With over 40,000 undergraduate and graduate students, UCLA has the highest enrollment in the UC and hosts one of the largest postdoc communities as a whole in California. This year, there are roughly 1,600 postdocs at UCLA, about 60% of whom are international, a number likely to rise in the years to come if the appointment statistics from previous years are an indicator. It is especially exciting for the UC Postdoc Newsletter to report on the recent developments regarding postdoc affairs at UCLA, as UCLA lies at the forefront in offering services and resources to its postdocs.

For most administrative purposes, postdocs at UCLA are housed in the Graduate Division. The exception is visa matters, which fall under the auspices of the Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars (DCISS). In the last few years, the Graduate Division has created a wide range of initiatives to benefit its postdocs. Robin Garrell, Dean and Vice Provost of the Graduate Division, is genuinely enthusiastic when she speaks about postdocs at UCLA. She feels proud, and rightly so, of the positive developments that have enhanced the postdoc experience at UCLA, and for which she and her colleagues in the Graduate Division are largely responsible. In 2013, UCLA organized 23 career and professional development events open to postdocs, while in 2014, that number was reached during the fall quarter alone. Another source of pride for Dean Garrell is the California Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate, a project co-run by UCLA, Stanford University, Caltech, and UC Berkeley, and funded by the National Science Foundation. The Alliance offers leadership and professional development opportunities for graduate students and postdocs from underrepresented groups on a cross-campus basis.

Dean Garrell recognizes the virtues of having cross-unit collaboration and a central informational hub in the vast and, in many ways, decentralized bureaucracy that is UCLA. She explains that the Graduate Division works closely with a number of other units, including the Career Center and the Society of Postdoctoral Scholars (SoPS). Dean Garrell is particularly pleased with a new professional development website for graduate students and postdocs. With this new website, postdocs and graduate students now have, in one place, access to information on all events regarding professional and career development organized by many UCLA departments and units. In addition, the site provides valuable information on individual development plans (IDPs) for postdocs.

The journey from being a young nerd dreaming of a serendipitous cure for diabetes to facing reality as a fourth year postdoc at UCLA has been filled with interesting challenges so far. Coming all the way from India with just 2 suitcases (bursting with Indian groceries), I entered my Ph.D. program aiming to win the Nobel Prize. But I soon realized that academia lacked an entrepreneurial spirit, and so I transferred from a two year postdoc at Louisiana to UCLA last year in search of greener pastures. True to the saying, the grass is greener here! UCLA has been intellectually stimulating, collaborative and entrepreneurial. I have always believed in a healthy balance between academic and extracurricular activities. As a UC postdoc, I have never been at a dearth of ideas for my own work. But my rich life as a postdoc does not stop here. I got to join the Society of Postdoctoral Scholars at UCLA, which has been a great and rewarding experience. I am able to exercise my love for mentoring through this collegial group of postdocs to make the postdoc experience at UCLA an incubator for their careers. For the sake of brevity, I will refrain from praising the beauty and diversity of UCLA and its enriching culture.

All this I have done concomitantly with my research, where I am studying the role of neuropeptides in Multiple Sclerosis. At UCLA, I get to know about the latest research in all fields, which is a huge source of ideas for my own work. But my rich life as a postdoc does not stop here. I got to join the Society of Postdoctoral Scholars at UCLA, which has a great and rewarding experience. I am able to exercise my love for mentoring through this collegial group of postdocs to make the postdoc experience at UCLA an incubator for their careers. For the sake of brevity, I will refrain from praising the beauty and diversity of UCLA and its enriching culture.

My ending words for UCLA postdocs resonate with a quote by the great Albus Dumbledore from Harry Potter: “Help will be given at Hogwarts to those who ask for it.” I can say that I have got more than what I asked for at UCLA!
I am more than delighted to take on the role as Editor-in-Chief of the UC Postdoc Newsletter, especially since I myself was a postdoc at UC Berkeley’s Institute of European Studies (2012–2014). With this as a backstory, I hope to build on the great work done by my predecessors in reporting on postdoc-related matters on all ten UC campuses.

As you may already know, these are very exciting times to be a postdoc and to be working with postdocs. This is a period whereby we at UC are presented with new challenges and opportunities. As you will see, more and more key actors in UC are cognizant that postdocs have reached a critical point in being recognized as the research engine of UC. As a result, there are now many thriving associations and societies run by postdocs themselves on several UC campuses, including UCSF’s Postdoctoral Scholars Association, UCSD’s Society of Postdoctoral Scholars, UCI’s Postdoctoral Association, UCLA’s Postdoctoral Scholars Association, UCLA’s Society of Postdoctoral Scholars, UCI’s Postdoctoral Association, UCSD’s Postdoctoral Association, and the Berkeley Postdoctoral Association. Furthermore, as of 2008, UC postdocs are unionized and represented by the United Auto Workers union. Another important example is that career centers and other units on many UC campuses are working together to offer postdocs the same or similar tools and resources that they offer to graduate students. All these developments signal that postdocs are becoming more integrated with their sponsoring UC campus. This issue of the UC Newsletter aims to report on these significant developments for the benefit of postdocs, faculty and staff.

As returning readers know, each issue highlights a particular UC campus. The campus in focus in this issue is UCLA which hosts one of the largest communities of postdocs in UC of which around 60% are international. Readers will be introduced to the key players who are international. Readers will be introduced to the key players who

For the past two years, I’ve had the pleasure of working as Editor-in-Chief for the UC Postdoc Newsletter. I came to the job of editing this newsletter from the University of Cape Town in South Africa, where I was a professor in the English Department, and then a senior researcher at the Institute for the Humanities in Africa. I knew a lot about what it meant to be faculty in the humanities, and very little about what it was like to be a postdoctoral or visiting scholar in the sciences. I had no idea how hard it is to get a foot in the door for young scholars starting out in the American academy, especially now, after the economic downturn. I have learned a lot about the challenges faced by the postdoc and visiting scholar population in the UC system.

