Prior to joining the UC Los Angeles Graduate Division as the associate dean responsible for postdoctoral appointments, M. Belinda Tucker directed a national postdoctoral program funded by the National Institute of Mental Health. In that capacity, she observed that few mentors and postdoctoral scholars were familiar with the rules and regulations governing postdoc appointments in the University of California. Moreover, few knew exactly what

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**Annual Report**

University of California
Council of Postdoctoral Scholars (CPS)

By Fabian V. Filipp, Chair

In my function as chair of the CPS over the past year, allow me to say that it has been a pleasure to work with postdocs and administrators from the ten University of California (UC) campuses. Here is a round-up of recent CPS activities.

One of the most successful endeavors this year was the establishment of the UC Postdoc Newsletter—as of this writing, our second issue! In addition, CPS representatives undertook an assessment of career development resources for postdocs on each UC campus, based on needs identified in the 2005 Sigma Xi National Postdoc Survey results. This process identified differing career support services to postdocs amongst the UC campuses and underscored CPS’s commitment to promote career development.

CPS meetings usually rotate among UC campuses; however, the most recent meeting was held “off location” at the 2009 National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) Annual Meeting in Houston, Texas. During the NPA meeting,

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Editor's Column By Natalia M. Belfiore


Thanks to President Obama, UC Berkeley postdocs Heather Melichar and Ou Li, and others in the lab of Dr. Ellen Robey (UC Berkeley, Molecular and Cellular Biology), are some of the American researchers now able to use federally funded equipment and supplies to study stem cell lines created after 2001 when then-President Bush banned studies of new stem cell lines. Their photographs were featured in a NatureNews article in March http://www.nature.com/news/2009/090309/full/458130a.html

According to a recent meta-analysis of more than 400 studies of factors that could affect the retention of women in math-intensive fields, the most compelling explanation is that “…mathematics-capable women disproportionately choose non-mathematical fields…” “Women’s choices regarding family and career are largely constrained by the family division of labor.” Thus, although cause and effect are poorly linked in most studies to date, research institutions that wish to attract and retain more women in the STEM fields are urged to create more flexible tenure-track options for women. Detailed results are available in Ceci, S. J., W. W. Williams and S. M. Barnett 2009. Psychological Bulletin 135:218-261.

UC Irvine just established its postdoctoral association and held its first-time ever meeting on June 25, 2009. Congratulations to UC Irvine postdocs!

Two new competitions for postdoc entrepreneurs have been announced – the Kauffman Foundation Outstanding Postdoctoral Entrepreneur Award and the Emerging Postdoctoral Entrepreneur Award. Winners will be awarded $10,000 and $2,500 honoraria (respectively) by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and the National Postdoctoral Association. For more information go to: http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/component/content/article/276-kauffman-nominations

Are you getting EVERYTHING YOU NEED from your postdoc?

By Cathee Johnson Phillips, Executive Director, National Postdoctoral Association

In an era of increasing complexity for the research enterprise, postdoctoral scholars pursue a variety of careers in academia, government, industry, and entrepreneurship—and this variety demands a diverse array of skills that are often neglected during doctoral study and postdoctoral research, such as writing grant proposals and CVs or mastering the principles of effective lab management. The postdoctoral experience will be more relevant to career and professional development if the scholar seeks or is offered opportunities to acquire, maintain, or improve such skills.

Recognizing the important need for this training, the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) has identified six core competencies to (1) provide national guidelines for institutional development of curricula to address the needs of postdoctoral scholars for skill acquisition to achieve career success and (2) provide guidelines for postdocs and mentors to assess success in completing the steps needed for scientific career fulfillment. In reality, postdocs will need to be self-driven and proactive in managing their time so that they can develop these skills.

The six core competencies represent skills that are needed to succeed regardless of one’s career path. They include:

1. Discipline-specific conceptual knowledge (e.g., broad-based knowledge acquisition, analytical approach to defining scientific questions, design of scientifically testable hypotheses)

2. Research skills (e.g., literature search strategies and effective interpretation, statistical analysis, experimental design, data analysis and interpretation, principles of the peer review process)

3. Communication skills (e.g., writing, speaking, teaching, media relations, networking, selling yourself to prospective employers)

4. Professionalism (interactions at the workplace and with colleagues, peers, and society)

5. Leadership and management skills (e.g., strategic vision, motivating others, project management, resource management)

6. Responsible conduct of research (e.g., data ownership and sharing, publication practices and responsible authorship, research involving animals, research with human subjects, conflict of interest, identifying and mitigating research misconduct)
The context of the core competencies is life-long learning. The reality is that just working on these skills during undergraduate or graduate studies is not enough. Putting this learning on hold during a postdoc is quite simply not a good idea. If a faculty advisor or principal investigator is reluctant to allow time and/or provide guidance for continued development of these skills, the results of a recent survey may offer some encouragement to do so. According to the 2004-2005 Sigma Xi postdoc survey of U.S. postdoctoral scholars: “Postdocs who reported the highest levels of oversight and professional development were more satisfied, gave their advisors higher ratings, reported fewer conflicts with their advisors, and were more productive than those reporting the lowest levels.”

