When graduate students are deciding where to go for postdoc training, typically three factors are considered: 1) quality of the research; 2) the opportunity to expand their skills and knowledge; and 3) active faculty mentorship. However, there is an often-overlooked fourth factor that has a huge impact on postdoctoral career success: the environment that acknowledges and supports postdocs as a community.

That community comes in different scales; small, like a research team or lab; larger, like a school or division; or larger yet: university-wide. Regardless of the scale, the importance of this factor lies in the support, resources, and opportunities available for the postdoc within the community.

Over 10 years ago, UC San Diego Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs (OPVSA) started a campaign to build a stronger postdoc community and increase opportunities for postdoc engagement. Helmed by the OPVSA Director, Jennifer Oh, the impetus was that if postdocs felt connected, valued, and supported, the ensuing sense of belonging would enable them to focus on their research and professional advancement. The efforts to develop this community started with the creation of a Postdoctoral Association (PDA), membership in the National Postdoctoral Association, and collaboration with neighboring institutions and PDAs to increase the resources and opportunities for postdocs. To address the personal and professional challenges that come with the uncertain and stress of this transitional training period, the Postdoc Health and Wellness series was established in partnership with the Faculty Staff Assistance Program. The series offers workshops on topics like “facing the challenges of a new environment,” “working postdocs with small children,” and “how to be a healthier, happier, more productive you.” In addition, large annual events like the Postdoc Appreciation Luncheon and Best Postdoc Award were rolled out to acknowledge the contribution of postdocs; and through collaborations with campus partners, including Career Services Center and the PDA, many professional and peer networking opportunities were offered in the STEM Career Symposium and Postdoc Research Symposium.

In order to address the professional development needs of this diverse and substantial postdoc population (around 1300, representing 13 countries and 64 academic areas), a new staff position within the office was formed to expand and manage the postdoc community.

UC San Diego is home to 1300 postdocs from around the country and the world (to be more precise, 65% are international). This distribution of foreign scholars in an academic population is unique to postdocs, though not unique to just UC San Diego. Alexandra Bortnick, a postdoc in Biological Sciences and former chair of the Postdoctoral Association (PDA) recognized the challenges that new international postdocs faced, as well as new postdocs in general, and decided to create programs that focused on inclusion, diversity, and community.

The first order of business was to help new postdocs acclimate to the campus. To do this, she supported the formation of the PDA Ambassador Program, an idea of fellow postdoc Eileen Collyer. The idea was to pair current postdocs with incoming scholars on the basis of their native language, home country, or common interests. Established in collaboration with the UC San Diego Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs by Jennifer Oh and Virginia Hazen, UC San Diego Advancing Postdocs Strengthening Community through POSTDOC AWARDED for COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY by Jennifer Oh and Virginia Hazen, UC San Diego

Photo credit: Eric Jepsen, UC San Diego Publications

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Imagine that you have just put your infant to sleep and in the quiet night, you check your email to find welcome news: your abstract has been accepted and you’ve been invited to present your research. Your presentation will be at the largest professional meeting for your discipline and attending would not only give you the opportunity to disseminate your innovative research and be recognized for your contribution to the field, but would also allow you to build networks and collaborations, and most importantly as a postdoc, it would allow you to find a job. Pre-family care days, you could easily spend a week at similar meetings, but now your baby requires much attention and you have very limited resources to rely on for caregiving support. Do you only go for a day – fly in to give your talk and fly right out - and miss out on the opportunity to see other research and network with colleagues? This is the dilemma that many postdocs and young faculty parents face: trying to build their career while managing the demands of their family.

“Balancing family and career is challenging for young researchers,” said Vice Chancellor for Research Sandra Brown. “We hope this grant program will remove one of the barriers to professional development – travel for those postdoctoral scholars with child- and adult-dependent care responsibilities.”

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With the support from UC San Diego’s Vice Chancellor of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Vice Chancellor for Research (VCR), the Postdoctoral Association (PDA), Committee on the Status of Women, the Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs (OPVSA) launched a first-of-its-kind pilot Dependent Care Travel Program for Postdocs (DCTP). The aim of the program is to enable postdocs with child or adult dependent care responsibilities to attend conferences, research meetings, or other professional development activities they would otherwise be forced to cut short or unable to attend altogether. To achieve this, the program provides supplemental funds to cover the expense of providing care for postdocs’ dependents, including airfare for a caregiver or spouse, day care fees, caregiver costs, and/or storing and shipping breastmilk.