The academy is highly demanding in this country, more so than in any other I know, and I do have some international experience. The challenges faced by women are, if anything, worse than elsewhere, given this country’s fairly brutal attitude to maternal rights and family support, in tandem with the tenure track system here. I have loved seeing how the UC system is responding to this particular challenge by making childcare available or affordable, or by offering social support networks, depending on the campus. I still don’t envy women who want both academic careers and families in the U.S.

From my own experience, I had some frustrations about what I increasingly experienced as the gap between the world of the academy and the society around me. This picture has been complicated for me: it’s not just that the university as an institution remains responsible for its relevance outside its own milieu; for scholars in the American academy, you also face the urgent reality that there are not enough jobs to meet the desire for academic work from newly-minted PhDs. In the sciences, a lot of energy is going into making industry jobs an option, and I have been struck by the identity-remaking that this entails. Young scientists do not only have to learn how to present themselves to other sectors, they also have to learn how to think of themselves differently. I think there is enormous potential for growth of all kinds in this situation, both personal and institutional. I remember hearing English Literature doyenne Elaine Showalter speak in London just over ten years ago. She said then that the academy needed to radically reconsider its requirements for an English PhD, that we...
Thrivein Science organizes and facilitates small peer-support groups for graduate students, or postdocs. Troy met Diane in graduate school at the University of Michigan in 2004. They are now married. Both are single-molecule biophysicists, but currently work in different labs. Both Troy and Diane have experienced professional challenges, and witnessed the adverse psychological and professional effects they have had on them, giving them an insight into the close connection between good mental health, well-being and a thriving career. These insights, in turn, sparked a real interest in Diane and Troy to understand the challenges that a number of postdoc couples at UC campuses ask themselves daily in some form or another. The UC Postdoc Newsletter has interviewed four of these couples and is thrilled to relate their stories. The four couples are: Troy Lionberger and Diane Wiener from UC Berkeley, Hanne Hoffman and Aitor Aguirre from UC San Diego, Ann Lin and Fred Beasley from UC San Diego, and finally, Fatma Yildiz Tascikaraoglu and Akin Tascikaraoglu from UC Berkeley.

All four couples met at their university, either as undergraduates, or graduate students, or postdocs. Troy met Diane in graduate school at the University of Michigan in 2004. They are now married. Both are single-molecule biophysicists, but currently work in different labs. Both Troy and Diane have experienced professional challenges, and witnessed the adverse psychological and professional effects they have had on them, giving them an insight into the close connection between good mental health, well-being and a thriving career. As a result, Troy and Diane recently launched a new program at UC Berkeley called Thriving in Science. Thriving in Science organizes and facilitates small peer-support groups for graduate students and postdocs in the physical and life sciences. Thriving in Science aims to help young scholars realize that well-being and non-academic career paths are integral and legitimate parts of scientific research. Thriving in Science is currently sponsored by the California Institute for Quantitative Biosciences (QB3) and the Visiting Scholar and Postdoc Affairs Program both located at UC Berkeley.

Fatma and Akin, who are from Turkey, met each other while they were both undergraduate students. Fatma and Akin were both research assistants at Yildiz Technical University in Istanbul, but they are currently postdocs in the Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences Department at UC Berkeley. While they were students, Fatma and Akin “started to spend our whole time together until I went to Japan for my Ph.D. studies for six months. After this period we [saw] that we [would] like to spend the rest of our lives together,” Fatma says.

Ann met her fiancé Fred in a lab on the sunny UC San Diego campus in 2012. They were both researching, and are continuing to research, host/pathogen interactions and preclinical drug evaluation. At the time they met, Fred had been a postdoc in the lab for a year. When Ann joined Victor Nizet’s lab as a postdoc, she was initially assigned bench space in the main lab. But then entered Fred, who “convinced Ann to claim a bench in the satellite lab where I was working. It marked the first time anyone had voluntarily moved from the main lab to the satellite,” he said, with a hint that perhaps he wanted Ann to come to his lab for more than the scientific expertise she would bring. Recently, Fred has begun another postdoc appointment at the California Institute for Biomedical Research, where he is conducting research that will hopefully lead to “drug discovery for neglected tropical diseases.” Ann still works in Nizet’s lab, where she works on Streptococcal and urinary tract infections. “[T]his is the first time I have worked apart from him ever since we met,” Ann explains, and continues: “It has been weird without my ‘personal advisor,’ but luckily, I still get to ask for his opinion at home since he is quite familiar with my project.” Fred, in turn, focuses on the positive effects that working apart will have on their relationship: “I’m very glad we had a few years to work together but it’s probably for the best that we now work apart. We moved in together at the start of 2014, and marriage is not so distant on the horizon; and you just can’t spend 24 hours a day with your partner. That’s a formula for derailing a relationship.”

Hanne, who is Danish, met her husband Aitor, who is Spanish, at the University of the Basque Country in Bilbao, Spain. They are now married, and both postdocs in their fourth year at UC San Diego.