Detailed information regarding these competencies is available on the NPA Web site at http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/core-competencies

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In 2003, University of California (UC), Los Angeles was one of the few campuses left without a postdoctoral scholar association (PSA). In March of 2003, Eileen Anderson-Fye, a postdoc in the social sciences, was successful in obtaining funding from the Vice Chancellor of Graduate Research (Dr. Mitchell-Kernan) to create and support a PSA, named the University of California Los Angeles Society of Postdoctoral Scholars (SoPS). Eileen was very active in the UC Systemwide Council of Postdoctoral Scholars (CPS), and thus was able to inspire and garner interest and participation from postdocs at UC Los Angeles to create an active organization. During this time, SoPS held its first social mixer at the UC Los Angeles Faculty Center and created its first web page, and later instituted “Pub Nights” on Fridays as well as occasional career events.

Over the years, SoPS decided to distribute its activities into five internal committees, a model that has worked well to distribute responsibility among postdocs. This allowed members to align their activities with their interests. The committees are the

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Beginning in the Fall of 2009, Berkeley postdoc Jocelyn Rodgers will mentor 42 WiSE women, mostly freshmen, at their weekly seminar. The goal of the seminar has been to introduce young female undergraduate students to strategies for academic success, career and graduate school options, and issues and challenges specific to women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields, including industry. Jocelyn, who taught middle and high school science in Washington, D.C., and supervised a high school engineering team in creating robots and electric vehicles, is hoping to enhance the current curriculum with an active introduction to the breadth of campus research, including interactions with graduate students and research groups.

The WiSE Theme Program is one of seven Theme Programs offered in UC Berkeley's residence halls. These special residential communities are co-sponsored by an academic department and the Office of Student Development (OSD) that allow undergraduates to enjoy the opportunities of the large research university while being part of a smaller and closer-knit residential community of students who share a common academic interest. For more about the WiSE Theme Program click http://themeprograms.berkeley.edu/wise.html

In addition to materials covered in their weekly seminar, WiSE residents are also offered other thematic opportunities including retreats, field trips, workshops, dinners with faculty, study groups, community service, and leadership development projects.

Jocelyn earned her Ph.D. in Chemical Physics last year from the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) and currently works at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory under the faculty sponsorship of UC Berkeley Professor Berend Smit (Chemistry and Chemical Engineering). Jocelyn conducts research on molecular simulation of biologically-relevant systems. As a doctoral student at UMCP, Jocelyn was a teaching assistant for a new physical chemistry special topics course designed for beginning graduate students. During her undergraduate years at Harvard, she was an introductory chemistry teaching assistant and also tutored at a local high school, the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School.

Because Jocelyn has a clear career goal to become a faculty member at an undergraduate teaching institution, she was upfront about this when applying for postdoctoral positions. To this regard, she sought a way to enhance her teaching credentials while completing her postdoctoral research, and was very excited to come across an opportunity to work with undergraduates.

In past years, the WiSE seminar was taught either by a faculty member, or by professional staff from the OSD. This year, in response to student requests for more direct contact with women who have been graduate students or professional scientists, WiSE advertised to the UC Berkeley postdoc listserve, and received over a dozen inquiries. OSD Academic Services Assistant Director, Dr. Anne Marie Richard, was very pleased with the pool of postdoctoral applicants for this volunteer position, and is looking forward to the year’s program. Richard also speculates that other Theme Programs may seek postdocs for similar roles in other fields in the near future. The arrangement promises to be a win-win for both the WiSE Theme Program and, for Jocelyn, who is seeking to enhance her postdoctoral experience.

Meanwhile, Jocelyn is really looking forward to her new role with WiSE, connecting with undergraduates, mentoring WiSE women, and further developing her own teaching and advising skills. She will be provided with administrative support from the professional and student residence hall staff as well as the WiSE Advisory Board, which provides guidance to the program and includes faculty members Professors Caroline Kane (Molecular Biology), Fiona Doyle (Engineering) and George Chang (Nutritional Sciences & Toxicology).

The Graduate Division team aimed to provide a one-stop go-to document that would answer nearly all questions postdocs as well as their mentors might have on campus. The project grew to include guidelines and advice to postdocs on initiating and maintaining clear, goal-oriented communication with their postdoc advisors regarding the trajectory and milestones of the postdoc appointment. Toward this end, the project team referred to other documents, including UC San Diego’s Postdoctoral Scholar Annual Review Form, the National Science Foundation Guidelines for Mentoring, the American Association of Medical Colleges Compact Between Postdoctoral Appointees and Their Mentors, and the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology’s Individual Development Plan for Postdocs.

