Henry Ford once said, “Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” 52 years ago, the University of California, San Diego was founded, and last month we welcomed our 8th Chancellor, Pradeep Khosla. At the ceremony, Chancellor Khosla said, “Our founders had the goal of establishing an experimental campus, one that would define the future of education and research. Their vision, their work, and their successes led us on an upward trajectory to where we are today.” UC San Diego is ranked 15th Best Among the World Universities by the Center for World-Class Universities at Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

The birth of the newsletter. Almost exactly four years ago, Sam Castaneda, Director of the Visiting Scholar and Postdoctoral Affairs (VSPA) Program at UC Berkeley, and Managing Editor of this newsletter, proposed that we create a newsletter dedicated to keeping communication alive among postdoctoral scholars, and administrators working with them in the entire UC system. Using donated funding, Sam hired me as the Editor-in-Chief, and together we grew the newsletter from a fledgling idea to a regular publication, coming out usually three times a year to loosely match the academic quarter system in place at most UC campuses.

The impetus for the newsletter. It seemed like a good thing to do at the time. The recession and concomitant budget cuts had relegated the UC Council of Postdoctoral Scholars (CPS), formerly a vibrant, intercampus working group of postdoctoral representatives and their administrative representatives, to an email-only group. Postdoctoral affairs coordinators at several campuses, and at the UC Office of the President had been “reorganized,” such that duties were subsumed into the schedules of other busy administrators. I had been a postdoc at UC Berkeley, and for most of that time, President of the Berkeley Postdoctoral Association and Berkeley representative to the CPS, and previously, a graduate student at UC Davis for 6 years, so my knowledge of the UC system was broad and reasonably deep. Sam’s position as Director of the VSPA, and his tenure at UC Berkeley that spanned multiple decades, budget crises and booms, and administrative turnovers, gives him a unique perspective and formidable network from which to draw.

Newsletter takes form. Over the course of our first nine issues, Sam and I developed a pattern, highlighting the activities and status of At Long Last!

Great Things Happening at UC San Diego in the Spirit of Collaboration
by Jennifer Oh, Director of Academic Research Personnel, Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs, UCSD

Achieving this level of success in such a short period was possible because of our shared vision, and the belief that we can achieve great things if we work together. This spirit of collaboration is alive and well in the Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs (OPVSA). The

To Your Vitality!.......................................................... 7
Making it work.......................................................... 8
Love, Liliana............................................................ 8
Postdocs Be Prepared.................................................. 9
Notes from the UAW .................................................. 11

continued »
As the UC San Diego Postdoctoral Scholar, UC San Diego Postdoc Association
Natasha Distiller, Editor-in-Chief: UC Berkeley, Visiting Scholar
Joan Garnett, Garnett Powers and Associates
Adam Green, Law Offices of Adam Green
Jennifer Oh, Director of Academic Research Personnel, Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs, UC San Diego
Sheila Semaan, UC San Diego Postdoctoral Scholar, UC San Diego Postdoc Association
Neal Sweeney, UC Santa Cruz; President, UAW Local 5810
Kirsten Tolson, UC San Diego Postdoctoral Scholar, UC San Diego Postdoc Association

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.

2nd Annual
UCSD POSTDOC VENDOR SHOW
by Sheila Semaan, Bernice Aguilar, and Kristen Tolson

The UC Postdoc Association (PDA) is focused on enriching the postdoctoral experience by providing professional development and networking opportunities in academia and in industry, and the majority of our budget to accomplish these goals comes from fundraising efforts. The idea of hosting a Vendor Show as a way to support the PDA came to Kirsten McTavish (a former UCSD PDA member) a little over 2 years ago after hearing about other successful Postdoc Vendor Shows during the National Postdoctoral Association conference.

The second UC PDA Vendor Show was held on September 19, 2012. The effort was headed by Kristen Tolson, a first year postdoc in the laboratory of Alexander Kauffman. This year our Vendor Show hosted over 40 vendors from a wide range of specialties and research disciplines, giving postdocs and other university researchers the opportunity to learn about the various innovative products offered, as well as a chance to network with industry representatives. The direct one-on-one interaction with vendors benefitted vendors, postdocs, and other laboratory employees. We were able to put faces with names and forge personal relationships with vendors that will likely help in all future transactions. Also during the event, several biotech companies offered seminars that introduced their latest innovations and also gave attendees a first hand perspective on what it is like to work and conduct research in industry.

