue. We show you—through the eyes of the postdoc—how the University of California affects the lives of these young researchers. In this edition of Postdoc Profiles, we highlight two postdocs from UC Los Angeles, one from the IDDRC/Semel Institute for Neuroscience, and the other from the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. They have contributed descriptions of their time as postdoctoral scholars.

Sandra Holley received a Ph.D. in Neurobiology and Behavior from Cornell University, after attending the University of Miami as an undergraduate. This was followed by a postdoc at Cornell in the Department of Molecular Medicine. In 2009, she came to UC Los Angeles to work in the laboratory of Dr. Michael Levine. Through the years, she has taught numerous courses to undergraduates, and attended teaching trainings focusing on several aspects of teaching. She has received awards and accolades for her teaching. Her Postdoc Profile is a stellar story of her volunteerism efforts in greater Los Angeles since she arrived in the area.

Click here to view Holley’s profile.

Greg Pawin received a B.S. and then his Ph.D. in Chemistry from UC Riverside. He has many years of experience working in chemistry labs and teaching chemistry. His is an amusing and interesting story of using his unique expertise to fix an ultra-high vacuum scanning tunneling microscope, and finding an outlet in postdoc activities.

Click here to view Pawin’s profile.

“Postdoc Profiles” is a recurring element of the UC Postdoc Newsletter. Each issue features stories about or by individual postdocs, highlighting their subfield and experience. Write in your ideas to vspa@berkeley.edu. We look forward to hearing from postdocs throughout the UC system.
JOINING FORCES: Working Better by Working Together

by Shelley Claridge

The Society of Postdoctoral Scholars (SoPS) at UC Los Angeles, founded in 2003, is a council of postdoctoral researchers who seek to improve the postdoctoral experience at UC Los Angeles. Since its inception, the society has organized career development and social activities, and in recent years, has also acted in an advisory capacity to the UC Los Angeles Graduate Division [See 2009 article]. The postdoctoral community at UC Los Angeles has grown to over 1200 researchers; typically 10-15 serve on the council annually, organizing 3-6 events each month. Since UC Los Angeles, like the other UC institutions, is a public university with a large population on a limited budget, we have found it extremely helpful to partner with other groups on campus, serving both postdocs and graduate students, both to pool resources and to ensure communication throughout the campus. Recently, we have also developed relationships with other Los Angeles area postdoc societies, including those at California Institute of Technology, City of Hope, University of Southern California, and Cedars-Sinai, to share seminar speakers and foster social networking and collaboration.

A primary mission of SoPS is to assist postdoctoral scholars in developing career skills that will help them transition into both academic and non-academic positions. To maximize the range of career seminars available to the postdoc community, SoPS has partnered with other organizations on campus, including the Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholars Services, the California NanoSystems Institute, and the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs for the Biomedical and Life Sciences. In the past two years, the joint career development group has pooled resources to offer larger and more frequent seminars, including an annual multi-day lab leadership workshop drawing over 200 attendees. This year, the joint career development council has instituted a monthly series of career development events followed by networking receptions to promote further interaction on the issues addressed in each seminar. Topics have included grant writing, presentation skills, academic and industrial job searches, high-impact graphic design, time management, and career planning.

SoPS also arranges frequent social activities to help postdocs develop a strong social network across campus. This year, SoPS has partnered with the UC Los Angeles Graduate Division and the California NanoSystems Institute to offer monthly socials featuring networking games to encourage productive and fun interactions. SoPS also arranges frequent pub nights, brown bag lunches, hikes, and other social events, including a recent premier of the PhD Comics movie with a cast panel led by Jorge Cham.

Finally, in the past two years, SoPS has begun to engage with other Los Angeles area postdoc societies to encourage postdoc interactions among campuses. Intercampus hiking socials have been well-attended, drawing dozens of attendees, as have intercampus postdoc leadership socials for postdoc council members from all schools. In many cases, Los Angeles area institutions have collaborated on invitations of out-of-town speakers, allowing us to both share great experiences and reduce costs.

Looking forward, SoPS is working to increase the sense of postdoctoral identity and community – both for postdocs and for UC Los Angeles. Since the postdoctoral turnover rate is so high, we’re making an effort to ensure postdocs find us early in their careers here, so they begin to form a social network and think about career development immediately, when it’s most helpful to them. We’re also working to strengthen ties to the UC Los Angeles community by getting postdocs recognized as part of the Alumni Association. Postdocs at UC Los Angeles have made remarkable steps forward in the past eight years, and we’re excited about making the next eight years even better.

