Welcome to Volume 12 of the Postdoc Newsletter. This issue, we focus on two of the smaller campuses in the UC system. As you will see, size has nothing to do with quality of life or research at these campuses. Here you can find a little information about each campus, who looks after postdocs at each site, and contact information for relevant associations or other offices. In the rest of the newsletter, we feature more of the services and experiences relevant to postdocs on these two campuses.

UC Merced is the newest campus in the UC system, the first since 1965. Situated near Yosemite National Park, it opened in 2005 and offers new access opportunities for the whole state, particularly for the San Joaquin Valley. It is dedicated to the educational and economic development of the region in addition to fulfilling the UC mandate for providing a base for world-class research. UC Merced has the highest hiring rate of UC postdocs in the UC system for faculty positions. It has a number of exciting new research initiatives planned, including those within its new medical school and other start-ups, such as the Blum Center themed “Global California: The World at Home”; the UC Merced Center for Computational Biology; the Center of Excellence for the Study of Health Disparities in Rural and Ethnic Underserved Populations; and the UC Merced Center for Research in the Humanities and Arts.

Unlike the other smaller campuses in the UC system, which house their postdocs in their Graduate Student Divisions, Merced postdocs fall under the auspices of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development, Dr. Samuel Justin Traina. Read our interview with Dr. Traina.

Administrative information for UC Merced postdocs is available on the Research and Economic Development site. Merced also offers international postdocs the help of the Office of International Affairs which collates a number of resources for getting settled. Merced does not have a Postdoc Association, but the Office of International Affairs coordinates the International Students Association.

UC Santa Barbara has a spectacular beach campus, one of the most beautiful in the nation according to Newsweek. Postdocs fall under the Graduate Division here, and have a number of dedicated resources, including information for job seekers. UC Santa Barbara has a Society of Postdoctoral Scholars, which is overseen by Assistant Dean Christian Villaseñor. Read more about AD Villaseñor.

UCSB also has a Professional Development Series from the UCSB Center for Science and Engineering Partnerships. You can read more about this series here. The UC Santa Barbara Office of International Students and Scholars is available to international postdocs and provides administrative assistance, counseling, and advice on everything from immigration, employment, housing, and health care, to financial concerns, academic problems, travel, and personal issues.

In addition to profiling these two campuses, we also offer some general information on relevant developments for postdocs in the UC system including some news on the union contract, an update from the UAW, and many of our regular features. I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I enjoyed putting it together.

Natasha Distiller, Editor-in-chief

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BIG PLANS

Natasha Distiller interviews Samuel Justin Traina, Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development at UC Merced

Additional information supplied by Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research, Deborah Motton

As the youngest campus in the UC system, Merced is still relatively small. With just under 4,000 students, there are only 37 postdocs on campus. In part, this is because the faculty numbers are relatively small, and faculty members are young and still developing their research funding profiles.

“But,” says Dr. Sam Traina, “Merced has big plans.” The campus is scheduled to grow dramatically. By the year 2020, UC Merced hopes to have 10,000 students, and to double the number of faculty and postdocs. “We are about to enter a massive growth spurt,” Dr Traina asserts. “Our faculty is maturing, and is now starting to bring in big research grants. We will have 10% of our population comprised of grad students in the next four years. And we expect our research budget to grow at a higher rate than our faculty growth during this time.”

If UC Merced is about to become an even better place to be a postdoc, what has characterized it to date is its intimate atmosphere. Postdocs have been so entrenched in their lab communities that they have not felt the need for specific social support. “What they do need,” says Dr Traina, “is help navigating the bureaucracy, and, as on all the other campuses, guidance on multiple career options. UC Merced has plans to run a postdoc orientation day and to set up bi-monthly meetings to meet both of these needs.”

Dr. Traina’s office is also developing a multiple careers program for postdocs, which will be housed in the UC Merced Center for Career and Professional Advancement. Another benefit to Merced’s small size is that funding for this service is not an issue. On the bigger Southern California UC campuses, Career Center resources tend to be restricted to graduate students, whose student registration fees pay for such resources. “But,” says Dr Traina, “The postdoc numbers here mean we don’t have to worry about that.”

About one third of the postdocs have families, and they access the Early Childhood Education Center at subsidized rates. This is another place postdocs find community as many graduate students also make use of the childcare services on campus.