Continued »
Pulling it off: Notes on how to succeed

We found the key to a successful Vendor Show was making sure the event was well advertised. We created flyers two weeks in advance and posted them all over campus, specifically reaching out to the UCSD research community who would have the most to gain from attending our show. In order to help provide incentive to attend, we also promised (and delivered!) a free meal from Chipotle to all attendees that visited at least 10 vendors, as well as entry into our attendee raffle. Many companies, both biotech and local UCSD companies, were kind enough to donate items for the raffle so we were able to offer many prizes, including an iPod Shuffle, gift certificates from UCSD Extension, t-shirts, mugs, Jamba Juice certificates, and movie tickets, just to name a few. Our postdoc, grad student, and UCSD retiree volunteers also helped make the day run smoothly. We made sure to keep the vendors happy throughout the show by having these volunteers deliver food, water, and help out with anything else the vendors needed during the show. Many vendors expressed their appreciation for these hospitality teams and said that this really made the show a pleasant experience for them. Through our interactions with vendors, we were also able to plan future vendor sponsored social hours for postdocs to network and learn about products that may help them in their research, which was an unexpected beneficial side effect from the Vendor Show.

At the UCSD Vendor Show, everyone was kept happy, with a raffle for participants and a special hospitality team for vendors

With over 500 attendees, this Vendor Show surpassed both last year’s participant attendance and fundraising amounts, making it a wonderful success and raising the bar for future Vendor Shows. Vendor feedback was very positive and we know that through word of mouth and because of everything we learned this year, the Vendor Show next year will be even more successful. We thank all the vendors, attendees, and volunteers for their incredible support and look forward to doing this all over again next year!

For more information, visit our Facebook page or Events page.

The UCSD Exposure to Industry Program: Educating UCSD Postdocs about what else is out there

By Sheila Semaan, UCSD Postdoc

Do I really want to stay in academia? This is a question that plagues many postdocs these days. Following this initial question, we then ask ourselves: What do I really want to do and is industry a good option for me? The problem is, as academic postdocs, many of us only know the academic world. Ask us how to get a career outside of academia, and most of us draw a blank. Our generation of postdocs has seen the effects of lack of funding: many labs have shut down, or are under threat. We have seen our incredibly intelligent and hardworking peers and P.I.s struggling to keep their personnel while continuing to do good work. When the statistics inform us that only 15% of postdocs move on to an academic position, it leaves us to wonder, where do the other 85% end up?

As UCSD postdocs, these were questions that Milos Lazic and I had, and we were not alone. We knew there had to be a way for UCSD postdocs to gain more exposure to industry and learn about industry careers available to us. We initially started with inviting industry professionals (Directors of Bioscience, Medical Writers, Tech Transfer, Senior Scientists) to the Postdoc Association (PDA) Industry Connections Seminars to tell us about various career options. But was there more we could do? The answer came to me after I attended the National Postdoctoral Association Annual Conference last year and met with Christopher Tsang, the postdoc who started UC Berkeley’s Postdoc Industry Exploration Program. He and his co-founders gave a thorough presentation on the steps involved in starting this type of program, which involves site-visits to companies. I knew it would take a lot of work to start up a similar program at UCSD. However, I also found out at the conference that the Scripps Research Institute had a similar program called the Industry Bridge. When I returned from the conference, Milos and I met with Brian Yeagy, who headed Scripps’ program and he provided us with contacts and pamphlets on which to base our program.

We were able to start the UCSD Exposure to Industry Program (EIP) in the winter of 2012. The EIP consists of site-visits to local biotech, pharma, medical device, and high tech companies. At the site visit, postdocs get a chance to learn about a company’s products, hear from employees about career tracks through panel discussions, presentations, and networking hours, and tour the facilities. Our very first site visit happened at Pfizer in December 2012, with site visits to Janssen (a division of Johnson and Johnson) and Takeda also planned for the following months. Through EIP, UCSD postdocs have the unique opportunity to get first hand exposure to the companies, their personnel, and facilities. The aim of our program is to expose postdocs to various career options, create valuable networks, and contribute to UCSD postdocs’ career transitions. We want to stress that our program is not a company recruitment fair and does not arrange formal job interviews. It is an educational experience for postdocs to

Continued »
OPVSA also provides training and career development opportunities to postdoctoral scholars. Postdocs’ career development needs situate them between graduate students and junior faculty. They also have some needs specific to their own career status. To avoid reinventing the wheel and exhausting limited resources, OPVSA collaborates with the units on campus that already provide some relevant services. The Center for Teaching Development, a training center under the Dean of Graduate Studies, Kim Barrett, and directed by Beth Simon, encourages postdocs to participate in their Preparing Future Practitioner Program. The program provides monthly seminars on academic preparation and job searches. The Career Services Center, under the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Penny Rue, has a Graduate Student Advisor, Joe Cribari, who invites postdocs to some of the workshops he offers, including the annual PhD conference. In return, graduate students are invited to many of the larger workshops offered by OPVSA, such as the Funding Fest/Grantsmanship series held each April.