“If not for this grant, I would not have been able to bring my eight-month-old baby, and so would not have been able to stay for the entire conference. I would have felt compelled to attend only for my presentations and then return to California immediately to minimize time away from my baby,” said Liz Siantz, a postdoc in the Health Sciences.

Balancing family and work will never be easy, but this program removes some of the financial obstacles and helps alleviate stress and anxiety to give young scholars an opportunity to balance both. The goal of this program is to empower postdocs to stay engaged and visible in their career when both their family and research are ready to meet the world.

Due to the success of the pilot program, Vice Chancellor for Research and Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs will continue the program in 2017-2018 with an increased budget of $30K, and individual awards of $1000.

For more information visit: http://postdoc.ucsd.edu/award-opportunities/dependent-care-award.html

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.
Postdoc Parents

by: Jessica Lee

Research shows that the strain of having a baby during a postdoc appointment pushes mothers — and many fathers — off of their career track. But the question of what happens during the postdoc years to cause that shift has long remained unanswered. A new report by The Pregnant Scholar initiative, an NSF-Funded collaboration between researchers at UC Hastings and UC Berkeley, seeks to answer that question. The report, Parents in the Pipeline, is based on the first comprehensive nationwide survey of postdocs who had children during their appointments, as well as an analysis of nationwide data on postdoc benefit policies. Several UC campuses participated in the study.

The majority of postdocs surveyed for the report actually had positive experiences becoming a parent during their postdoc years. For example, 93% of women who asked for a pregnancy accommodation, like avoiding toxics in a lab, were granted the accommodation. But a closer look is concerning; the remaining 7% of postdoc mothers may have had to make a choice between pursuing research and protecting their health. Moreover, 60% of postdoc mothers didn’t even ask for any accommodation. This number may be the result of a fear of discrimination; as a postdoc mom wrote, “you know not to ask [for accommodations] in this environment because you may lose projects or because of retaliation.” Such actions would be in violation of federal law as well as the UC postdoc contract, which guarantees reasonable accommodations and modified duties, if needed.

When it comes time to taking parental leave, postdoc parents face another hurdle. Over half of the institutions surveyed (53%) provided no paid maternity leave to postdoc employees and 61% of institutions didn’t provide paid paternity leave to postdoc employee fathers. Parents who were considered trainees instead of employees fared even worse. Shockingly, some postdocs had no access to any form of time off for the birth of their child, including sick or vacation days or disability leave.

Postdocs within the UC system are provided with parental leave through their collective bargaining agreement. Postdocs are eligible for up to 6 months of paid leave under the PSBP Short Term Disability Plan for pregnancy disability (including recovery from childbirth). The UC now also provides up to 4 weeks of paid parental leave for moms and dads. This can be taken in addition to the time off for pregnancy disability. Postdocs are also eligible for unpaid job protected leave.

Regardless of what is posted on paper, however, many postdocs reported difficulty taking the full amount of leave they’re entitled to. They face intense pressure from Principal Investigators (PIs), like one who actually showed up at his postdoc’s hospital room and said, “so what about 2-3 weeks and you will be back.” That postdoc mom just had a C-section, which typically means a recovery period of at least 8 weeks, but she felt she had no choice but to return early. Other postdocs reported their PI using “threats of pulling funding” or making “insulting remarks.” Less frequently, postdocs actually do lose their appointment because they need childbirth leave: “my boss said that he had no more funding and said so sorry about that… I was actually fired and could not come back after the delivery,” said one geneticist. But the PI hired a new postdoc – the lack of funding was just a ruse.

Thankfully, these stories are the worst-case-scenario. The majority of postdoc mothers found that their PI’s response to their new parent status had a positive impact on their overall experience during the appointment. Those postdocs who do have problems should be aware that cutting funding or limiting research opportunities because of a postdoc’s pregnancy or parental status is actually in violation of federal law. Every UC campus has resources to help resolve the problem, including the postdoc union, human resources, and Title IX offices. Off campus, many research funders have policies and procedures in place to support postdoc parents.

After leave, when postdocs have to manage a new baby and their work, challenges continued. Many postdocs reported making arrangements with their supervisors to adjust their schedule to accommodate their caretaking needs. Much of this need for flexibility arose because postdocs have a difficult time arranging quality childcare during their working hours. As many UC parents know, childcare is a challenging expense to manage on a postdoc salary. One postdoc noted that “well over 75% of my NIH-level salary went to pay childcare expenses. This is outrageous, and it’s really no mystery why so many mothers in biology quit.”