Growing Leadership, Visiting the White House and Standing Up for Postdocs: UC Postdoc Union Summer-Fall Update

by Xiaoqing Cao and Neal Sweeney

The UC Postdoc Union (UAW Local 5810; the Union) has had a very busy and productive summer and fall. We have made progress in expanding our postdoc union leadership on the ten campuses across the state, increasing our advocacy for federal research funding and immigration reform, and working effectively with the University of California (UC) to resolve contract-related issues affecting postdocs.

Many new postdocs have been getting involved with the Union. The UC Postdoc Union Joint Council, which consists of over 30 postdocs from all 10 UC campuses, held its first meeting in July at UC Los Angeles. At this meeting, we set short- and long-term goals and developed plans to achieve them. Working groups were also set up that will focus on issues important to postdocs including career and professional development, visa/immigration, political advocacy, and
childcare. The working groups have been making progress since July and will report back at the next Joint Council meeting in October. In addition, postdocs have been working at all UC campuses to sign up new members and discuss any problems or questions that may arise.

The Union has also been actively involved in advocating for science funding and immigration reform. Lobbying and letters from postdoc union members at UC, in conjunction with other advocacy efforts, helped secure the two percent increase in the NIH/NRSA stipend rates, which means that minimum postdoc salaries at UC automatically increased by that amount. Currently we are urging our members to send letters to the California Congressional and Senate delegation to encourage increases for science funding for 2012. In September, we were invited, along with other progressive organizations in California, to the White House to meet with elected officials and top Obama administration advisors. This was a great opportunity to make our voice heard about increasing federal science budgets and progressive immigration reform that would make it easier for postdocs who have earned PhDs at US universities to become permanent residents and citizens.

The Union has also continued our successful efforts working with UC to ensure that the terms of the contract are understood and upheld by all parties. For example, in recent months, hundreds of postdocs on all UC campuses have now received the first-ever experience-based pay increases upon reappointment or anniversary date, close to 40 postdocs across the state are receiving back pay because of a misunderstanding of short term disability benefits pursuant to our contract, and numerous postdocs have now been able to take time off for vacation, visiting family overseas, and other personal reasons. Some conflicts have also been successfully resolved regarding the rules of postdoc termination under the contract; notably a pregnant postdoc was allowed to extend her appointment once the PI was explained the details of the contract.

The Union looks forward to more postdocs getting involved in all of these efforts. If you are interested, you can contact the Union at uaw5810@uaw5810.org or call at 510-845-5726.

ENGLISH
Works for You!

Sam Castañeda, Director of the Visiting Scholar and Postdoc Affairs (VSPA) Program at UC Berkeley has long recognized that international postdocs come to the U.S. with a huge need to improve their English language skills. UC Berkeley’s postdoc population is the largest in the UC system, numbering approximately 1,400, about 55% of which come from other countries. 72% of them have spouses or partners that accompany them. In addition to this community, there are 1,200 visiting scholars and 400 visiting student researchers at UC Berkeley. These groups are also mostly international and also bring their spouses/partners.

In the past, Castañeda worked with another language institute to provide English classes but found the classes to be prohibitively expensive, and the company less capable of expanding with the overall potential student population. While searching for a solution, Castañeda began to work with Boston Educational Services, which administers the International Test of English Proficiency (ITEP), to provide testing on campus for postdocs. Through this well-established nationwide company, Castañeda made his connection to The Language Company (TLC), based in Edmond, Oklahoma.

With 28 years of experience teaching English as a second language, TLC’s unique business model works well with the population Castañeda serves. One of TLC’s course models is what they call “special programs,” or courses that are custom designed for a unique population. TLC’s instructors base their class sessions on the stated needs of the students, teaching to multiple proficiency levels in concurrent courses. Course content and style changes as they receive further feedback, which is solicited in evaluations after each and every session.

Since 2010, TLC has run four sessions for eligible participants, which include spouses and partners of affiliates in the VSPA program. Currently, TLC is scheduled to provide four sessions per year, one per quarter, with as many concurrent classes as are necessary to match the English language proficiency of enrollees, up to five. TLC has a long-standing professional relationship with ITEP, whose service is trusted, and enrollment begins with each student taking the ITEP to establish his or her English proficiency level. Classes so far have been evolving to emphasize oral communication, on the request of the students, although this could shift as enrollment changes. Along with this emphasis, there is an optional writing assignment offered each week, with personalized feedback given by an assigned editor. Students also have the option of giving oral presentations to their classes weekly.