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In late October 2014, Dr. Belinda Huang, the Executive Director of the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA), visited the Bay Area to confirm that the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco will be the site of NPA’s 2017 15th annual meeting. She spoke with UC Berkeley postdocs at a luncheon held at the Bancroft Hotel on October 16, 2014, and delivered a lecture on campus in the evening. The lunch saw the participation of around 15 postdocs and representatives from the Berkeley Postdoctoral Association (BPA), the Humanities and Social Sciences Association, the Career Center, and the Visiting Scholar and Postdoc Affairs Program (VSPA). Dr. Huang invited all participants to discuss the current issues currently facing the postdoc community. She emphasized the importance of this discussion, since the NPA forms its policies and conducts its advocacy through direct input from postdocs. The discussion was rich and addressed a variety of issues.

Dermot Donelly, President of the BPA, mentioned the recent postdoc housing survey conducted by the BPA and the VSPA. Everyone at the luncheon echoed the results of the survey, which boiled down to the fact that finding affordable and decent housing has been a very difficult experience for UC Berkeley postdocs. The UC Berkeley higher administration has been very responsive to the results of the survey. The Assistant Vice Chancellor for Real Estate, for instance, is now considering building housing designated specifically for postdocs. Another hot topic arose in connection to stipends and salaries. Dr. Huang pointed out that the NPA has been advocating for a rise in the minimum stipend for ten years. She asked the postdocs what they proposed as a minimum stipend or salary. Most believed that the increased NIH minimum stipend is still insufficient for postdocs living in the Bay Area. They would much rather see a minimum stipend or salary adjusted to regional living costs.

At this point in the conversation, a contrast was made to careers outside of academia. The postdocs at the luncheon pointed out that they could make well over $100,000/year if they pursued non-academic careers. Dr. Huang was interested in knowing how research universities help their postdocs with exploring these non-academic careers. However, the postdocs in attendance did not feel that they were receiving much support from their departments in this regard. Dr. Huang referred to a recent survey conducted by the National Science Foundation, which found that only 10-15% of postdocs in the United States believe that their departments provide them with information and opportunities for pursuing non-academic careers. The survey also found that only 15% of postdocs in science, engineering, and medicine will be able to attain academic careers. Thus, Dr. Huang believes it is important for all postdocs to explore additional career options. The NPA is having a Career Connections event this year at their Annual Meeting to help postdocs connect to careers outside of academia. One postdoc at the luncheon mentioned that the Department of Chemistry sends out industrial recruitment emails to graduate students, but not to postdocs. The postdocs did, however, appreciate on-campus initiatives from QB3, the BPA, the VPSA and Beyond Academia, which they felt provide postdocs with alternative career opportunities.

Dr. Huang is an advocate of the importance of using big data to improve the postdoctoral experience. At the 2015 NPA annual meeting in Baltimore, there will be a discussion about NPA’s recently published Institutional Policy Report and the National Academies of Science Report. Using data from these reports and new studies on postdocs and graduate students will improve funding strategies, career tracking, advocacy, and postdoc outcomes. Big data, and quantification more generally, have become major tools with which administrators and organizations such as the NPA drive their reforms, advocacy, and policies. At a recent Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) meeting, which Dr. Huang attended, deans of graduate schools across the country expressed a desire to see the value of the Ph.D. quantified, so that prospective employers can better gauge what skills a Ph.D. holder can bring to any given job. To this end, the CGS is launching a career pathway study in order to track the employment trajectories of graduate students and postdocs. The results of this study will enable graduate deans to improve their curricula by addressing career tracks outside of academia.

In the evening, Dr. Huang delivered a lecture in Stanley Hall on “Opportunities, Leadership and Finding Your Own Career Path." Based on her impressive career trajectory, which includes seven career paths, Dr. Huang extended useful lessons to the audience of postdocs. Dr. Huang distilled what she had learned from each of her jobs. For example, she learned that diversity extends beyond race and gender into social class while working with low-income children at Oakland Technical High School. As a marketing agent at the Consulting Psychologists Press, she learned about the organizational structure of private companies. While working as the first Asian American career counselor serving students the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Huang learned a great deal about investment banking, consulting, and real estate, since those are the career paths which students of the Wharton School would pursue.

Dr. Huang spoke of a turning point in her life: when her fifteen-month old daughter was diagnosed with microcephaly, a condition that can lead to intellectual disability, forcing Dr. Huang to reconsider her work/life balance. For three years, she decided to abstain from work since she had to take her daughter to various appointments six times a week. After three years, she missed all the intellectual challenges she had grown used to in her various careers—not least
as the person who developed the Student Affairs Program at the Wharton School. She found that she could not commit to the typical everyday requirements of a job, but that did not deter her from finding professional fulfillment: “I couldn’t fit the structure so I created my own structure.” She decided to create a leadership workshop for Asian American women college students on her own time, and offered it to universities across the country. Before she knew it, she had offered the workshop at many institutions, including San Jose State University, Northwestern University, and Amherst College.

After teaching courses on Asian American Studies at UC Berkeley and gaining a doctorate in higher education administration, education policy from the University of Maryland, Dr. Huang landed her current job as Executive Director of the NPA. Dr. Huang outlined the structure of the NPA, telling the audience that the NPA advocates for an increase of the NIH minimum stipend, works for equitable and sufficient benefits, provides resources, helps community building, collects data, and has developed mentoring resources (Mentoring Up) with colleagues from San Jose State University, Northwestern University and the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

So, what has Dr. Huang learned from her career that she wishes to impart to postdocs? In short, that postdocs should be “versatile, resilient and innovative.” In her twenty years in higher education, Dr. Huang successively built on the skills she had learned from her previous career, thus making her skill set highly versatile. Dr. Huang’s trajectory has not been straightforward, and she has endured rejection, failure and very difficult personal circumstances. But in all these adversities, she has remained resilient, never losing focus on what she wanted in life, which has paid off in the long run. Finally, many of her jobs have required skills for which she had no formal training. For instance, when she became Executive Director of the NPA, Dr. Huang had no experience managing a non-profit budget. Her versatility and resilience, however, gave her the confidence to innovate herself and learn about budget management on the job. As a result, she now feels fully comfortable managing the NPA budget.