This impressive, but concise, document not only provides a specific directory of terms, services and offices of use to postdocs at UC Los Angeles, along with forms and checklists, but a road map for key interactions between postdocs and their faculty advisors. The Tool Kit recommends an initial effort to outline the postdoc’s goals, followed by quarterly and annual meetings to check in about the milestones and timeline. This year, an annual evaluation has become mandatory at UC Los Angeles and is required for the Graduate Division to extend a postdoc’s appointment.
Tucker and Itagaki have been impressed by the effort that faculty have put into writing the evaluations and their consistent use of the tools in the kit. The Graduate Division has also noted that this process has given both postdocs and mentors an opportunity to document their intentions, efforts, and accomplishments related to the agreed-upon goals for each individual postdoc, which has served to smooth negotiations down the road. Itagaki, along with Esther Chang and Jenny Tang from the UC Los Angeles team, plan to revise the Tool Kit, which they published inexpensively, as new policies and other changes come about. They hope that the fruits of their efforts serve as a template for other campus postdoctoral offices across the nation to adapt to meet the needs of their own postdocs.

To view the Tool Kit, please click on http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/gss/postdoc/pdtoolkit.pdf

**Ask Adam**

**ANSWER (CONTINUED):**

Department to issue the DS 2019 (the certificate required to obtain a J-1 visa) for the purpose of exchange and academic training. The reason for the granting of Academic Training is for you to have a work experience in the U.S. prior to your return home.

J-1 postdocs may work after graduation during a period of Academic Training for up to 36 months. During this time, you may work for any employer in your field, regardless of that employer's relationship to your academic institution. The actual authorized period of Academic Training employment is listed on your DS 2019 form.

On the other hand, the H-1b is a work visa that is granted for up to six years and in some cases may even be extended further. During your period in H-1b status, you might be sponsored by your employer for permanent residence, or in some cases might even be able to sponsor yourself without the need for an employer. While in H-1b status it is a simple process for you to switch between employers, although each employer must submit its own H-1b petition to immigration on your behalf.

Another benefit of changing your J visa status while inside the U.S. to H-1b visa status is, should you need to travel outside the U.S. and the visa expires during the time of your travel, it is far easier to be granted another H-1b visa than it would be a J visa. The reason for this ease is that in order to be granted the J visa, you must establish that you continue to have a residence outside the U.S. to which you will return at the conclusion of your program. By contrast, the H-1b does not require you to maintain a residence outside the U.S. In fact you can be in the green card (permanent residence queue) and still be issued the H-1b visa at the U.S. consulate abroad, should you travel. This would not occur if you needed to obtain a new J-1 visa.

In order to be eligible to change your visa status from a J-1 to an H-1b visa, I will assume that you are not subject to the two year home residency requirement. This rule applies to those in J status from certain countries if you have received either U.S. government, home country government, or international organization funding. An international organization, for example, might be the OAS, NATO, or the UN. Receipt of private scholarships or direct funding from the university in support of your research does not make you subject to the two year home residency requirement.

If, on the other hand, you are subject to the two year home residency rule, then you are totally ineligible to change your visa status from J-1 to H-1b until you obtain a waiver of the rule or have spent a total of 24 months in your country of nationality or last permanent residence.

I will also assume that IBM is not authorized by the State Department to issue the DS 2019 forms. Mainly, J visa program authorization is granted only to universities and some non-profits. So, IBM realizes that once your Academic Training is over it will be forced to obtain an H-1b on your behalf. Due to issues that surround the H-1b quota IBM probably wants to move you to that visa category sooner rather than later.

Adam Green, Attorney at Law
www.employment-family-sponsoredimmigration.com

**Annual Report**

the UC System was often referenced as a model for postdoctoral support. For the record, many past and current CPS members as well as UC campus representatives are NPA individual or institutional members who are on the NPA executive board or who are chairs of many NPA subcommittees. For example, current UC Los Angeles postdoc Judy Ho is the NPA treasurer as well as a CPS member, and is an important liaison for both organizations.

At the spring meeting of the UC Council of Graduate Deans (COGD), I delivered our annual report and requested renewed support from UC administration. In response, the CPS was formally reconfirmed as an academic advisory committee and Dr. Christine DesJarlais of UC San Francisco was elected chair of the COGD Postdoc Work Group. In this capacity, DesJarlais will provide interface amongst UC postdocs, faculty and campus administrators.

During my tenure, the CPS also endorsed the UC Los Angeles Postdoc Toolkit (see focus article in this issue). With encouragement from the hardworking UC Los Angeles team, it is hoped that this comprehensive document will serve as model and resource for universities across the nation.

Personally speaking, my affiliation with the CPS has been extremely rewarding. The CPS is a great example of how a volunteer group of postdocs can make substantial contributions to the enhancement of the postdoctoral experience at UC. Soon, my duties as chair of the CPS will be passed on to chair-elect, Dr. Amanda Stiles of UC Berkeley. I am confident that she will do a great job! Best wishes to everyone.