Another area of synergy is with the PostDoc Association (PDA). This past year, the PDA has been led by an amazing and energetic group. Kristen Tolson organized the second annual Vendor Fair and raised twice as much funding for the PDA as last year. Sheila Semaan and Milos Lazic developed the new Exposure to Industry Program that introduces postdocs to the local industry environment through organized site visits. You can read more about both these initiatives in this newsletter on pp. 3-4.

EIP has also taken the lead in identifying and inviting speakers for the monthly Industry Connections series. The series was developed by OPVSA in 2010 as part of the postdoc training and career development program. The format is small, roundtable meetings with a speaker who was a postdoc and is now working in industry. The speaker shares his/her personal experiences and answers questions from the 18-20 postdocs. Recent speakers were postdocs who made the transition to industry, who are now directors or Vice Presidents of R&D, who work in regulatory affairs, medical writing, intellectual property, or who went from industry back to academia. The program offers opportunities to explore various jobs, learn about individual experiences, and network. In January 2013, OPVSA will be launching a similar program, Academic Research Roundtable, where junior faculty from the various disciplines will share their experiences about the job search, interviewing, transitioning from postdoc to faculty, work/life balance, and navigating the tenure process.

OPVSA also collaborates with neighboring institutions under the umbrella of the Torrey Pines Training Consortium (TPTC). Partners include the Salk Institute for Biological Studies (B. Bea Rajsombath), Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute (Diane Klotz), and The Scripps Research Institute (Ryan Wheeler and Michael Matrone). The flagship program of TPTC is the annual Academic Leadership Symposium which is a two-day workshop to help postdocs effectively transition to and lead research programs.

In the coming year, OPVSA has several new initiatives planned. They will hire staff to support the training and development efforts. They will increase industry collaborations and offer travel grants. Finally, they will launch another new initiative called the Postdoc Research Award. So as you can see, 2013 looks to be as full and as exciting as 2012 was.
UC San Diego’s mission is to advance knowledge through excellence in education and research at all levels, including postdoctoral scholarship. This goal could not be achieved without the dedication of their faculty, who serve as effective advisors, advocates, role models and colleagues to our next generation of researchers.

To honor these faculty members, the Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs, with the generous support of Garnett-Powers and Associates (GPA), established the GPA Excellence in Postdoctoral Scholar Mentoring Award in 2012.

The inaugural recipient of the award is Professor Steffanie A. Strathdee, associate dean of Global Health Sciences, Harold Simon Chair and chief of the Division of Global Public Health in the Department of Medicine. Strathdee was nominated by Lianne Urada, Ph.D., who said in her award introduction statement that what makes her an excellent mentor is that, “She is not only an amazing human being – compassionate, fair, professional, dedicated and down to earth, but also a tireless advocate who constantly finds new ways to support junior scholars, to improve them, and to get them promoted.” She went on to say Strathdee treats her mentees with respect and encouragement, while motivating them to take on greater levels of responsibility, involving them firsthand in cutting-edge research. She is clear, professional, and direct when giving constructive criticism, and goes to great lengths to ensure her fellows move in the direction that is most beneficial for their research careers. She assesses the mentee’s skills, interests and goals and helps them map out not only their current projects, but also opportunities several levels beyond. “Because of her, I feel confident that I can succeed in academia. She has been critical to my success over the years; she has helped power my success.”

Dr. Harold Simon, for whom the endowed chair is named, said, “I have observed and greatly admired Dr. Strathdee’s recruiting, teaching, promoting, supporting, and eventually helping to establish students, postdoctoral fellows, and young faculty onto promising career paths. She has built one of the most innovative, productive, successful, and respected academic entities I have encountered in my almost 60-year academic career.”

“It’s difficult to over-state the importance of knowledgeable, conscientious, and caring mentors for our postdoctoral scholars,” said Vice Chancellor for Research Sandra Brown. “Their wisdom and guidance help ensure that these promising young people achieve at the very highest levels as they embark on their careers.”

“I am incredibly honored to be nominated for this award, and to continue the tradition of those like Dr. Simon,” said Professor Strathdee. “My mentees deserve the kudos… I have learned just as much from them as they have from me. They continue to provide me with new ideas, insights and experiences from a variety of cultures. UCSD provides an outstanding environment through which they flourish.”

The award was presented during the Postdoc Appreciation Luncheon in September, a standing-room-only event, when 250 postdocs gathered to be honored. Each received a newly designed postdoc t-shirt, was served a buffet lunch, and was inspired by keynote speaker Professor Roger Tsien, Nobel Laureate in Chemistry. Tsien shared his experiences as a postdoc, talked about finding his niche in research, and entertained the postdocs with his observations of the Nobel Prize ceremony. Some of his personal conclusions were that novel interdisciplinary boundaries are often fertile research areas; one should find the right collaborators and exploit them kindly for mutual benefit; and prizes are ultimately a matter of luck, so avoid being motivated or impressed by them.