Dr. Huang ended her lecture on an inspirational note, signaling that postdocs have a bright future in sight. She gave numerous examples of postdocs who have become leaders: “the Chancellor of UC Berkeley Nicholas Dirks, the Provost of the University of Maryland Mary Ann Rankin, President Shirley Ann Jackson of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and the President of Howard University Wayne A.I. Frederick, have all been postdocs.” Her last comment was that postdocs are our future leaders in academia, industry and non-profits — and current postdocs should develop themselves in all areas for the many directions their careers will take them.

To Keep Trying to Make Improvements:

From the perspective of the Labor Relations unit within the UC Office of the President (UCOP), postdocs are a somewhat complex matter. For instance, well over 50% of all postdocs are international, which means that they are on visas, which, in turn, has implications for their employment status. Postdocs, as another example, also receive funding from a variety of different sources, which has consequences for their employment status, as well as their health insurance funding. Nadine Fishel, Assistant Director of Labor Relations at UCOP, says that this intricacy gives rise to a lot of interesting issues. Fishel is chief negotiator for various bargaining units, including the postdoc unit, meaning that she is responsible for negotiating the contract between UC and UAW Local 5810, the postdoc union.

Fishel explains that UC cares a lot about its postdocs: “we want them to have an excellent experience, go out into the world of research and do great things.” The University wants to promote their success by offering the best resources and opportunities for their professional development, within funding means.

After a year and half of negotiations between UAW and UC, in 2010, one of the first stand-alone contracts in the United States between a postdoc union and a university was ratified. Since the contract has been the doctrine governing terms and conditions of employment, Fishel’s job has been to administer it, and that includes a variety of tasks, such as handling grievances and arbitration hearings, as well as being the point person for clarifying the meaning of the contract language. If UAW and UC disagree on the meaning of a paragraph, Fishel will be called to provide UC’s official interpretation, which could then be used at a hearing.

Four years into the five-year postdoc contract, Fishel believes this first contract has served both parties well. She says that UC and UAW have a good professional working relationship which includes treating each other with dignity and respect, even if the two parties take adversarial roles at the bargaining table. Since the postdoc contract is one of the first of its kind in the nation, UC has had to learn and adapt along the way to manage new issues and improve practices in the framework of the contract. “The key is to keep trying to make improvements within reason and funding,” says Fishel. One recent issue that exemplifies this positive attitude was the grievance over the Postdoc Scholar Benefit Plans (PSBS), where a number of postdocs at UC Berkeley were informed that if they enrolled in plans stipulated in the postdoc contract, they would have to pay for them. Consequently, some did pay for them and others opted out. A settlement was eventually reached, which Fishel fully supports. She says the University wants
QUESTION:
Dear Adam,

I am a male international postdoc from Brazil at UC San Francisco and I need your help with a personal matter.

Recently, I met a very nice woman from Peru who was visiting the Bay Area on a tourist visa. Believe it or not, we fell in love almost immediately. It’s been 60 days since she entered the U.S. to begin her tourist stay and according to her single entry B-2 non-immigrant visa, she can stay for 30 days more. Because we do not want to separate, I was wondering how to go about extending her tourist stay in the U.S. for another 90 days. This will then give me a chance to evaluate if I should marry her.

But here’s the big question: If I do marry her, how can she stay with me during my postdoc research stay which was granted for two more years on my J-1 visa? And more importantly, if we decide to postpone the marriage until a year from now, is there any way she can stay while we figure things out?

I know this is complicated, but so is love. Hoping you can help me.

Best wishes,

A Love-Fixated Postdoc from UC San Francisco

ANSWER:

Usually a person admitted to the United States from Peru as a B-2 tourist is admitted for six months. A person that is admitted for only 90 days, however, is likely to be from one of the 38 Visa Waiver countries. People admitted from one of the Visa Waiver countries are admitted for 90 days but without the possibility of their stay being extended or a change of visa status being granted to them while in the U.S. Your friend is from Peru, and Peru is not one of the Visa Waiver countries, so she can only apply for an extension of stay of her B-2 status.

It is quite simple to apply for an extension of her B-2 visa, but Immigration requires a compelling reason in order for them to grant it. In order to extend her stay, she can go to www.uscis.gov and complete Form I-539 and pay $290. The filing instructions are on the website. She will have to answer how long she would like to extend her stay and will need to decide on a date of departure, as well as submit evidence that she has sufficient funds to remain in the United States through that date. She may request to extend her stay for up to six months, but U.S. Immigration will ultimately decide the length that she will be granted.

If you become a U.S. citizen and marry the Peruvian woman, you may sponsor her for a green card without her having to leave the United States. You can go to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services website and read the filing instructions for the green card process. The filing fee is $1,490. A few days after filing on her behalf, you will receive receipts in the mail. The receipts establish her ability to remain in the U.S. until the green card interview at the local Immigration office. Normally, the green card interview occurs approximately four to eight months after the filing. Immigration will want to establish that you entered into the marriage for love and not simply to help the Peruvian woman obtain her green card by “beating the system” so to speak. On the other hand, if you only have a green card, and you have married her and sponsored her for permanent residence, it will take about a year and a half to two years for her to receive the green card.

