



The POSTDOCKET

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National Postdoctoral Association
 200 New York Ave. NW, Suite 635
 Washington, D.C. 20005
 202-326-6424
 202-371-9849 (FAX)
 info@nationalpostdoc.org
 Heather Gorby, Ph.D., Editor-in-Chief
 Andrew Hebbeler, Ph.D., Associate Editor
 Rachel Ruhlen, Ph.D., Associate Editor

6th Annual NPA Meeting: Postdocs Need to Train For an Uncertain Future

Ian Brooks and Rachel Rublen

Postdoctoral scholars today are facing a shortage of academic faculty positions and a future where funding is uncertain at best. To survive and flourish in a modern, global marketplace postdocs need effective mentoring and training in translational skills. This message was presented to over 250 delegates, representing research universities, institutes and foundations in the US and Canada, who gathered in Boston, MA, the weekend of April 25-27th for the 2008 National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) annual meeting.

An interactive discussion of the 2000 National Academies' Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy report: "Enhancing the Postdoctoral Experience for Scientists and Engineers" took place between participants at the

Friday Leadership Session for postdoc associations (PDA) and offices (PDO). PDO and PDA participants agreed that great strides have been taken in improving the postdoc training environment, but room for improvement remains, particularly in focusing on the futures of postdocs outside academia.

The conference theme was providing postdocs with the training required for employment in either the traditional academic career path or, more likely, in non-traditional careers. Most postdocs depend on their mentor's R01 grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The current NIH budget plateau was addressed in the Keynote Address delivered by Dr. Sharon L. Hays, Associate Director of the **Annual Meeting**, *continued on page 10*

Structural Changes Lead NPA to New Efficiencies and Opportunities

Stacy Gelhaus and Beth Alton

Discussions regarding structural changes in the NPA committees of the membership have been ongoing for over a year. Diane Klotz, former Chair of the NPA Board of Directors, highlighted the thought process in her recent article "Look for Structural Changes to the NPA" (POSTDOCKET, Winter 2008). These changes were first discussed at the annual NPA Committee Chair's Leadership Institute held in 2007. Since that time, a significant number of

changes have occurred mainly due to hard work by the Implementation Taskforce, created at the annual Board of Directors retreat in December, 2007.

Efficiency and Collaboration

The taskforce was charged with implementation of the new committee structure, which includes streamlining the committees of the membership from seven to four: Meetings, Outreach, Resource Development, and Advocacy. Consolidation of committees is in no way a downsizing of the NPA; rather, it is an opportunity to re-engage committee membership and reduce redundancy among overarching projects. This will allow the NPA to be more efficient and collaborative organization that better serves the postdoctoral community.

Changes, *continued on page 5*

NPA Awarded Grant to Plan National Survey of Postdocs

Alyson Reed

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation has awarded a planning grant to the NPA to lay the groundwork for a national survey of postdoctoral scholars, similar to the Sigma Xi Postdoc Survey conducted earlier this decade. The goals of the national survey will be:

- To gather and report comprehensive data on the status of postdoctoral scholars in the U.S.
- To enable comparisons with the Sigma Xi Postdoc Survey data and results
- To enable more detailed analyses of various sub-sets of the postdoc population
- To develop postdoctoral policies and best practices based on more reliable sources of data

The funds awarded for the planning grant will be used to: develop a pilot survey instrument and online interface; to test the pilot survey at the University of Pennsylvania; to analyze the survey results; and to make further refinements to the survey instrument and process based on the results of the pilot. If all goes according to plan, the NPA will then seek additional support for a national survey project based on the planning activities conducted.