UC Merced partners with the bigger campuses like UC Berkeley and UC San Francisco to ensure that UC Merced postdocs get access to the education and training workshops that are offered in the larger UC system. Dr Traina is concerned that his postdocs, together with advanced graduate students, do not miss out on resources because of Merced’s smaller size. “Our students have benefited greatly from this partnership with UC Berkeley and UC San Francisco, which we appreciate,” he says. “We will continue to make use of the opportunities offered at the larger campuses.”

Dr. Traina is committed to making the postdoc experience on campus a useful and fulfilling one. “I am very interested in postdocs,” he says. “I want to serve their needs.” This commitment is clear in his actions: as Dean of both Graduate Studies and Research in an earlier incarnation, Dr. Traina was responsible for postdocs at UC Merced. When the campus hired a separate graduate dean, Dr. Traina advocated for taking the postdocs with him into the research division. “Postdocs are not students. They need to be treated as professionals,” he says. “In recognition of this, I wanted to keep them with me.” You can be sure that as UC Merced continues to grow, postdocs will continue to be well cared for.

“We are about to enter a massive growth spurt. Our faculty are starting to bring in big research grants.”

– Dr. Sam Traina

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.
UC SANTA BARBARA:
Promoting Postdoctoral Professional Development

At UC Santa Barbara, professional development for postdoctoral scholars is a priority. Through the Center for Science and Engineering Partnerships (CSEP) at the California Nanosystems Institute (CNSI), postdoctoral scholars benefit from professional development programming that focuses on the knowledge and practical experience essential for their career success.

Dr. Arica Lubin coordinates the Professional Development Series for CSEP. The Professional Development Series not only offers career-related resources, but also provides opportunities for socializing and networking. Graduate Division Assistant Dean Christian Villaseñor comments on the Program’s popularity, as well as its success: “The fantastic turnout at CSEP’s events shows what a great resource their program is to the postdocs at UC Santa Barbara. Arica deserves particular credit for the program’s success.”

Dr. Lubin affirms that the program is well subscribed to by the postdoc community. “The program has provided a venue for postdocs to discuss professionalism and exchange ideas with colleagues and outside professionals alike,” she says. The Professional Development Series is a grassroots development originally started by CSEP Associate Director, Wendy Ibsen, and three recent UCSB PhDs: Dr. Lubin; Meredith Murr, now Director of Research Development in UCSB’s Office of Research; and Maria Napoli, now a program coordinator for CSEP. Under CSEP, the series developed into a full-blown program with University support from the College of Engineering and Math, Life and Physical Sciences Deans; the Graduate Division; and the Office of Research. The CSEP team has helped the series retain its community-led character by seeking input from program participants and incorporating a steering committee that includes current postdocs to plan the annual program.

CSEP also offers teaching and mentoring opportunities for postdocs. “This crossover,” says Dr. Lubin, “allows the team to develop content that is useful to postdocs across a broad spectrum. Because we see postdocs in practicum too, we can better respond to their needs.” It also helps that Dr. Lubin and her colleagues all have backgrounds in science and engineering, making it easier to develop programming that is relevant and targeted to the postdocs being served.

“Collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and flexible learning characterize UC Santa Barbara”

“Collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and flexible learning characterize UC Santa Barbara”

Of the approximately 300 postdocs at UC Santa Barbara, about 90% are in STEM fields. Although the CSEP program addresses the predominantly science and engineering postdoc population, there is a social sciences and humanities presence too. Many of their offerings are universally relevant and postdocs as well as graduate students from these disciplines also attend regularly.

The Professional Development Series is just one example of the type of support that postdocs receive at UC Santa Barbara. If you are considering where to apply for a postdoc, consider UC Santa Barbara. “The environment at Santa Barbara is great,” says Assistant Dean Villaseñor. “We’ll take good care of you.” Dr Lubin agrees: “UC Santa Barbara is a very collegial place. We work collaboratively. Postdocs can be involved in shaping their own services.” Dr. Lubin also suggests that a strength of UC Santa Barbara is its interdisciplinary energy. “UC Santa Barbara is a great place to gain access to experiences across the disciplines.” This access to flexible learning seems to be a theme here. The commitment to thinking creatively about how to provide the best for its postdocs makes UC Santa Barbara special.