If she is only your girlfriend and you are not a U.S. citizen, her legal stay will be limited to the length of time that she is in B-2 visa status. However, if you are in J-1 status and marry her, she is entitled to be your dependent in J-2 status and eligible for work permission. The spouse of an H-1B postdoc is entitled to H-4 status but not to work permission; however, President Obama has indicated that he might permit H-4 spouses to receive work permission. If you do not marry her but she wishes to stay, she could potentially enroll in a full course of study and change her visa status to that of an F-1 student or become a J visa researcher or student in order to remain in the United States.

The Law Offices of Adam Green specializes in representation of postdoctoral scholars, especially their particular immigration issues including H visas, E visas, green cards and J visa waivers. If you have questions regarding the above information, obtaining work permission, or green cards, Adam is available for a free chat via email at adamgreen@earthlink.net. You may also call him at 323-852-6135.

To Keep Trying to Make Improvements:

UC POSTDOC RELATIONS

all its scholars to have good and affordable health insurance. The Postdocs have an excellent benefits plan. Fishel believes that until problems such as these are brought up, things are likely to remain status quo. It is because this particular problem was brought up and addressed that UC now has a robust set of measures which ensure that postdocs are informed about their rights to benefits.

This year, UC, with Fishel as chief negotiator, and UAW will sit down at the bargaining table to negotiate a new contract, as the current contract ends in September 30, 2015. Fishel foresees a good discussion and a number of improvements to the current contract, given that it is a successor to the first contract. She expects the union to bring up problems regarding postdoc housing and childcare, while UC will seek to clarify and shore up the contract language on both economic and non-economic issues. Postdoc career and professional development is a likely subject for bargaining, since both UC and UAW agree on the need to provide postdocs with the best resources and opportunities to ensure the success of postdocs in a highly competitive job market.

“Labor Relations is an ongoing relationship. The parties need to work together to find solutions that benefit both sides,” Fishel says, summing up the nature of labor relations. “Research plays a major role in the University’s mission and as such, postdocs are an integral part of UC’s success,” she concludes.
Seasonal Healthy Eating

By Joan Garnett, Garnett Powers and Associates (GPA), the health and welfare insurance broker for UC postdocs

It’s that time of year that we all so enjoy, when the temperature has dropped, people are bundling up by the fireplace, and there is a bounty of vegetables and fruits that come with the winter season to tempt our palate. Life is good!

The season for watermelon, peaches and plums is past, and we miss them. But the time to eat squash, cranberries, pumpkin, apples and pears is here, as well as a variety of other delicious, healthy seasonal treats.

Winter brings us a variety of fruits and vegetables rich in protective vitamins, carotenoids and phytonutrients that can enrich our diet and promote a healthy lifestyle. It’s all about creating the colors of the rainbow on our plates to not only please the eye, but to also please our bodies with the richness of the nutrition found in the winter bounty. The following are some of my favorite vegetables and fruits that are in season in December and January that can not only add variety and good flavor to your meals, but also give your body what it needs for optimal performance and health:

1. **Broccoli:** Not everyone is hot on broccoli; but when you consider the benefits of eating this hearty beauty of the vegetable family, it makes sense to include it in your diet. High in fiber and rich in antioxidants, studies at Johns Hopkins University have shown that consuming broccoli may fight stomach cancer and ulcers. I like to quick boil broccoli for about two minutes, let it cool, and cut it up, primarily the florets, and use it in salads. It’s beautiful, sweet and crunchy served this way. Broccoli is a great source of vitamin C, which we need to aid the immune system in fighting viruses and bacteria.

2. **Cranberries:** Tart, tangy and tasty, these little nutritional powerhouses are delicious in salads and as an accompaniment to many meat dishes. Like broccoli, cranberries are a great source of vitamin C, as well as vitamin A and fiber. If eaten regularly, or consumed as juice, they have a well-known and much respected benefit of helping to prevent urinary tract infections. They can be eaten dried, canned or in juice form, and are also available in supplement form.

3. **Chard:** A multi-colored gem full of phytochemicals, studies have shown that chard may help prevent certain cancers. It is sweet and easy to chop up to add to your favorite salad, or to sauté with garlic and onions for a super healthy side dish.

4. **Squash:** I used to think the butternut variety were just pretty, odd shaped pumpkins. Then, when I finally learned how to prepare them, I fell in love with their richness, as well as their nutritious value. One cup of cooked winter squash offers 214 percent of the recommended daily value of vitamin A and 33 percent of vitamin C. I particularly enjoy spaghetti squash, a long yellow squash that, once cooked, yields several cups of noodle-like flesh that can be eaten with any type of spaghetti sauce and truly tastes like you’re eating pasta! I scoop out the flesh and serve it with a garlic tomato sauce, topped with parmesan cheese. My husband loves it because it tastes so good and is gluten-free.

**Recipes:**

Following are a few links to recipes to take advantage of the bountiful fall harvest to enjoy tasty meals and enhance your nutritional intake!

- Pear and Cranberry Crisp
- Butternut Squash Soup
- Sweet Potato Bars

support and manage postdocs at UCLA, the many exciting services and resources UCLA offers, and some of the challenges that are facing these young researchers.