Much of what postdoc parents need is common-sense: pregnancy accommodations, parental leave, a childcare program that they can afford, and an end to hostility against having both a family and a research career. The first step to meeting those needs is creating formal policies and programs. Next up is providing the training and resources necessary to create an environment where postdocs can assert their rights — and where PIs will respect them. Thankfully, UC postdocs have many supportive policies in place already, such as parental leave and access to backup childcare. For those struggling with unsupportive PIs, or simply with navigating the paperwork, there are resources that can help. In addition to campus postdoc offices, the union and other on-campus resources, the Pregnant Scholar operates a helpline for students and postdoc parents in need of assistance.

Disability Leave.
HOW TRUMP’S TRAVEL BANS AFFECT INTERNATIONAL POSTDOCS

The anti-immigrant posture of the Trump administration has led to a series of changes in immigration measures and policies. How do these affect international postdocs? We asked Adam Green and Robert D. Aronson, two immigration attorneys, to clarify what Trump’s recent Executive Order (EO) barring citizens of five countries from entering the United States means for people in general, and for international postdocs in particular.

The first EO banning people with certain nationalities from entering the United States was stopped by the courts. Trump signed a second, revised EO on March 6, 2017 banning citizens of Iran, Sudan, Yemen, Libya, and Somalia. Green explained how this EO works: “The EO ban now applies to those outside of the US without a US visa as of January 27, 2017 and those who do not have a visa as of March 6, 2017. These individuals may not enter the US. The ban also suspends refugee resettlement from these countries to the US for 120 days and reduces the number of refugees that the US will accept to 50,000 for this year. President Trump claims that he is permitted to suspend the entry into the US of anyone he deems detrimental to the national interest.”

Green said that there is some precedent to Trump’s executive order under the Obama administration, but he also described major differences. “President Obama had also suspended entry occasionally to people from the five above countries depending on political conditions. But, President Trump’s initial EO was ruled unconstitutional because he announced that Christians from these countries would not be excluded. He made it clear that the ban was for Muslims. However, the targeted countries are majority Muslim and the EO fails to provide evidence that nationals of these countries pose a threat to national security.”

If a citizen from any of the five banned countries had a valid visa prior to the latest executive order, and no prior travel to the United States, their visa will remain valid. U.S. permanent residents (green card holders) from the five banned countries are not affected by the latest executive order, nor are dual citizen holders that hold citizenship from any of these countries as long as they have a passport from a non-designated country, such as France or Sweden.

Aronson clarified how the travel ban affects international postdocs and scholars. “The main thrust of the Administration’s immigration reform measures is simply not directed to postdocs and advanced degree professionals, but rather concern entry-level professionals, particularly postdocs in particular.”

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If you have “J” visa status this will not work. In addition, you must first confer with your international scholar advisor office to discuss whether they would even be amenable and prepare an H1b application in this situation.

But, since this concurrent employment is based upon your continuing to work at a “cap exempt” employer if you end your H1b employment at Cal you must then end your employment at Amgen. Remember, the only way that you were able to work at Amgen is because of your UC Berkeley “cap exempt” employment.

If, however, Amgen files another H1b visa application for you on April 1, the filing date for private companies, and you are eventually approved Your “cap exempt” H1b for Amgen would commence on October 1 of that year. So, on October 1 you may then end your H1b postdoc employment if that is what is desired.

Best wishes,
Adam Green

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.
Did you know...

...as hard as it is to secure a faculty or PI job after obtaining your PhD, or your postdoc, it is even harder for some groups than others. Maggie Kuo reports on a recent study that shows, in the bench sciences in biology, women PhD students work longer hours than men. For every 100 hours worked, they publish 15% less in their first year than their male counterparts, which undoubtedly contributes to a comparatively lower publication rate for women. After ruling out lack of confidence, authors and others speculate that it can likely be attributed to a combination of weaker mentoring, fear of retribution for asking, and uneven valuation by mentors of the work accomplished by women students. [Women miss out on authorship opportunities early on, Feb. 16, 2017, Science Careers]