UPDATE ON Postdoctoral Scholar Benefits Plan (PSBP)

SelectPlus becomes Bright Horizons Care Advantage

The name has changed for what was previously referred to as SelectPlus. This service is now called Bright Horizons Care Advantage. It is available to all postdocs. The cost of membership in this service is paid for by the University of California and is completely free for postdocs. You will simply pay for the services of the caregivers that you hire through the Bright Horizons Care Advantage program. Please visit http://www.garnett-powers.com/postdoc/index.htm for more information on this valuable service.
**Know It All?!**

by Natalia M. Belfiore

**Brief comments and notices about articles, events, and resources that are of interest to postdocs.**

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**Did you know…?**

In spite of huge advancements in opportunity, attitude, and percentages, women still occupy only a small fraction of leadership roles in the scientific fields. According to Zoghbi and Greenbard (February 1, 2014, “What women need to succeed in science,” The Scientist), “an undercurrent of exclusion still exists.” Authors list guidance, recognition and image as the major factors needing work to help women (and others who fall through the cracks) succeed. Commenters remind readers that the elements of exclusion run deep and will take a lot of work to undo. Feel free to substitute the underrepresented group of your choice for “women” in any of these discussions.

Indeed, Helen Shen (March 6, 2013, “Inequality quantified: Mind the gender gap,” Nature) reported that in spite of equity at the training level, more men than women hold posts in science and engineering, and men earn more than women. Shockingly, the data show that women earn “half the doctorates in science and engineering in the United States but comprise only 21% of full science professors and 5% of full engineering professors. And on average, they earn just 82% of what male scientists make in the United States — even less in Europe.” Shen points to mentoring, but also poor family friendly practices, sexism in practice, and pay disparity, as driving factors that compound quickly to oust women from the pipeline.

Blogger Katie Burke (January 23, 2014, “Unsettling Stats about Women in Science,” The UnderStory: The Life and Times of Ecology and Ecologists) summarizes data on these factors, and adds her own. These include bias in funding, peer review, cultural leadership styles, perceptions of pace of progress, along with sexual harassment and microaggression, and women choosing to leave the field. Burke also lists some actions that could help with advancing and retaining women. The list includes exceptionally good mentorship, by women if possible, building allies, better pay and benefits for postdocs, including maternity/paternity leave, and calling out sexual harassment and discrimination.

Accordingly, a study summarized in the newsletter Knowledge at Wharton (September 26, 2012, “E-mails Ignored, Meetings Denied: Bias at the Search Stage Limits Diversity”) showed that much of the discrimination in hiring or advancement occurs during the search for jobs. The article describes job-seeking behavior that is likely to help candidates, but reports that the study uncovered significant bias on the part of managers just at the level of interacting with prospective applicants. The author does not offer any concrete suggestions to job seekers but rather encourages managers to examine their own behavior. Still, as a potential applicant, it is useful to know what goes on to try to circumvent it.

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**ON CHANGING COURSE**

By Chuck-Hou Yee, UC Santa Barbara

I’m a young scientist building a career and community I love. I spent a large part of my twenties amassing the technical skills and developing the physical intuition needed to become a condensed matter physicist. Curiosity and the desire for recognition drove me in this endeavor. I thought scientific discovery was my ticket to success and life satisfaction, an organizing principle that abruptly collapsed shortly into my first postdoc when my girlfriend at the time ended our relationship.

I came to the Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics at UC Santa Barbara with high hopes of scientific productivity. Here were brilliant individuals with whom I aspired to collaborate. Instead, I found myself devastated: gut-wrenching dread at 4am and a complete inability to focus on research. The horrifying truth gradually emerged: I didn’t know who I was, neither

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**A POSTDOC EXPERIENCE: Running Around UC Merced**

By Erin Gaab

The hard-earned titles of “doctor” and “psychologist” often mislead people into thinking I’m a psychiatrist of some sort. While I enjoy diagnosing problems, I am far from being able to cure the stressors people present me with. As a fulltime postdoc and part-time lecturer, my position involves research and teaching. However, I like to think of myself as an active analyst of life, still learning to reframe distress (negative stress) as eustress (stress which opens the door to growth). I attempt this reframing by both climbing towards visions that the growing University of California Merced offers and running away to view challenges from the outside.