UC San Diego honors faculty members who serve as advisors, advocates, role models and colleagues to the next generation of researchers.
Brief comments and notices about articles, events, and resources that are of interest to postdocs.

Did you know…?

Much has been written and discussed in recent years on “alternative careers” for PhDs, tacitly lending credence to the notion that there is the “right career,” (academia) and the “others.” As the economic hard times continue to lift, I am heartened to see more editorial and advisory emphasis on managing one’s career without knowledge of its endpoint. I would like to think that if we all worked assiduously at understanding ourselves, building skills (beyond the technical) that can help us in any job, and creating a collaborative and supportive community, we might stand a good chance of ending up doing something that is a good match for us. Oh, and performing our current job tasks well.

There is still far to go in getting the academic establishment to value non-traditional paths or pursuits, even while recognizing that academic jobs, per se, are few. “While many professors are sympathetic to the Ph.D.’s plight, some still see candidates who seek alternative careers as throwing away years of intellectual rigor” says Brenda Iasevoli of the Village Voice. For this reason, the first place you go for support in how to proceed may not be your major professor. There are many blogs, trainings, and books on the subject.

In case you think I’m being cynical by continuing to talk about non-academic careers now that the economy is turning around, there are, refreshingly, many reasons to meet your life goals outside of an academic setting other than just sour grapes. Terran Lane discusses many in his article in August of 2012, and highlights many that have pushed academics to prioritize things they do not find rewarding because of the ongoing changes in the academic funding structure.

Stories abound chronicling how individuals have found their current employment one way or another by being true to themselves. It is inspiring to read the best of these, if only to convince yourself of what is really needed. Susan Ferber’s story tells of her difficult employment one way or another by being true to themselves. It is inspiring to read the best of these, if only to convince yourself of what is really needed. Susan Ferber’s story tells of her difficult choices, swallowing her pride, and getting on her path in editing.

Meanwhile, while you are cataloging your values against academic reality, getting trained in a variety of skills, and trying not to become jaded, remember that it will always serve you to do a good job at your current job. Michael Price from Science Careers talks about how this involves less dreaming and more reality-based plodding, fewer visions, and more working with others to meet your short-term goals.

At the same time as doing a good job at your job, you would do well to network, in a variety of modern ways, according to Vick and Furlong, and hone your leadership skills, says Katharine Stewart. These tasks will help you to succeed in a straight-path academic job, or to recognize opportunities that may not follow the path commonly taken, either within or outside of academia. Na’ema Suleiman expresses her frustration with her seeming lack of hirability, after so long on the market. I think it’s time that PhDs were valued as part of a larger community of scholars and intellectuals who are viewed as hirable, and successful, because of the breadth and depth of their contributions, not their job title.

Ask Adam nearly anything about Visas, Travel, and Related Topics

QUESTION:

I am a postdoc from Italy on a J-1 (exchange scholar) visa and recently began my research at UC Riverside. Can you advise me as to how my same-sex partner can come to the U.S. to stay with me? From what I understand, only heterosexual married spouses of a postdoc are eligible for a J-2 non-immigrant visa. Can you recommend how my same-sex partner can come to the U.S. to live with me? I really miss him.

ANSWER:

Although a J-2 visa is reserved for heterosexual married spouses, as you noted, a visa does in fact exist for domestic partners. This visa is the B-2 tourist visa. Your same-sex partner can therefore apply for a B-2 visa with the primary purpose of travel as accompanying a significant other. The B-2 visa will allow your same-sex partner to be admitted to the United States for up to 1 year. At the airport or other port-of-entry, your partner should request to be admitted for 1 year. Then, he will be able to extend his visa after that year (for 1 year periods at a time), since he will have evidence that your, and thus his, stay is temporary.

This is a result of a 2011 policy memorandum produced by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) that instructed its officers to uniformly address nonimmigrant domestic partners in this manner. This memorandum does not limit this kind of B-2 visa to same-sex partners; CIS explains that this B-2 status can be for “cohabitating nonimmigrant partners and other household members of principal nonimmigrants.” In other words, a person that you live with, such as a child or elderly parent, could also be eligible.