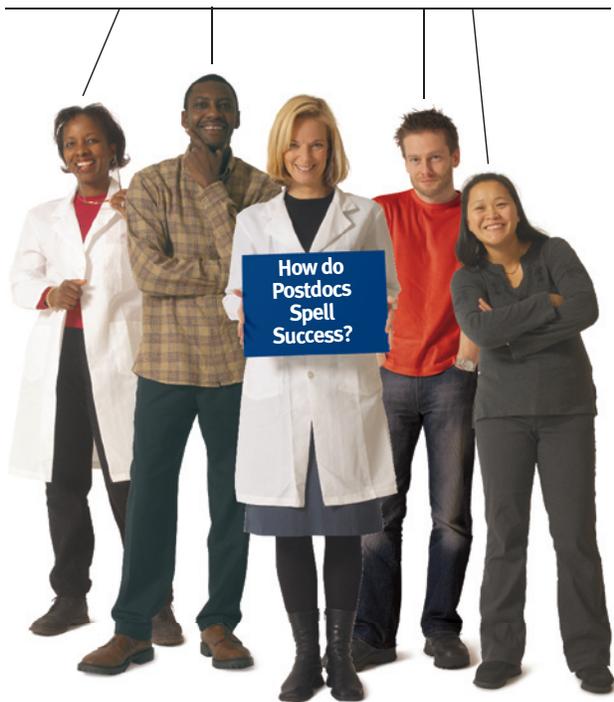
The timeframe for the planning work will be from April – September, 2008, and will involve partnerships with the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) International, and the National Bureau for Economic Research (NBER). Both organizations were involved with the previous Sigma Xi survey. In preparing for this project, the NPA convened a Project Workgroup which included representatives of postdoc offices and associations that have conducted surveys, along with a representative of FASEB and the former survey

investigator for Sigma Xi. This workgroup will be reconstituted as an Advisory Committee for the planning grant project.

If the NPA is successful in securing support for a national survey, we hope to include the following elements: 1) a supplemental survey option for participating institutions; and 2) an assessment of the feasibility of longitudinal data collection on former postdocs who complete the survey. We plan to work closely with postdoc offices and associations to help us implement the national survey project. This will include: securing permission from the institution to participate in the survey (and formulate supplemental survey questions); assist in obtaining IRB approval; providing postdoc mailing lists and marketing the survey to postdocs; helping to ensure a robust response rate; and making use of the custom data analyses provided to impact institutional and individual practices.

Alyson Reed is the Executive Director of the NPA.

AAAS & NPA



Here's your link to career advancement

AAAS is at the forefront of advancing early-career researchers — offering job search, grants and fellowships, skill-building workshops, and strategic advice through ScienceCareers.org and our Center for Careers in Science & Technology.

NPA, the National Postdoctoral Association, is providing a national voice and seeking positive change for postdocs — partnering with AAAS in career fairs, seminars, and other events. In fact, AAAS was instrumental in helping the NPA get started and develop into a growing organization and a vital link to postdoc success.

If you're a postdoc or grad student, go to the AAAS-NPA link to find out how to spell career success.

AAAS.org/NPA



Penn State Adopts New Parental Accommodation Guideline

Allison De Marco and Kathleen Flint

In February 2008, Pennsylvania State University became one of the few research universities to implement a special parental accommodation guideline for postdoctoral trainees and graduate student assistants. All postdocs, regardless of funding source, and graduate students with research or teaching assistantships, are eligible for six weeks of paid leave following the birth or adoption of a child. Penn State's guideline specifies that the primary caregiver is eligible for the accommodation, rather than the child-bearer common to other



Penn State Postdocs Faith and Dan Lessner with their son Brayden.

policies. This provision allows both men and women to utilize the accommodation, although only one parent is eligible if both are Penn State trainees. Income and benefits, including health insurance, remain unchanged during the accommodation period while major assignments and/or milestones are deferred.

Sensitized by his research demonstrating women's attrition from the academy as well as developments at other universities, Dr. Mark Wardell, Associate Dean of Graduate Student Affairs and Director of the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, assembled a task force in April 2007 to investigate the possibility of implementing a parental accommodation guideline for trainees. Prior to a formal guideline, new parents often were forced to withdraw for the full term, consequently restricting their access to University resources including the library and faculty advising. The odds of completing a degree fall dramatically following a withdrawal.

The new guideline matches that previously implemented for Penn State faculty and staff, who also receive six paid weeks. After moving through two University Committees, President Graham Spanier approved the guideline in December 2007.