What do you need to successfully get a job in your field? David Jensen argues succinctly: “you need all of the pieces,” by which he means, you need broad and strong technical skills. But in addition, you need a set of so-called “soft skills” to convince a prospective employer that you should be hired. Soft skills mostly fall into three categories: verbal communication, writing, and negotiating. Jensen argues that few, if any, institutions or mentors do a good job of helping you hone these skills, if they recognize them as important at all; his article offers some suggestions for how to develop these. Finally, Jensen states, articulating exactly what you have to offer, in all of these areas, and how it matches the job description, is the final step in successfully getting the job offer. To answer the million-dollar job search question, you need all of the pieces, May. 10, 2017, Science Careers]

Academic research position prospects are slim enough, at around 15% [Navigating the Shifting Academic Research Landscape: Advice for the Junior Scientist, May 3, 2017, Future of Research], that many PhDs in biomedical fields are looking elsewhere for work. This has inspired some mentors to provide the breadth of hard and soft skills described by Jensen (above) to try to improve the odds of their students and postdocs getting an industry job, should academia fall through. Samantha Jones describes the philosophy and efforts of Dr. Gene Yeo at UC San Diego, to combine training in multiple related fields, training in bench work and theoretical work, as well as training in using applied and basic research approaches. He advises and helps students to choose versatile projects in order to keep all doors open, to network widely, and to collaborate. He is not the only lab mentor to take this training seriously, but his work serves as a good example to others. Speaking of jobs, Steven Hyman posts that biology would do well to imitate physics and a few successful natural science institutes by creating a broader culture of institute-like science institutions [Biology needs more staff scientists, May 18, 2017, Nature]. Specifically, he claims, these should be replete with staff scientists who can work for a long time on single complex problems, often collaborating with those in other fields. The model has been very successful at the Broad Institute (the author’s home institution) and several European groups; a handful of non-profit groups have assumed some aspects of this model as well. In spite of some logistical and cultural problems to be solved, most importantly, funding, Hyman reports on the great success of this research model. Restructuring of this type could greatly advance science, and could provide new job venues for many postdocs in the sciences.

After consideration, it may be worth rethinking that postdoc after all. Devin Powell describes a new report in Nature Biotechnology which used NSF data to document the financial (ignoring the also onerous temporal) sacrifice built into doing a postdoc [The price of doing a postdoc, Jan. 10, 2017, Science Careers]. Postdoc salaries are substantially lower than salaries in industry, to start with. But, given the low odds of finding an academic job, most will enter non-academic jobs later, where it could take 9 years to close the pay gap between his/her salary and those of PhDs who did not take an average of 4.5 years to complete a postdoc. These financial data seem to indicate that, without a guarantee, taking a postdoc might not be in the financial best interest of new PhDs. Powell does suggest that authors failed to ask whether other aspects of the postdoc made the sacrifice worthwhile. Nonmonetary rewards could be worth the risk for many.

Unfortunately, the research and funding climate for the sciences as well as the arts in the United States is worsening dramatically. The current President has cut or frozen funding and hiring at all Federal scientific agencies and institutions. In some cases, panels of scientists advising agency policy have been fired and replaced by business leaders with no science training [Scott Pruitt removes scientists from EPA advisory panels to make room for industry advocates, May 8, 2017, Think Progress]. Efforts by the current Administration, in concert with the Republican-dominated House and Senate, have put a budget proposal before Congress that, if passed, will cut the NIH funding by $6 billion (20%) and the EPA by 30%, and the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) completely (100%), for example [A grim budget day for U.S. science: analysis and reaction to Trump’s plan, Mar. 16, 2017, Science]. Many more cuts are slated in all science-related agencies. While many agency scientists, citizens, and lawmakers from the other side of the aisle hope that the budget does not get approved as-is, it is unlikely to be struck down completely. Effects on basic and applied scientific activities will be devastating.

Sadly, in addition to losing funding across the board, the current President has put forth, to date, two versions of a travel ban, seeking to block immigrants, including revoking current visas for people from several majority-Muslim countries. The first was ultimately struck down by federal judges; the second was stayed by two different district judges, and that stay has recently been upheld by a 10-3 decision from the 4th Circuit Court [Trump is dealt another defeat on travel ban as U.S. appeals court in Virginia blocks enforcement, May 25, 2017, Los Angeles Times]. Because