In order to apply for the B-2 visa, your partner will need to go to http://travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms_4230.html and submit a DS-160 Online Nonimmigrant Visa application and then go to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate website to receive additional information about the country-specific instructions. A specific list of documentation for the B-2 visa does not exist, however your partner should attempt to show evidence of co-habitation, as well as other documents such as a marriage certificate, a joint bank account statement, insurance documents and a letter from your employer verifying the temporary nature of your assignment. Your partner will need to present all these documents at both the U.S. Consulate and the port-of-entry in order to demonstrate the purpose of his visit.
It’s baaaaaack! Yes, it’s the flu season again, and it’s striking with its usual mighty force. According to the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s latest FluView report entry on December 29th 2012, 29 states had reported more cases of the flu than previous years. Most of those states were on the east coast and in the midwest. This year, the particular flu viruses that are making the rounds are influenza A (H3N2), 2009 influenza A (H1N1) and influenza B. These are the viruses that cause the most distress to the body, unlike influenza C, which tends to be less severe.

To be prepared, there are a few things you can do to get your body’s immune system ready to keep those attacking germs from getting you down. The flu vaccine is always recommended. But you can take other measures to prevent succumbing to a virus that is looking for a host.

Here are a few recommendations to get your immune system in shape, and tips to avoid the invaders:

1. Don’t touch your face unless you have doused your hands in bleach: OK. We know you don’t want to douse your hands in bleach, so just don’t touch your face unless you’ve washed your hands thoroughly. Rubbing your nose or eyes with contaminated fingers is a sure way to allow bacteria and viruses to enter into your respiratory system. So, wash those hands well and for at least the amount of time it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song. If you’re in a public restroom, you may want to sing it to yourself silently.

2. Keep everything clean that your hands touch: This means keyboards, coffee pots, counters, phones, appliance handles… if your hands touch it, that means they can transmit the unseen viruses and bacteria that can cause the flu. See how important number 1 is?

3. Get your vitamin D levels checked and take a supplement if necessary: We’re hearing more and more about vitamin D deficiency. The latest summation that about one billion people in the world do not have sufficient vitamin D levels to prevent illness. According to Dr. Frank Lipman, vitamin D is essential for preventing disease and maintaining health. In this regard, you can get a simple blood test called a ‘25-hydroxy-vitamin D’ test to measure your level. See your physician and ask to have this test to learn if you are deficient. Your doctor can advise you as to the optimum levels of vitamin D to get your immune system in good order, and may just prescribe you spending at least 15 minutes a day outside getting some sunshine!

4. Use a neti pot on a daily basis: Never heard of a neti pot? It’s been used by yogis for thousands of years and is a wonderful way to gently irrigate your nasal passages with warm salt water. It looks like a tiny teapot with a spout that fits in your nostril. You fill the pot with lukewarm water and a salt mixture, then gently insert the spout into your nostril, turn your head sideways, let the water flush your nasal passage, letting all of that gunk buildup of environmental pollutants, pollen, mucus, viruses and bacteria float right out into the sink! You can actually buy the pre-made salt packets online at iHerb.com.

5. Get enough sleep: Sleep is so beneficial to the body. The recommendation continues to be at least seven to eight hours a night to allow your body time to heal from the onslaught of stress, pollutants and junk food from the day before. Recent research from Carnegie Mellon University found that habitual eight hour sleepers got sick only a third as much as those who slept less than seven hours.

6. Drink wheat grass juice regularly: Talk about a powerful immune boost! According to The Wheatgrass Book by Ann Wigmore, among the many positive effects wheatgrass has on the body includes relieving gastrointestinal tract ailments, and detoxifying the liver and bloodstream. And it may just stave off that nasty cold or flu virus that wants to invade your system.

If none of the above works and you do still get the flu, get plenty of rest, drink lots of clear fluids (no alcohol!) and ask your doctor about a prescription drug that can reduce the duration of the flu, like Tamiflu.

### You May Want to Know About:

**Postdoctoral Scholar Benefits Plan Changes for 2013**

- All birth control prescriptions will still be covered as they are currently, with the exception of implantable contraceptive devices. (For example, an IUD) on the HMO plan. These devices are now covered under the HMO plan.
- The dental HMO plan has lowered the cost of crowns to a maximum of $200.
- The dental PPO plan has now changed to a Point-of-Service (POS) plan. This will allow many postdocs to pay less when visiting the dentist.
- The percentage contribution amount required by a postdoc to pay for the HMO medical plan remained the same for plan year 2013. It had been scheduled to increase.
- The amount required for a postdoc to pay for the medical contribution for the PPO plan was lowered for plan year 2013.
- A transgender surgical benefit has been added.
- Select Plus (formerly Sittercity) has been added as a benefit.
- Effective April 1, 2013, the PSBP will terminate the last day of the month that a postdoc was active. As always, the postdoc may continue to stay enrolled in the plan under COBRA, but all premiums will be paid by the former postdoc.
Katja Weichsel is a physicist from Germany. She has been a postdoc member of the Cohen Atmospheric Chemistry Research Group at UC Berkeley for the past year. Katja is in the U.S. with her husband. She is also a physics postdoc in chemistry at UC Berkeley, has a 2 year old daughter and is pregnant with their second child. Together, the family is here for at least one more year, after which their current funding comes to an end.