Although there has been no official usage tracking, clarification inquiries made by several colleges suggest that graduate students and postdocs are aware of the program and are eager to use it.

Research institutions have an array of practices regarding parental leave for postdocs, largely dependent upon how their appointments are classified. Most postdocs are classified as employees, entitling them to standard institutional leave policies which typically permit paid leave only through a combination of accrued vacation and sick time, or short-term disability. Although some postdocs on fellowships can be subject to fellowship-specific policies allowing defined periods of paid

leave, such as the NIH NRSA fellowship (see sidebar), many non-employee postdocs must depend upon the goodwill of their supervisors, or consider an unpaid leave or leave of absence.

Fewer institutions have paid accommodation policies specifically for postdocs of all classifications. Some, like Stanford and the Lerner Research Institute at Cleveland Clinic, offer a defined period of paid leave for all postdocs similar to that at Penn State. Others have smaller scale accommodation programs offering either paid

leave for postdocs within certain departments or schools, or competitive fellowships to support a subset of postdocs. Such policies can foster a postdoc's continued career advancement by removing the stigma attached to special accommodation requests on a case-by-case basis and standardizing his or her return to full-time research.

Allison De Marco, MSW, Ph.D., is a Family Research Consortium IV Postdoctoral Fellow based at Penn State and Chairperson of the Penn State Postdoctoral Society. Kathleen Flint, Ph.D., is Project Manager for the NP A where she manages the Postdoc Leadership Mentoring Project and the Bring RCR Home project.

NIH expands parental accommodation policy for NRSA Fellows

On April 10, 2008, the NIH released a modified parental accommodation policy for the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards (NRSA). The change, effective immediately, extends the current period of paid leave for adoption or the birth of a child from 30 calendar days per year to up to sixty calendar days per year when "those in comparable training positions at the grantee organization have access to this level of paid leave for this purpose." This includes trainees on training grants and fellows on individual fellowships and either parent is eligible to take leave. For more information: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-08-064.html>

University of Michigan Adopts Individual Development Plan, Postdoc-Mentor Compact

Christopher Alteri

The University of Michigan recently adopted an Annual Evaluation for postdocs. The University of Michigan Postdoctoral Association (UMPDA) represents 500-600 postdocs at the University of Michigan Medical School. The recently revitalized UMPDA works closely with the Program in Biological Sciences (PIBS), the umbrella program responsible for graduate students, the Assistant Dean for Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and the Faculty Advisor for Postdoctoral Studies. These key management and administrative relationships were instrumental in the creation of an Annual Evaluation for Postdocs that includes an Individual Development Plan (IDP) and adoption of a modified version of the AAMC GREAT Compact entitled, "Guiding Principles between Postdoctoral Appointees and their Mentors". These policies enhance the postdoctoral experience by putting in place a standardized mechanism to foster regular communication between postdocs and mentors to ensure that both parties' goals and expectations are clearly defined and given the greatest opportunity for success.

The top-down strategy avoided potential slow-downs by circumventing deliberations among the >500 faculty within the Medical School. The starting point for the policies was in PIBS, where Dr. David Engelke, the former PIBS Director, and Dr. Lori Isom, the current PIBS Director and former Faculty Advisor for Postdoctoral Studies, developed the

initial idea to create an annual evaluation mechanism combined with an IDP. From PIBS, the documents were circulated to the UMPDA, where postdocs were given a forum to provide feedback. The revised documents received approval from the Medical School Dean's office, then traveled to Human Resources (HR), the only body with the ability to implement the policies across the entire Medical School. HR now distributes the Annual Evaluation/IDP to departmental administrators for inclusion in annual review packets for faculty and staff. By combining a top-down approach and early consultation with the UMPDA, road blocks were minimized while creating policies that serve the needs of both postdocs and faculty mentors.