As postdoctoral researchers, we are granted the task of filtering opportunities which constantly rush into our minds through the
Dear Adam,

I am a postdoc at UC Riverside on a J-1 visa and I need your help with a very sensitive situation. As it turns out, my postdoc experience has been quite unpleasant. It’s not the work that’s the problem. It’s my faculty mentor. First of all, he is never in the lab. He mostly directs the work from his home office via a lab manager, who is much less experienced than me. I say this as I am coming to the end of my third year in the same lab. On the other hand, the lab manager has only been here for a mere five months.

At any rate, I complained to my faculty sponsor about how I am not being treated well and gave him specific examples. To this, he retorted that if I didn’t like the way I am being dealt with that I should look for another position. This really took me by surprise. But I was determined that if I didn’t like the way I am being dealt with that I should look for another position. So, here are my questions:

1. Can I simply quit my postdoc job and start looking full time for another position?
2. Is there some provision within my visa rights that allow me to change my visa to another type while I look for another postdoc job?
3. Can I take another job that is not related to my academic endeavors?

I used to be a tour guide and am very good at this.

All I need is a little time to get things sorted out. But I don’t know what my visa limitations are in cases like this. Please help me, Adam. Thanks.

ANSWER:

I am so sorry about your problem at work and appreciate your important questions. You are sponsored by UC Riverside and once you quit, or your job is ended, it will terminate your DS 2019 and your ability to stay in the United States legally. At that time, you enter your 30 day grace period. When the grace period is over, you must have applied for a change of visa status, or secure a new J visa sponsor, prior to the last day of the grace period. If not, you become “out of status” and are no longer in the U.S. with permission. So I recommend that you not quit your postdoc position. Instead, you should go through UC’s procedure for termination, which will take some time. However, you could simultaneously commence your job search. Hopefully, you will have found a new position and that institution will issue you its own DS 2019 form.

If you are unable to secure a position that will commence prior to the end of your 30 day grace period, the only other alternative is to apply for a change of status to B-2 tourist visa. However, applying for a change from a J-1 visa to a B-2 visa is frowned upon by immigration. They might believe that you are not really going to be a tourist but instead are actually seeking new employment. If you are forced to consider this alternative, an experienced immigration attorney should first be consulted. For your information, any future employment while you are in J-1 status must relate to your degree. You are not simply here in the U.S. to work in any position. Instead, you were admitted to the U.S. to perform research in your field. Therefore, despite your being a wonderful tour guide, this type of position is one that is not available to you.

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How We De-Stress and STRETCH Our Minds & Bodies

by Joan Garnett, Garnett Powers and Associates

I can say with confidence, at Garnett Powers & Associates (GPA), our yoga breaks have become what we participants call “ache breaks”… a 30 minute reprieve from phones, email and the constant banter of our colleagues, where we get up off of our chairs and down on a yoga mat to ease the stress of the workday with stretches and relaxation poses that not only improve our energy for the rest of the day, but renew our spirits!

The brainchild of one of our employees, the idea of taking a 30 minute break later in the workday to come together and do yoga poses initially seemed somewhat, well, “out there”. Some of us had been doing yoga for years, like me, so we were all very enthused, while others looked at doing yoga at work as something aimed at more ethereal hipsters.

Well, as you can imagine, it didn’t take long for most employees to ditch the nay-saying and join in. And thus began a routine that all of the participants greatly relish and anticipate on Tuesdays and Thursdays… that 30 minutes of doing something for what ails us in the sitting-most-of-the-day working world! Somehow I got myself chosen as the chief Yogi… no formal certification, but just a willingness to lead people toward the resolve of improving their overall health. And trust me, we are very careful. Without a certified practitioner, we practice only very easy poses that offer stretching and flexibility, but don’t challenge the spinal cord or our limbs beyond what we term ‘mild discomfort’.

So, what is yoga? It is a century’s old practice, the word “yoga” derived from a Sanskrit word, yug, which means “to yoke” or bind together. Yoga is considered an instrument of wholeness, binding together mind, body and spirit. There are many types of yoga, Hatha yoga being the most commonly practiced in the United States. There is a plethora of styles of Hatha yoga, as Ananda, Iyengar and Kundalini, to name a few. In yoga, the body is considered to be made up of centers of energy, called chakras, and each yoga position, regardless of the type of yoga, connects with one or more of the chakras. In my opinion, yoga is a self-perpetuating physical art form that hooks, inspires, and empowers you to want to do more once you start. Ok, maybe not everybody, but those who begin to feel the benefits of yoga usually get hooked and can’t go without.