Katja has greatly enjoyed her time in the U.S. so far. She loves Berkeley, and finds the people here open-minded and friendly. She enjoys the lack of judgementalism she has experienced in Berkeley, especially as she has become used to living with European prejudice against Germans, although she acknowledges that being white probably makes a difference to this experience in the U.S. When she gets homesick for a German way of doing things, she makes use of a playgroup for German mothers – although she notes that she is the only postdoc in the support group. The other members are all stay-at-home mothers with husbands who work at the university.

Katja works with the Berkeley Atmospheric CO2 Observation Network (BEACON), a project that is concerned to measure CO2 and air quality in urban areas. She has had an extremely positive work experience here, as a mother of a young child and as a pregnant woman. She speaks with gratitude and affection of her wonderfully supportive boss. She has flexibility in her hours, and also benefitted from his understanding in her first trimester, when she was quite ill. Group meetings are child-friendly, and altogether the work environment she describes sounds close to ideal for a working parent.

Katja joined the group as a postdoc in a part-time capacity, a job situation she said she was told would be impossible to find. She says that her experience has been that it is possible to do her work part-time: “It’s a myth that you have to put all your energy into your work to be successful”. But she agrees there’s pressure on women to look “serious” about their work, which means having to prioritize it over other things even if they could get the same amount of work done while retaining multiple focuses. She admits, “My group is super exceptional in its willingness to accommodate women with small children.”

At the same time, she plans to stop working when her second child is born. In Germany it is illegal to return to work in the first 2 months post-partum, so returning to work before then was never in her plan. “The good thing is, I’m not over-ambitious”, she laughs. At the same time, she spoke about the necessity of economic independence to her sense of self, and the importance of having the stimulation and alternative focus that working part-time gives her. Her husband is the family’s main bread winner and wants an academic career. For him, time with the new baby has to be sacrificed. He also feels he misses out on time with their daughter, Katja says.

We spoke about the personal implications if you want to be with your kids and so choose to break a career trajectory. “I totally understand women who prefer to put their kids in day care after six weeks rather than give up their whole lives forever,” Katja says. But we agreed that it shouldn’t be a situation where women have to choose one rather than the other. Katja says she feels strongly for women who are trapped by a system that is not really changing. Women who become professors continue to face really difficult choices about having to give up quality in either family or work life.

She also spoke about the importance of having a supportive partner. Because her husband is dependable and willing to take primary financial responsibility, Katja has more options as a part-time working mother. In managing to be at peace with having prioritized her family over her work, she has found a way – and an understanding and supportive work environment here at UC Berkeley – which enables her to achieve the balance she needs.

You can read more about Katja’s group and their project on their websites.

Katja is here for at least one more year, after which their current funding comes to an end.
San Francisco is known as “The City”, as opposed to Oakland, which is called “The Town”, and you’ll soon catch on to the difference.

Here you’ll spend a long time developing a new identity and it’s up to you to manage it as well as you can. No matter who you were before, from now on you’ll be The Spouse, The Partner, the “plus one” on all the invitations your husband or your wife will receive. There is a whole world created for you by UC Berkeley and it’s meant to make you feel at home.

If you are headed to UC Davis, UC Irvine, UC Los Angeles, UC Merced, UC Riverside or if your loved one is going to study and conduct research at UC San Diego, UC San Francisco, UC Santa Barbara or UC Santa Cruz, your joys and problems will be similar to those of Berkeley spouses and partners.

It won’t always be easy and you’ll mainly be on your own. After all, this is not your country, you may have left a very good job back home, you already miss your family and you are lost without the markets you know. Where can you buy good French cheese, or that special kimchi you like, or nice shoes? Where will you buy new clothes? Where are the doctors if you need them? Do you have to pay them? Which school are you going to send your children to? And most important, where are you going to make friends? How will you cope with all the different feelings you’ll experience during your stay? To whom are you going to talk when you feel happy or lonely or depressed? Is there anyone out there sharing your same experience?

Well, of course there is. I have walked this same path not so long ago and I know how you feel. And maybe I can help you.

Liliana Cardile is an Italian journalist living in Berkeley. She used to cover international political issues and cross-cultural topics for a well-known Italian weekly publication. She also traveled internationally, shooting TV documentaries, and worked on Italian TV as an anchorwoman.

Liliana met her husband in China where she was spending a sabbatical year learning Mandarin. Five days after their marriage, in 2008, she moved to the U.S. with him when her husband began a teaching career at UC Berkeley. In the Bay Area she became officially a “spouse” and her two children were born in Berkeley. She has always been focused on making the most of this experience.