The AAMC GREAT compact implementation followed a similar path. In addition, UMPDA consulted with the Office of the Vice President and General Counsel to ensure the use of appropriate legal terminology and to avoid contractually binding language. Currently, this compact is introduced to incoming postdocs at orientation sessions at the beginning of every postdoctoral appointment. The combined usage of the modified AAMC Compact with the annual evaluation and IDP empowers postdocs with a formal mechanism to enhance their research training experience and meet their individual career goals while, at the same time, meeting or exceeding the needs of the faculty mentor. This in turn, strengthens the postdoctoral community, benefits the mentor's research program, and strengthens the reputation of the University of Michigan Medical School as an optimal setting for postdoctoral training.

Christopher Alteri, Ph.D. is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Michigan Medical School, president of the UMPDA, and serves on the AAMC GREAT Group Postdoctorate Committee.

NPA Member Round-Up

Thank you to the following sustaining members that have joined or renewed their membership since the last issue of the POSTDOCKET.

NEW

- Purdue University
- Rockefeller University, The (Postdoctoral Office)
- University Health Network
- University of Texas Medical Branch

RENEWED

- American Association for Dental Research
- American Society of Microbiology
- Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology
- Baylor College of Medicine
- Burnham Institute, The
- Drexel University College of Medicine
- FASEB
- H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute
- Harvard School of Public Health
- La Jolla Institute for Allergy and Immunology
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Mayo Research Fellow's Association
- National Institutes of Health, FELCOM
- Purdue University
- St. Jude Children's Research Hospital
- University of Colorado at Boulder
- University of Colorado Denver (Anschutz Medical Campus)
- University of Michigan Medical School
- University of Missouri Postdoctoral Association
- University of Tennessee Health Science Center
- University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, The
- University of Utah
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Wadsworth Center/NYSDOH

International Educators Association Forms Special Interest Group on Postdoc Issues

Heather Gorby

NAFSA: the Association of International Educators (formerly, National Association of Foreign Student Advisors) recently approved a special interest group for those engaged in training and supporting postdocs. NAFSA promotes international education and global workforce development. NAFSA serves international educators and their institutions by setting standards of good practice, providing training and professional development opportunities, providing networking opportunities, and advocating for international education.

In 2005, NPA leaders including Executive Director Alyson Reed and Advi-

sory Board member Sam Castañeda met with NAFSA staff to discuss creating a special interest group on postdocs. The purpose of the group was to bring together NAFSA members who work with postdocs for the purpose of better understanding the key issues confronting this young, migrant, mostly international scientific research community. The goal of the special interest group is to identify the problems and challenges of international postdocs and provide solutions to them through training and professional development of NAFSA members.

Over the following three years, NPA volunteers coordinated with regional leaders of NAFSA to get enough member signatures on a petition for the formation of the special interest group. Approval for the group was received in March, 2008.

Currently, Sam Castañeda will lead the group as chair, with Adam Green as

co-chair. Mr. Green is an attorney who has served as an informal advisor to the NPA's International Postdoc Committee. NAFSA members and the NPA both provide services to international students and postdocs. The formation of the special interest group will allow all of these people to come together in one place and will foster communication among those that already provide services to the international research community.

The group will have a conference room at the upcoming NAFSA annual meeting in Washington, DC (May 23-25, 2008) where members can meet together. A workshop on postdoc issues, led by Mr. Castaneda and Ms. Reed, will also be offered at this meeting. The next step for the special interest group will be to solicit members and set up an e-discussion list as well as a webpage.

Heather Gorby is the Editor-in-Chief of the NPA POSTDOCKET

Changes, continued from page 1

Committee charges have been written by the Implementation Task Force and approved by the Board. The Strategic Planning Committee has assigned each of the new committees tasks based on their new charges. The new committees will be:

- **Meetings** will remain the same; however they will be responsible for the planning and organization of regional meetings and seminars in addition to the NPA Annual Meeting.
- **Outreach** will conduct activities to promote the mission, values, goals, and business objectives of the NPA.
- **Resource Development** will focus on the development of tools and resources for the postdoctoral community.
- **Advocacy** will be responsible for addressing all advocacy and policy issues relating to and affecting the postdoctoral community, including but not limited to general policy, diversity, and international postdoc issues.