One initiative that I am personally thrilled about is the first step towards giving a voice and forum to all those postdocs who conduct research in the humanities and social sciences. Though a minority group in the nation of postdocs, they are an important community of scholars whose contributions are vital for a healthy democratic society and critical thinking. Postdocs in the humanities and social sciences are in just as much need of help as postdocs in the STEM fields to further their research and careers. UCLA, in particular, through the Visiting Scholar and Postdoc Affairs Program, has concretely recognized the significance of postdocs, visiting scholars, graduate students and graduate student researchers in the humanities and...
social sciences in 2013 by creating the Humanities and Social Sciences Association (HSSA). To this regard, I have been president of the HSSA since August 2013, and I am proud of the progress we have made since then. The HSSA has organized numerous professional and academic development and social events, and has been praised by both the community it serves and the higher administration to which it reports. As the article on UCLA in this issue shows, there is also desire at UCLA as well to institutionally recognize postdocs in the humanities and social sciences, which is why talks have begun over whether an UC-wide committee for these researchers can be formed in the near future.

In addition to reporting on developments at UCLA, this issue of the UC Postdoc Newsletter will cover postdoc-related developments at the UC Office of the President Labor Relations, feature stories on what it is like to be a UC postdoc whose partner or spouse is also a UC postdoc, and a report on National Postdoctoral Association’s Executive Director Belinda Huang’s recent visit to UC Berkeley and Stanford University. Finally, this issue contains immigration attorney Adam Green’s recurring column, Dear Adam, where he answers an immigration-related question from a member of the postdoc community. Plus there’s the health and wellness article by Joan Garnett of Garnett Powers & Associates, which manages the postdoc health insurance for all ten UC campuses.

REFLECTIONS

from Outgoing Editor Natasha Distiller

were churning out students who were being made to jump through hoops that had no value beyond a narrow definition of tenure track requirements. Even then, she was saying, there were not enough posts for people being produced by a system with no commitment to relevance beyond itself. She took early retirement from Princeton soon after, where she is still Emeritus Professor. The bigger question of how people are being trained, and for what, remains one I will watch with interest.

I don’t envy anyone starting out on the tenure track now. But at the same time, I have learned how far things have come for postdocs, particularly in the UC system. From a fairly chaotic, ad hoc approach, the powers-that-be have changed their attitudes in the last decade or so. I think there is genuine recognition that postdoctoral scholars, in all the disciplines, are crucial to the academic enterprise, and starting out now, at least in the UC system, means starting with more recognition and resources than ever before.

It has been a pleasure to learn all this, and to meet some of the people who have made it happen. It is equally a pleasure to hand the job of putting this newsletter together over to Admir Skodo, who, as a fellow humanities traveler, will no doubt also learn about life in the sciences, while helping to bring the rest of the disciplines into the spotlight as well.

UCLA: At the Forefront in Offering the Best Postdoc Experience

There are a number of people in the Graduate Division who work with Dean Garrell to provide postdocs with the support they need. April de Stefano, Ph.D., the Director of Academic Services in the Graduate Division, seconds Dean Garrell in mentioning the major advances in postdoc resources and services over the last few years. “There are many more opportunities for postdocs now than just a year ago,” she says. Sarah Valdovinos, Coordinator of Postdoctoral and Graduate Student Professional Development, agrees with de Stefano’s assessment: “Since I started working with postdocs at UCLA two years ago, there has been a large shift in the expansion of services offered to postdoctoral scholars.”

Both de Stefano and Valdovinos see the importance of close-knit collaboration between campus units for the sake of postdocs. De Stefano adds that some services must be tailored specifically for postdocs, given the nature of their position. “We are either enhancing the collaborations or growing specific type of services for postdocs,” de Stefano explains. One major resource that exemplifies the collaborative spirit which animates the Graduate Division is the Ph.D. Career Planning Series for Postdoctoral Scholars and Doctoral Students, created in 2010 by the Graduate Division, California NanoSystems Institute, and SoPS. Between 2010 and 2014, the series organized thirty-eight events on a range of topics, including transferable skills, grant writing, online education, and teaching. Valdovinos mentions another important program, namely the Careers In…Series, co-led by the Graduate Division, the Career Center, the Graduate Student Resource Center, and the UCLA Office of Postdoctoral Affairs in the Biomedical and Life Sciences. Valdovinos describes the series as a “a continuous series highlighting a different STEM career pathway each month by bringing in both alumni and external panelists that are currently working in that career path.” The major reason for starting this series, Valdovinos says, was that nowadays “[many] pathways, not just academia, are seen as viable options and postdocs are seeking out opportunities to learn more.”

The importance UCLA attaches to increasing professional and career development opportunities for postdocs can also be seen in a shift that occurred within the Career Services Subcommittee of the UCLA Graduate and Professional Student Welfare Committee, formed in 2010, with de Stefano acting as Co-Chair. This subcommittee was initially given the task of reviewing the provision of career planning and
transferrable skills development resources for graduate students. At a later stage of the committee’s work, in 2012, UCLA postdocs came into its orbit. The committee’s report, published in 2013 as *Report on Graduate & Professional Students’ and Postdoctoral Scholars’ Career Pathways at UCLA*, thus addresses the needs of both graduate students and postdocs, detailing and clarifying existing campus resources and recommending new initiatives.

Joseph Watson, the Associate Dean in the Graduate Division, is delighted over the fact that postdocs, “our forgotten soldiers” as he calls them, are getting the support they need to develop professionally, and that they are starting to benefit from all the same opportunities as graduate students. As a move in the latter direction, in 2013, there was a major push to confer alumni status to postdocs, and “that’s definitely a big change on campus last year,” says Dean Watson. UCLA postdocs will, in all likelihood, enjoy the benefits and privileges of alumnumhood in the near future.

Dean Watson highlights the current reality and the corresponding aims from the administration’s side that underlie all these wonderful initiatives—namely, an employment landscape where the academic faculty market can only absorb 15 to 20% of the postdoc population, thus necessitating a strong focus on multiple careers, in and beyond academia. De Stefano articulates the broader desire behind UCLA’s initiatives as an attempt to “normalize”—among faculty supervisors, PIs, graduate students and postdocs—the fact that you don’t have to go into academia. It’s OK if you do, it’s OK if you don’t.”