I know now that many of the difficulties I encountered in the beginning of my time in California could have been avoided, if I had had the right advice and support. This column is meant to help the spouses, the wives and husbands and the domestic partners living in all UC campuses who moved to California following their loved ones. If you’d like to ask a question, propose a topic, share a concern, get advice, discuss an issue related to your new existence or just feel less lonely, email Love, Liliana at vspa@berkeley.edu. Together we can create a virtual community on the pages of this newsletter. Please send me your inquires or comments.

Love, Liliana

You're going to UC San Diego?

How did you get the position of Vice Chancellor for Research at UC San Diego?

As a senior professor, with over 20 years of service in two departments – psychiatry and psychology here at UC San Diego – and extensive administrative experience, I had competitive qualifications for the position when it came open, and I was excited by the challenge.

Have you ever worked with postdocs before?

Yes, I’ve helped over three dozen postdoctoral scholars move on to successful careers – one of the more satisfying aspects of my career as a faculty member and an administrator. I myself have been a postdoc as well of course. But I have to say things are very different now from the time I was a PhD.

In which way?

The market has changed, becoming increasingly competitive. Postdocs need to be excellent researchers. They also need to learn the practical skills necessary to find financing for their research, whether that financing is from a federal agency or an industry partner. This is not new. However, in the past, postdocs had the luxury of learning on the job. The time to learn these practical skills has definitely shifted to “during the postdoc period”. This is why the postdoc training at UC San Diego takes two different tracks. One trains the academic in how to run a lab and be a leader in research. The other involves learning how to work in the private sector.

What changes would you like to see in the postdoc experience at UC San Diego?

We’re working very hard on their behalf to expand opportunities in training and career development, participation in innovative programs and encouraging more effective mentoring through use of Individual Development Plans (IDPs), new awards, and recognition programs. Examples are the new Excellence in Postdoctoral Mentoring award, the postdoctoral research award, and travel grants.

Liliana Cardile interviews Sandra Brown, Vice Chancellor for Research, UC San Diego

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How did you get the position of Vice Chancellor for Research at UC San Diego?

As a senior professor, with over 20 years of service in two departments – psychiatry and psychology here at UC San Diego – and extensive administrative experience, I had competitive qualifications for the position when it came open, and I was excited by the challenge.

Have you ever worked with postdocs before?

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What’s the annual budget for postdocs at UC San Diego? Do you plan to increase it and how?
This is hard to say as there is no single source of funds. We have about two dozen federally funded postdoc training programs, however many postdoctoral fellows are paid on individual grants or through clinical programs. We are constantly looking to increase funding for our postdocs.

Talk about the challenge of increasing financial support for postdocs.
We are actively working to develop a diversified and integrated plan of support, looking at all public and private sources. We believe that support for postdocs should, under some formula, recognize the significant contributions they make to their labs, our university, and society in general.

What do you think is the specific enrichment that postdocs’ presence offers to San Diego campus life?
I am proud to say that postdocs are the heart of innovation and creativity at UC San Diego. They are the source of the most adventurous ideas. They add freshness and vitality to research here. And they are mentors to graduate and undergraduate students and help educate the next generation of scientists.

What are the main duties of your position?
The Vice Chancellor for Research provides value-added services that help our scholars and scientists compete for, win, and administer grants; streamlines administrative processes; oversees key research collaborations; helps speed discoveries to the marketplace; builds partnerships with industry and other institutions; and helps bring the next generation of researchers into our classrooms and labs. Additionally, since many postdocs move into business careers, we have started a new training series that focuses on practical skills and application of their expertise to the broader business and commercial sector.

What’s the demographic of postdocs at UC San Diego?
Over the course of the year, we had 1200-1300 postdoctoral scholars. This number includes 50% in health sciences, 42% on the general campus and 8% at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography. 65% are foreign. A third of our postdocs are women.

Who’s directly in charge of postdocs in campus?
Postdocs are academic researchers; therefore, they are under my authority. In terms of administration, Jennifer Oh is the Director of Academic Research Personnel and she oversees the administrative unit that handles postdoctoral policies, appointments, benefits, services, training, and career development (see pg. 1 for input from Ms. Oh on her work at UCSD).

What do you think are the main issues for postdocs at UC San Diego?
Preparing for and finding jobs. With the lack of available academic positions and the challenges of getting grant funding, postdocs are increasingly looking at other career paths. It would be prudent to prepare our postdocs for careers inside and outside academia and across all occupational sectors.

What about the role of postdocs in contributing to diversity at UC San Diego?
Our many international postdocs bring their cultural identity and customs with them when they come to San Diego, which gives our other students a taste of the international academic environment. Learning about other cultures helps one grow as a researcher and as a person.