Classes are intensive, with 18 hours of evening classroom time per six-week session. Costs are kept low as a priority to make classes accessible to as many as possible. UC Berkeley contributes by providing very high quality classroom space and language laboratory facilities contained within the campus’s Berkeley Language Center.

So far, most of the students that have enrolled have been postdoc or
Amelia Linnemann is a postdoctoral scholar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she works on cardiovascular genomics and mechanisms of gene regulation in the Department of Cell and Regenerative Biology. Linnemann is also co-author on the National Postdoctoral Association’s “A Postdoc’s Guide to Pregnancy and Maternity Leave,” which she helped write during her own pregnancy and maternity leave. I recently spoke with Linnemann about planning her leave while also managing her full-time research program.

Postdocs and postdoctoral supervisors often worry about how pregnancy and maternity leave will affect their research. How did you plan your research around your delivery and leave?

I was lucky to have a project that was near publication-ready when I started planning for maternity leave. I was able to complete my experiments and submit the paper early enough in my pregnancy that I had time to address reviewers’ comments before my leave began. It actually worked out perfectly because my paper was accepted just a few days after I had my son!

A common concern for pregnant researchers is research or lab safety. What did you do to mitigate any potential hazards?

I researched everything online for potential impacts, especially early on before I even announced my pregnancy to the lab, knowing that early embryonic development is a critical time. For example, I made sure to open tubes containing any type of volatile chemical only in the fume hood and I avoided doing any sonication to reduce the risk of chronic loud noise hurting my baby. Luckily I had lab mates that were happy to help.

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Did you have to worry about making these changes to your research regiment before you had shared the news of your pregnancy?

I didn’t but I do have a friend who encountered this situation, and she ended up telling her supervisor shortly after she found out she was pregnant so that she could avoid working with certain chemicals.

How did you find out about your options for taking maternity leave? Were they detailed as part of your postdoctoral fellowship?

Early on, I looked at online resources through the HR department at my University as well as thoroughly read my fellowship award guide. It was a bit confusing at first because my award guide didn’t specifically state ‘maternity leave,’ but instead outlined general allowances for time off. Once I contacted someone at the granting institution’s benefits and leave policies and make sure you are officially enrolled in any insurance benefits. Conduct a workplace hazard review. Talk to other postdocs and visiting scholars about their experiences with maternity leave. Gather necessary paperwork for maternity leave and begin filling out forms. You may need your doctor’s signature. Turn in paperwork for maternity leave. Don’t forget to add your new dependent to your health/dental insurance policies before your institution’s deadline.

Before you conceive 7-9 months before leave 4-5 months before leave 2-3 months before leave Beginning of Leave 0-2 months post-partum

© National Postdoctoral Association Graphic Design by Amelia Linnemann
agency, however, it became clear that this time off was meant to include maternity leave when necessary. A very small percentage of my appointment is through my department to allow me access to health insurance, so this complicated matters a bit too. Once I found the right person to talk to though, it was only a matter of filling out one simple form, providing documentation from my fellowship, and getting the required signatures. I am glad I started early, as it ended up taking me a couple of months to figure everything out.

**In closing, what’s the one piece of advice you have for others considering having children during their postdoc?**

It is ultimately YOUR decision when you want to start a family. It is all too easy to let yourself be influenced by those who might tell you to wait until your career is more established. The way I look at is I would rather find a good work-life balance now, than to look back 10 years from now and resent not taking the plunge.

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**Changes to Postdoc Health Insurance**

**Rates & Contributions**

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A table of exact rates, including changes to some base rates, and contribution amounts for each type of coverage is shown here, and is available with your departmental benefits officer, as well as in a letter sent to each postdoc from the UC Office of the President during the week of October 24, 2011, in advance of the open enrollment period. As in the past, contributions due by postdocs will be automatically deducted from postdoc paychecks through the payroll system, unless there are insufficient funds or postdocs are paid directly by their funder. In the latter cases, postdocs will be billed directly by GPA monthly for their contributions. Further questions about the changes and the agreement between UC and the Union may be directed to the UAW Local 5810 or at uaw5810@uaw5810.org.