Those who practice yoga breaks here at GPA all agree that yoga just simply makes you feel better. It’s energizing, but also relaxing at the same time, because of the inner focus through the conscious breathing that is done while holding yoga postures. We will hold a posture for a minute, then focus on our breathing, then relax in between postures to allow time for our bodies to realize the positive benefits and rest in between postures.

It’s said that yoga can help manage conditions like anxiety, arthritis, asthma, back pain, high blood pressure, depression, headaches and other conditions and diseases. With practice, it can improve muscle tone, flexibility, and circulation. It’s also credited for reducing stress and tension, while stimulating the immune system. We all agree here at GPA that it truly creates a sense of well-being and calm. Talk about a team-building exercise!

Speaking of stress and tension, having had the pleasure of communicating with postdocs over the last fifteen years, if there’s one thing I’ve learned, it’s that postdocs are a hard-working, focused, ambitious group that work upwards of 70-80 hours a week in the lab… a serious dedication that can wreak havoc on the nervous system. Yoga just might be the go-to practice that could release some of that tension and stress.

A study at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, Massachusetts found that yoga practiced on a regular basis may be helpful in treating both dementia and Alzheimer’s. Study participants who practiced yoga two hours a week for eight weeks were given MRI scans which showed improved brain function.

Another study of 90 people with chronic low back pain, funded by the National Center of Complementary Medicine (NCCAM), found that participants who regularly practiced Iyengar yoga realized less disability, pain and depression after 6 months.

It’s been amazing to see how much more flexible we have all become with the regular practice of yoga here at the office. And I can honestly attest to the stress levels being reduced. Many of us also do yoga at home, or with a certified yoga practitioner, so our flexibility, range of motion, strength and general sense of well-being continue to grow as we further our success with our poses.

It’s important to note that yoga isn’t for everyone; and those who need to be especially cautious are pregnant women and individuals who have sciatica, high blood pressure, glaucoma and other medical conditions that could be exacerbated by yoga. Finding a certified practitioner is paramount, and NCCAM has a site that provides valuable information on evaluating complementary practitioners and how to properly select one who has attained the proper certification. Yoga just might be the go-to practice that could release some of that tension and stress.

Until our next newsletter, Namaste…
The UAW Local 5810 is focused on the terms and conditions that affect postdocs throughout the University of California. In recent months we’ve made a series of enhancements that should make a real impact in the daily lives of UC postdocs – none of which would have been possible without the work and support of our members.

**Increasing Take-Home Pay**

One of our chief goals has been giving postdocs a voice in the political process – an effort that paid off in two ways. After a sustained advocacy campaign with the National Institutes of Health (NIH), we recently got word that the NIH will increase the Ruth Kirschstein NRSA base rate stipends for fiscal year 2014. This will raise the take-home pay of thousands of UC postdocs, since the minimum salary steps in our contract are tied to these base rates.

**Stopping the Sequester**

Through our Be A Catalyst Campaign, we were able to organize 39 members of Congress to sign a letter asking for the elimination of the Sequester – the disastrous federal policy that cut research budgets and other crucial programs like public health and Head Start. We are glad to report that Congress has agreed to phase out the Sequester cuts that had threatened our grant funding. While there is still work to be done in this realm (we would like to see across-the-board increases in federal research investment), finally taking the Sequester off the table is an achievement that should benefit our members and the academy as a whole.

**Improving the Postdoctoral Experience**

New postdocs arrive with lots of questions – about finding housing, enrolling in benefits, what paperwork to file, and much more. To help ease the transition, we have created a new web page complete with a checklist of things to do before arrival at UC, upon arrival, in the first month and in the first year. Our website also has frequently-updated information including answers to FAQs, an explanation of your rights as a UC postdoc, upcoming event listings, and more. Recent union-sponsored events have included presentations on taxes for postdocs and retirement options, and a workshop on writing a successful fellowship application. Also check out our Facebook page, Twitter feed and LinkedIn page for the latest postdoc-related updates and news.

**Campus Updates: UCSB and UCM**

UCSB: At UC Santa Barbara, postdocs are excited about an upcoming...