What do you think about the “broken pipeline” theory, and how do you plan to help women postdocs in pursuing their careers while being mothers?
I think that flexibility and appreciation are the keys to these issues. Progressive universities need to be ready to adapt, and to pursue new models of work-life and home-life, to ensure a healthy kind of balance in our lives. The policies that we have in place support time off for maternity/paternity leave, and recalibration of postdoctoral time due to maternity/paternity leave. Starting on January 1, 2013, UC Postdoctoral Scholar Benefits Program provides access to Sittercity services. The Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs has offered workshops, supported organizations, and shared information on this topic.

What help does the university provide to spouses and partners of postdocs?
Help for spouses and partners has been limited in the past, and I think many of us agree that we need to be more aggressive and forward-thinking about this issue. I think we all recognize that every postdoctoral scholar is a resource and a key to our future. In terms of finding jobs, they can contact the Partner Opportunities Program website. For the spouses of our foreign postdocs, the International Center has various activities and resources to help with transition and acclimation. If they are suffering emotionally or psychologically from the move, they can speak to counselors at the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program free of charge.

What’s the role of the union in postdoc issues?
The UAW is the exclusive representative of postdocs for the purposes of collective bargaining with respect to wages, hours, and terms and conditions of employment. The postdoc union is new at UC San Diego and we are learning to work with them in a new way, with the common goal of bettering the working conditions (see pg. 11 for more from the UCSD Union).

What kind of support services do you have for postdocs?
The Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs supports postdocs on many levels. In career development, we offer training and development seminars and symposiums, one-on-one career counseling, and we create partnerships to provide or access other
career development opportunities. We facilitate insurance enrollment and assist in resolving issues and disputes. We work with various campus offices on postdoctoral issues (for example, access to housing, parking, or ID cards). We work closely with the International Scholars Office to resolve visa and funding source issues. Through the UC Office of the President, we offer a fellowship, the UC Presidential Postdoc. We also provide a postdoctoral training certificate, and review and approve NIH LRP applications. We support and advise the Postdoctoral Association (PDA), and provide financial and administrative support to PDA activities (for more on the activities of the PDA at UCSD, see pp. 3, 4, and 5).

Does UC San Diego help postdocs find jobs, elsewhere or on campus?  
Yes, we do. All options are considered in our training programs for postdocs, in an effort to ease and optimize their transition to the next step in their careers. There are formal resources available in our Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs as well as personal assistance provided by each mentor. We take this responsibility of career advising and assistance very seriously.

How many chances are there for postdocs to join the faculty staff at the San Diego campus?  
Opportunities still exist at UC San Diego, based on research results and excellence. However, there are also many other research opportunities in San Diego. UCSD’s postdocs are well trained to make a difference, whether here in the U.S. or back in their home country.

Improvements in Health Care  
Working together with UC, we were able to secure a series of improvements to our plan, including new healthcare benefits, enhanced dental coverage, and access to a childcare referral service (see “To Your Vitality!” in this issue for more details). In accordance with the initial UC and UAW contract, the Postdoc contribution to the HMO remains at 2% and 3% (depending on dependant coverage) for

the next three years. In this regard, we are pleased to report that we have a productive working relationship with the UC and proud we could achieve a higher-quality plan for the same or lower rates.

Supporting Education and Research Funding for UC  
Early in 2012, we recognized that the results of November’s election would have a major impact on the issues most important to our members, from education and research funding to visa and immigration policy and more. In the spring we began working to identify pro-science, pro-education candidates and propositions. In the weeks leading up the election, UAW members and friends put in over 250 volunteer shifts, for a total of 1,000 hours, to support the candidates and causes we believed in. Specifically, we helped pass Propositions 30 and 39, which provide crucial funding to UC. Overall, 49 of the 53 pro-science candidates we endorsed were elected – a 93% success rate!

Building Political Support for Federal Science Funding  
Over the past year, the federal research funding that supports UC has been perilously close to being cut. To protect our members and our work, we began a sustained campaign to educate Congress on the value of federally-funded research.

We started with a petition, which over 4,000 postdocs signed. UAW 5810 members then met with their local Congressional Representatives to present the signatures and ask them to sign a letter to the federal budget office requesting an increase in research funding. Because of our activism, 21 members of the California congressional delegation signed that letter, and we now have 21 allies in Congress who understand our issue and are willing to advocate on our behalf.

The Road Ahead  
In 2013, UAW 5810 will continue to advocate for postdocs, help to resolve workplace problems, and hopefully, win new rights and improvements to our benefits and pay such as increasing the NIH NRSA stipend levels that determine our minimum salary scale.

By becoming involved, you help to improve our working conditions, increase science funding for UC, and more. If you have any questions, please contact your union (UAW 5810) at (510) 845-5726 or by email at uaw5810@uaw5810.org.