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Dear Haruna,

Thank you for your email, written indeed in quite good English. You are right when you suggest that many other spouses of international scholars share your difficulties with language here in the United States. I myself fight daily battles with English, and there are times when I feel I am not winning this war. I came to the U.S. nine years ago to support my husband’s strong desire to work in academia. I had a very successful career in journalism - I even had my own weekly TV show on foreign politics, but I thought my husband deserved this opportunity (and...I also believed we were going back after one year). I did not take into account that my spouse is a stellar researcher and, shortly after arriving to Berkeley, he was offered a permanent position as a faculty on this campus. Almost overnight, my professional identity was stripped away from me and I became the “wife of” an Assistant professor who struggled with her English and was often asked to repeat her sentences at the grocery shop, at the café, at my children’s school, at the doctor’s office. For someone who mastered the art of writing and storytelling, this looked like Dante’s inferno. I didn’t know who I was anymore, as you probably don’t right now. And I was sometimes ashamed of my inadequate language skills, as you are now. My husband’s English was not superb, but he had his talent for science and people were paying attention to his data and articles. My kids, who were born here, are native speakers. They started to correct my English at a very early age and even now they occasionally laugh at my Italian pronunciation. I was the only one left with the burden of rebuilding my own identity in a new country.

See Haruna, I am convinced that you and I, and the thousands of “academia spouses” like us, are not ordinary people. I like to think of us as old-time pioneers, women who accepted great risks and uncertainty to make a better life in a foreign country. You may have not yet the language skills you need here, but you have a strength and a will that are exceptional. Read as much as you can to improve your English, watch TV (in my first months here, I was greedily swallowing all kind of shows from PBS documentaries to SNL, via the Colbert show to all the Bravo trashy shows), attend an adult school to meet new people. There will be always someone who will question our writing skills or ask us to repeat a sentence or a word– that still, and will always feel like a sting to me. You will take a deep breath, repeat your sentence slowly and move forward to the next challenge. The UC campuses, like UCLA where you live, shine because of international scholars like yours and my husband who come here to do research. And because of their spouses and partners, who accept the challenges of being foreigners and explorers on campus and in the real world (remember that WE deal with schools, shops, summer camps, doctors, childcare, babysitters while our husbands are in the labs all day). Universities in the U.S. have been slow to recognize our needs, but we can definitely help build a better life for the next spouses. This has been part of my goal in the new career I am building here in Berkeley. I invite you to get together with other spouses and make your voice heard. You should not be ashamed or embarrassed: with your broken English you are supporting your family here even more than your husband does.

Love, Liliana
career development program and serve as professional development advisor and ambassador to the postdocs. Ginger Hazen, a former UC San Diego postdoc, became that dedicated staff member, which is a unique position in the UC system. In just over two years, having this valuable resource in place led to a four-fold increase in program activities and over 40% increase in the number of individual postdocs attending these activities, with an average of 85% of participants recommending the events to their peers. Moreover, the PDA Executive Board, to which Hazen is the advisor and ex-officio member, tripled in size and established four flagship events, including the New Year’s Networking event that brings together postdocs and working professionals from the greater San Diego area.

Most recently, OPVSA has input from the faculty with the newly created position of Faculty Director of Postdoctoral Training and Education. The Director Mark Lawson is Professor of Reproductive Medicine and Director of UC President’s Postdoctoral Fellowship Program. With this culmination of stakeholder voices and professional development momentum, OPVSA launched the Explore, Prepare, Innovate, Connect (EPIC) Program in January of this year.

Inspired by the natural beauty and distinct biomes of San Diego, this program is a holistic approach to postdoc training that provides a curriculum to empower postdocs to be successful in their training and beyond. To provide a foundation for professional development and a cohort for new or first year postdocs, the EPIC Program includes a two day workshop called the EPIC Bootcamp for postdocs to explore those career paths in an environment that encourages peer to peer, and faculty to postdoc, interactions, hence continuing to build community. The EPIC Bootcamp is the gateway to a certificate in four career paths that are of most interest to UC San Diego postdocs.

With 10 campus and local program partners, the EPIC Program itself is a testament to the community that is committed to the professional and career development of postdocs, including the grAdvantage program, Teaching and Learning Commons, International Faculty and Scholar Office and Rady School of Management.

While postdocs have many concerns and feel lost at times as to what their next step is, institutions have a responsibility to provide guidance, structure, and resources to help them navigate the path. OPVSA has recognized and embraced this responsibility and will continue to define, modify, and implement programs that strengthen the postdoc community to provide a healthy and productive time in training and empower postdocs for career success.

HOW TRUMP’S TRAVEL BANS AFFECT INTERNATIONAL POSTDOCS

in the IT industry, border security, new vetting standards within the U.S. Consulates in the issuance of visas, the unauthorized foreign national population in the United States, and removal (e.g. deportation) policy — all of which are issue and population groups largely removed from postdocs.”