Apart from the Graduate Division, SoPS and the DCISS offer a number of programs and opportunities for postdocs on their own. Tiffany Greco, current President of SoPS, which recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary, is enthusiastic about SoPS’s wide programming, as well as the fact that SoPS is able to provide substantive advice and input to initiatives in the Graduate Division, ensuring that postdocs’ voices are heard in conversations that concern them. SoPS organizes a monthly research seminar series, open to everyone on campus, in which postdocs present and discuss their research. SoPS has initiated a pilot project to award travel grants for postdocs once a year, which may be extended to twice a year in the near future. As a final example, SoPS now also awards an annual Postdoc Mentoring Award that is presented along with the annual Chancellor’s Postdoctoral Awards at a special recognition ceremony.

The DCISS, under the leadership of Director Shideh Hanassab, is yet another unit at UCLA which offers special services to postdocs. To signal DCISS’s commitment to postdocs, Hanassab recently created a postdoc version of her quarterly “Share with Shideh” luncheon, where she meets with students to learn about their situations through personal and informal interaction for the sake of improving DCISS’s programming. All DCISS programs are open to postdocs. Among them is the Spouses’ Circle, which meets every Friday to socialize and plan weekend activities. Another is the World Café, which is setup twice quarterly. A third is the Mini Travel Mate Trips, where two students or postdocs from different countries are paired with each other for the duration of a two-day trip, thereby promoting at one fell swoop the formation of friendship, multiculturalism, and exposure to American culture. A final program worth mentioning is Discover L.A. Trips, which is especially attractive to postdocs who do not own cars, but who are interested in visiting some of the many museums, parks, music performances, and sporting events in Los Angeles.

Mike Flaxman, who is the Manager in the Graduate Division that oversees the postdoc appointment process, is proud of the fact that UCLA offers some of the best services and resources to postdocs in the country. However, Flaxman believes—as do Dean Garrell, Dean Watson, and Director de Stefano—that “there is still more work to be done in terms of integration.” As an example, Flaxman mentions the fact that although postdocs are now offered a variety of resources through the Career Center, ultimately the hope is for postdocs to be fully integrated into this unit on par with graduate students. Valdivinos agrees with Flaxman: “Currently postdocs do not have access to 1:1 career counseling or the alumni center, which is something we are working to address. I believe UCLA has made great strides in the past few years, but there is still work to be done.”

Another area where UCLA can do more work, about which Dean Watson in particular is very passionate, is raising awareness among faculty members of what it means to be a postdoc today, and that includes dispelling myths about IDPs, an online academic and career development tool that tends to be viewed by faculty members as too formal, and also geared too much toward non-academic careers. A third area in need of improvement is providing information on where postdocs should turn when a specific problem arises regarding services such as library privileges, sexual harassment, and payments. Flaxman pointedly refers to the recent rise of reported sexual assaults on UC campuses, where it became unclear whether postdocs have access to Counseling and Psychological Services or whether they can consult the Sexual Harassment Prevention Office. Representatives from the Graduate Division are meeting with these units to address these vital issues, but Flaxman makes the larger point that it is often unclear whether a postdoc has access to certain services, which should not be the case. Here is where better integration can do its work. According to Flaxman, “systems-integration [for postdocs] is very important so that postdocs avoid losing services because of system-generated errors.”

UCLA is also trying to improve the experiences of postdocs in the humanities and social sciences. Despite their small numbers, just a few dozen, UCLA firmly believes that postdocs in these fields are important sub-groups in the postdoc population. Dean Garrell explains that there is a need to raise a “greater awareness of the importance of recognizing them as important knowledge creators and inventors.” Because careers in these fields differ rather significantly from those in STEM, there are initiatives at UCLA specifically tailored for postdocs in these fields. One such initiative is providing postdocs with access...
to Versatile PhD, which is currently unavailable to them. Versatile PhD is an online community and tool for exploring non-academic and non-faculty careers, taking into consideration the differences between humanities, social sciences, and STEM. UCLA would like to do even more: for example, collaborate with the other UC campuses. UC Berkeley recently launched the Humanities and Social Sciences Association (HSSA), which is specifically designed to provide postdocs, visiting scholars, graduate students, and visiting student researchers in the humanities and social sciences with career, professional and academic development resources and forums. “Such an initiative is welcomed by UCLA,” de Stefano says, and there may arise in the near future a joint venture between the HSSA, UCLA and other UC campuses so that postdocs in the humanities and social sciences can begin building cross-campus opportunities and resources for their professional and career development.

Hanne is a neuroscientist/endocrinologist, and Aitor is a stem cell biologist specializing in cardiovascular regeneration. Hanne came to Spain through the Erasmus Programme, Europe’s university exchange program. Hanne met Aitor on her very first day in the lab in Bilbao. “Aitor was one of the graduate students who spoke the best English and we started chatting right away—back then I did not speak Spanish,” Aitor remembers their first encounter in vivid detail: “We just had found that balance which Troy and Diane are hoping the [Aitor’s] side as he had to start over in a new graduate program.” Aitor ended up moving to Barcelona, which was close enough to Montpellier, the city in France where Hanne was living and doing her graduate studies. They managed to keep their relationship alive in this way for 3 years, the time it took for both of them to gain their Ph.D.s. “We managed to coordinate it so well that we finished grad school within 10 days from each other,” Hanne boasts. “We worked hard to make it possible. It is never easy to be a scientist with a partner in the same area, but it can be done if both sides make small sacrifices,” Aitor adds. Upon completing their Ph.D.s, Hanne and Aitor both felt that the United States would be a great country for their postdocs. But then, an issue of contention emerged. Hanne explains it thus: “Aitor loves rain whereas I love sun. We talked it through and Aitor agreed to look for positions in California; however, if he was not able to find a position there, I was OK going to a less sunny place (i.e, Massachusetts).” Aitor tells it somewhat differently: “I wanted to go to Boston, she wanted California. Guess who won that argument?”