In order to ensure equal attention to diversity and international issues, the Board also decided to add two officer positions to the new structure: a Diversity Officer and an International Officer. The Officers will be the public face of diversity and international issues for the NPA. The Diversity and International Officers will serve as the primary resource and expert advisors on relevant issues to the Board of Directors, the Staff, and Committees of the Membership.

Committee Leadership

Each committee will be managed by a chair and vice chair. New leadership was selected by the Implementation Taskforce and approved by the Board after a call for leadership for these positions was sent out in March, 2008. The following individuals were elected: International Officer—Daniel Andrade, Diversity Officer—Sibby Anderson Thompkins, Meetings Chair—Brenda Timmons, Vice Chair—Martha Skender, Advocacy Chair—Lucia Mokres, Vice Chair—Juliet Moncaster, Outreach Chair—Joseph Marx, Vice Chair—Teri Robinson,

Resource Development Chair—Rachel Ruhlen, Vice Chair—Rebekah Fleming.

These changes were presented at the Annual Meeting in Boston during both the poster session and a plenary session. Everyone is encouraged to directly contact a Board member or the new committee leaders and officers at anytime regarding information on the new structure or for more information on how to join a membership committee. The new structure of the NPA will allow for our continued success and service to the postdoctoral community.

Beth Alton is President of Keene Solutions Management Consulting and serves as Chair of the Nicholas Connor Institute for Pediatric Cancer Research; she formerly served on the NPA Board of Directors and was VP Human Resources at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies. Stacy L. Gelhaus is an NRSA postdoctoral fellow in the Center for Cancer Pharmacology at the University of Pennsylvania and co-chair of their postdoc council. She is also a member of the NPA Board of Directors.

NIH hosts “Best Practices” Workshop for Women in Biomedical Careers

Jennifer Reineke Pohlhaus

On March 4, 2008, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers, along with the National Center for Research Resources and the Office of Research on Women's Health, hosted a workshop entitled *Women in Biomedical Research: Best Practices for Sustaining Career Success*. The goals of this workshop were to examine systems and practices that address retention and advancement of women and to explore ways in which organizations are successfully addressing these issues.

The NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical Careers was created to respond to the challenges issued to federal funding agencies by the National Academies report, *Beyond Bias and Barriers: Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering*, and also to promote the career advancement of women in the NIH intramural research community. The Working Group was appointed by NIH Director Dr. Elias Zerhouni to develop innovative strategies and tangible actions to promote the advancement of women in biomedical research.

Keynote speaker Dr. Nancy Andrews, the first woman dean of the Duke University School of Medicine, cited that few women are seen at high-career levels in academia. She explained that young women often do not see prejudice



Perspectives from the NIH Director, Dr. Elias A. Zerhouni

and bias early in their careers, but they begin to experience multiple challenges as their careers progress, possibly explaining why they drop out of the career pipeline.

Dr. Tim Ley, Professor of Medicine at Washington University Medical School and Dr. Phoebe Leboy, President of the Association for Women in Science, provided demographic data, noting that a shift in the culture at medical and graduate schools will be needed to improve the inclusion of women and minorities in biomedical research. Speakers on the panel, *Models for Advancement in Industry*, highlighted the availability of training, mentoring, childcare, and flexible schedules, as key features to increasing diversity. Several academic programs showcased their “best practices”, including hiring in clusters, providing funds for replacement teaching, promoting increased flexibility in the promotion and tenure timeline, and encouraging executive training.

In providing his perspective on the issues, Dr. Zerhouni shared an anecdote from his past. When he and his wife, also a medical doctor, emigrated from Algeria, they were shocked to find lower numbers of women

in science and medicine than in their home country. Dr. Zerhouni explained that it was important for NIH to move from discussion to action on decreasing unconscious bias and eliminating barriers, an idea that was reinforced by the NIH panel later that afternoon. Panelists provided details on programs and initiatives that NIH is considering, such as increasing flexibility for paid parental leave and improving childcare opportunities.