All the basic legal provisions for the immigration status and legal pathways toward permanent residence for postdocs remain unaffected by the EO, Aronson said. “The main area of concern to postdocs lies not with overt legal reform, but rather with the delays, inflexibilities, and negative attitudes of the immigration bureaucracy, particularly in the U.S. Consulates abroad and at the border entry posts where there is a new empowerment granted to inject instability, uncertainty, humiliations, and fear in the putative service of U.S. national security objectives.”

Green, however, urges caution for anyone from the five banned countries who wishes to enter the United States: “Any nationals of the five countries must be extremely cautious should they wish to depart the US for any reason at all. If a trip is being considered, please discuss this with your international scholar advisor, or immigration counsel. The EO affects everyone from these countries including international postdocs. If you do return to the US with a valid visa nationals of the five countries can expect to be sent to ‘Secondary Inspection’ for further questioning and delay before being admitted to the US.”

About the interviewed immigration attorneys

Robert D. Aronson is an immigration attorney based in Minneapolis who works extensively with academic institutions and Postdocs nationwide, including within the UC system. Mr. Aronson’s biography can be accessed at https://www.fredlaw.com/our_people/robert_d_aronson/ and he would welcome further thoughts or comments on the information appearing in this piece.

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.
Scholar Affairs (OPVSA) and International Faculty & Scholar Office, the program provides a structured opportunity for new postdocs to be matched with Ambassadors and learn about life in San Diego, housing, transportation, family resources, and anything not explicitly explained in The Postdoc Survival Guide (which was co-developed by Dr. Bortnick). Postdocs were grateful for the insight and tips on career development, teaching, networking and family planning. Bortnick attributes much of the success of the program to her PDA team.

Once the postdocs were settled, the next order of business was to create a way for them to be engaged with the campus community. The PDA provides a structured organization for postdocs from different departments and disciplines to meet and share their ideas for advancing their community. However, they noticed that the vast majority of postdocs who participated were from the health and life sciences. In order to serve all postdocs, they needed representation from other disciplines. To address this, Dr. Bortnick and the PDA team developed the Departmental and Campus Representative Program. The goal of this program was to reach out to underrepresented disciplines from the social sciences, engineering, and humanities to create a more diverse and representative organization. At the beginning of the PDA term, the leadership would seek out and solicit postdocs from those underrepresented departments and disciplines and include them either formally or informally to address committee issues and participate in programs. This ensured that the views and needs of their communities were being addressed.

Following her tenure as PDA chair, Dr. Bortnick remained committed to postdocs and continued working with OPVSA and its programming. She applied for funding to establish the Postdoctoral Scholar Dependent Care Travel Program. The funding would financially aid postdocs who had dependent care responsibilities to travel to professional development opportunities.

For all these efforts, Dr. Bortnick was recently recognized as a campus recipient of the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action and Diversity Awards for her exemplary effort to make a positive impact through programs inspiring community and inclusion and tackling implicit bias in the workplace. This annual awards program honors staff, faculty, students, departments, and organizational units or groups that make outstanding contributions in the areas of equal opportunity, affirmative action, diversity, and the UCSD Principles of Community. Dr. Bortnick was the first ever postdoc to receive this award.

“We recognize and honor the great work these individuals and departments have achieved in promoting equity and inclusion at UC San Diego,” said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. “They have gone above and beyond to make diversity a priority, a charge shared by everyone on campus.”

When accepting the award Dr. Bortnick said, “We are from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, but what we all have in common is the desire to conduct cutting-edge research and train the next generation of students.”

We couldn’t agree more. The Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs is committed to continuing and expanding her efforts.