All the couples the UC Postdoc Newsletter interviewed believe that it is very helpful and beneficial to share a life with someone who works in the same field. Diane and Troy not only participate in Thriving in Science’s peer-support groups, they are also their own little support group. “[W]e constantly talk to each other and help each other,” Troy reveals. Both Diane and Troy recognize the strong influence the cultural mythology in science they speak of has had on them. They still often feel as if they are never working quite hard enough, or that any failure in the lab or any rejected article is a permanent stain that sullies their entire career. Troy refers to these feelings as “cognitive distortions,” and he adds that it is great to have Diane around as she makes him see “how ridiculous it is to feel that way.”

Hanne and Aitor both find it helpful and useful to consult each other in their work. “I find it very helpful that we both are scientists. It is nice, particularly as a woman, to have a husband who understands your work and work hours,” says Hanne, and continues: “In addition, when necessary, we discuss work issues, experiments or other work related subjects. It is nice to have someone trustworthy to talk with who is not in the lab, but knows what environment you are in, and the type of challenges you face.” Aitor, too, is keen on stressing the benefits of having a wife who works in a similar field: “Our different specialties can often be synergic in dealing with a specific problem; in those cases, talking about it helps you see solutions you would have never considered on your own.” Fatma and Akin echo Hanne and Aitor’s attitude. As Akin says: “we can understand our problems easier than the couples having different jobs.”

Aitor and Hanne lead a truly rich life outside of science, and they might just have found that balance which Troy and Diane are hoping the
participants of Thriving in Science will find in order to make their lives
and research more fulfilling. Hanne refers to herself as a “sports freak.”
Aitor adds that she “is constantly swimming, running and biking.” She
has participated in several races, including a half-Ironman.” Aitor loves
hiking, a passion he shares with Hanne, and gazing at the stars from
Palomar Mountain with his 8’ Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope. Though
different, there are many activities which the couple enjoys doing
together, such as traveling and eating good food.

Even though Ann and Fred no longer work in the same lab, they still
help each other out in the course of their research. Both express
how helpful the other’s emotional support and different scientific
perspective have been for the development of their research and
professional skills. “We just help each other whenever we can. We
don’t have to worry about how many favours we owe or are owed,
which is the normal dynamic with any other colleague,” Fred says,
and is seconded by Ann: “Yes, it definitely helps to work in the same
profession (even in the same lab).”

Though both partners of every couple the Newsletter interviewed find
it very helpful to have a partner or spouse who works in the same
field, all couples express certain challenges that accompany being a
postdoc couple. Significantly, however, none of the couples see the
possibility of ending up in different places as a problem. The reason
is simple: none of the couples would want to be separated for
long periods of time. For instance, for Fatma and Akin, who have a baby, it is unthinkable to live
in different locations. As they make clear: “if we could not have been
accepted from the same university, we most probably would have
given up being postdocs.”

Hanne and Aitor, who, like Fatma and Akin, have a child together, may
not agree on everything, but in the spirit of compromise, love, and
openness, they always manage to reach a mutual agreement. They
would never want to spend more than a few months apart from each
other. Hanne explains why: “We rely on each other and I would not
want us to be separated for long periods of time. This is truer now
that we have a child.” Aitor shares Hanne’s sentiment: “A two-three
months stay at another university or research center is not a problem,
and I personally think it can even be positive, but in my opinion, long
distance relationships over prolonged periods of time (read: years) are
never a good foundation for the future.”

Ann and Fred say that issues arise between the two, but these stem
from, in Ann’s words, the fact that they are “both pretty stubborn
people” who “like to stick to our original opinions.” Many of the
conflicts, however, “will often fizzle out at the end as we move away
from the conversation, or we seek second opinions.” At the end of the
day, Ann and Fred do not allow their scientific conflicts (and according
to Fred, 75% of their disagreements are scientific in nature) to follow
them home. Ann emphasizes: “We never really bring disagreements
we have in the lab back home after work though.”

For Fatma and Akin, the major problem is re-experiencing a problem,
since it is likely that two people working in the same field and who are
in a similar position will encounter similar problems. As Fatma says:

“The biggest problem is to cope with the same problems twice. For
instance, Akin completed his Ph.D. immediately after me and I took an
acceptance from here after Akin. So, we always kept feeling stressed,
even after an achievement by one of us. Instead of celebrating
something, we were still concerned about the same problem.”

Diane and Troy get along very well, but Diane hastens to add that on
occasion, two married postdocs can be a hindrance to each other's
development if both are unaware of the cultural norms that foster un-
realistic expectations. Having a life
outside of science, and friends who
are not scientists, is something Troy
and Diane highly recommend for
gaining a healthy and critical per-
spective on your
achievements and
the norms of your
profession. As a
result of their self-
examination and participation in support groups, Diane and Troy now
try to work no more than 50 hours week, have friends who are not
scientists, take reasonable time off, and volunteer as instructors at
the San Quentin University Prison Project. In fact, when the Newsletter
met with them, they had just returned from a rafting trip in the Grand
Canyon!