Know It All?! 

of the confusion, the ban, while largely stayed, has still prevented numerous foreign scientists and their spouses from obtaining visas to attend conferences, or to return to their temporary academic homes in the U.S. It is also affecting the number of students and postdocs attempting to come to the U.S. for academic work, says Karen Hertzog [Trump’s travel ban is on the back burner in courts, but it’s still front burner for universities, April 20, 2017, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel]. It is currently a major impediment to continued successful research in many laboratories as trained, invested talent does not return from trips, or do not apply in the first place. It is anticipated to cost most major universities nationwide significant tuition and overhead revenue.
Sandra A. Brown, Ph.D., is Vice Chancellor for Research and a Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry at UC San Diego. Dr. Brown is internationally recognized for her developmentally focused alcohol and drug research. Her research yielded pioneering information on adolescent addiction, relapse among youth, and long term outcomes of youth who have experienced alcohol and drug problems. She is the past President of Division 50 (Addictions) of the American Psychological Association, is on the executive board of numerous scientific organizations, and has over 35 grants and 350 publications. She is involved in addiction prevention and intervention at the regional, state, and national levels and helped lead NIAAA’s effort to establish national screening and early intervention guidelines for youth. She currently directs the National Consortium on Alcohol and Neurodevelopment in Adolescence (NCANDA) and investigates the effectiveness of novel approaches to intervention with youth.

Miroslav Krstic, Ph.D., is Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, Director of the Cymer Center for Control Systems and Dynamics, Daniel L. Alspach Endowed Chair in Dynamic Systems and Control, and Distinguished Professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, all at UC San Diego. Dr. Krstic’s research is in control theory (nonlinear control, adaptive control, stochastic nonlinear systems, PDE control, delay systems), model-free optimization (extremum seeking), and various applications. He has published extensively, and is considered a leader of his field after having pioneered feedback stabilization methods for nonlinear systems with unknown parameters and stochastic disturbances, and revolutionized the field of delay systems.

Jennifer Oh is Director of Academic Research Scholar in the Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs at UC San Diego. Under the Vice Chancellor for Research, she oversees the Postdoctoral, Visiting Scholar, and Academic Research Personnel units. As a campus administrative leader, her goal is to advance the research and educational mission of UC San Diego. She specializes in UC Academic, Postdoctoral Scholar, Visiting Scholar and HR policies and procedures; research and higher education policies and policy analysis; research administration; professional career development and training for academics; benefits and compensation; and postdoctoral bargaining.

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How Sleep Deprivation Damages Your Physical and Mental Health

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

You know those people who brag about getting three hours of sleep per night and still wake up with the ability to function like the rest of us? No need to be jealous of them anymore. Sleep plays a vital role in our physical and mental health; it’s our body’s way of rebooting itself. As a postdoc, you may be inclined to work those long hours and get less sleep on a regular basis that could interfere with your overall health. When our heads don’t hit the pillow enough, it can significantly lower our quality of life. According to Harvard Medical School, sleeping less than five hours per night increases the risk of death from all causes by 15 percent.

A study from the UC Berkeley Sleep and Neuroimaging Laboratory (The Sleep Lab) in 2015 discovered that one single sleepless night can fundamentally change the way we perceive others—it can influence the way you interact with people in a negative way. Cal professor and neuroscientist Matthew Walker, who runs the Sleep Lab, made the comment at a Smithsonian event in 2014 that the West is in the throes of “a silent sleep-loss epidemic.”

The first step to protecting your body is understanding how it works and getting to know the serious consequences of sleep deprivation.

Heart Disease

Lack of sleep has major effects on our cardiovascular system. In fact, women who sleep less than six hours, or over nine hours per night have an elevated risk of coronary heart disease. Sleep deprivation can also elevate blood pressure levels in people with hypertension the following day.

Mood Disorders

We all wake up a little cranky after a restless night of tossing and turning, so consider what 30 restless nights will do to your mental state. Insufficient sleep can lead to depression, stress and anxiety—and understandably so. When your body is not performing at its best you feel lousy and irritable, and you may not realize that all you need is a little shut-eye.

Alcohol

You may think that alcohol is the answer when you’re trying to get some rest, but it actually has an adverse effect on your body. Yes, alcohol can induce sleep, but it’s only temporary. It can cause a disruption to your slumber later in the night while it’s being processed through your body, sending you back to square one.

Obesity

Sleep deprivation has joined lack of exercise and overeating as a risk factor for obesity, but how can lack of sleep cause you to gain weight? Sleep gives our bodies an opportunity to secrete hormones that help control appetite, energy metabolism, and glucose processing. When we don’t get enough sleep, this process is disrupted. Insufficient sleep increases the secretion of insulin, a hormone that stores fat in our bodies and leads to weight gain.

We understand you have an overwhelming amount to do on your agenda, and there is never enough time in the day. One or two all-nighters may not hurt, but when it becomes a lifestyle, your body will eventually start to break down. Sleep is not a luxury; it’s a necessity. If you can see it as such, you won’t feel so guilty for those few extra hours of zzz’s.