To follow-up from the workshop, NIH plans to work in partnership with other organizations to continue to address how institutions, including faculty and administration, can successfully address the challenges for career progression for women in biomedical research. Materials, slides, and a videocast from the workshop are available on the “Women in Biomedical Careers” website (<http://womeninscience.nih.gov>), which also includes career development and other resources.

Jennifer Reineke Pohlhaus, Ph.D. AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellow, Office of Research on Women's Health, National Institutes of Health, and a member of the NPA Board of Directors.

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Canadian Postdoctoral Scholars Form New National Organization

Marianne Stanford and the Canadian Association of Postdoctoral Scholars Steering committee

At the 2007 NPA Annual Meeting, a small but enthusiastic group representing Canadian postdoctoral associations and postdoctoral offices connected. This group recognized that the work of the NPA significantly affects policy and makes a positive difference for postdocs working in the US. It was also acknowledged that to make changes within research institutions and funding agencies in Canada, Canadians need their own national postdoctoral organization. Thus, the Canadian Association of Postdoctoral Scholars (CAPS) was born. Starting as a group of 'NPA Meeting contacts', CAPS quickly developed into a steering committee composed of individuals

from postdoctoral offices and associations at eight different institutions, representing more than 3700 of the estimated 5200 postdocs at Canadian universities. The NPA offered CAPS significant resources and mentoring and facilitated discussions between the committee members by hosting regular teleconferences. Currently, CAPS has subcommittees focused in four major areas: funding and advocacy, membership, policy planning and governance. Start-



up funding for CAPS was secured from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and applications for additional monies from Canadian funding agencies and academic institutions are pending.

CAPS formed at an interesting time. Recent Canadian tax legislation changes

grant tax-free status to graduate student incomes labeled as scholarships or fellowships. Several universities are offering this significant tax break to select postdocs, as trainees, which has resulted in inconsistent tax advantages for postdocs across the country. Obviously, this is a subject of great interest for postdocs

in Canada and will be one of the major issues focused on by CAPS over the next year. With

an enthusiastic committee, as well as the support and guidance of groups like the NPA, CAPS intends to advance significantly the training of postdoctoral scholars in Canada.

Marianne Stanford, PhD, is the chair of the CAPS steering committee

Careering through your Postdoc, Part I

Jeffrey P. Townsend

This is the first in a short series of articles that aims to lend perspective on the varied and diverse postdoctoral experience and the transition into an academic job. The articles are formatted as a series of questions and answers for finishing graduate students, new postdocs, and postdocs on the job market about what they should do as a postdoc.

I. When should I finish my Ph.D. and start looking for a postdoc?

The well-kept secret is that, as long as your Ph.D. research has gone fairly well, this is nearly always up to you. Dissertation committee members who are readers of *The POSTDOCKET* will stamp their feet at reading this, steaming at their implied powerlessness, but if you really intend to move on to a postdoc you should judge

your own completion date carefully. Your completion date should be the product of the following tension:

- 1) Finish your Ph.D. as quickly as possible to move on to a postdoc and then a permanent position which will more fairly remunerate you for your education and dedication, and
- 2) Stay in your Ph.D. program until you have completed all the not-publishable education to which you wish to subject yourself, *because the clock starts ticking on publishing when you start your postdoc.* I strongly encourage students to publish during their Ph.D., but students should also realize that they will eternally be judged by the number of publications they have "now" compared to the date of award of their Ph.D. completion, not compared to the date of their entry into graduate school. You will of course learn a great deal after your Ph.D., but it will all be learning "along the way" to the next publication – at least, it will be if

you wish to lead a highly successful academic career. And in industrial research, although publications are not as often the metric of success, the questions you will be faced with and deadlines for research performance will be even more specific and prohibitive of intellectual vagrancy.

For many students, nudging from their graduate advisor or dawning awareness of nascent postdoctoral options are the signals that they rely on to inform them that it is time to wrap up their studies. However, although consulting with your graduate advisor or potential postdoctoral advisors about the tension above is a prime requisite, you are the one who will best understand the force of the factors 1 and 2 on your own life and goals, and now is a good time to take begin taking your career in your own hands by making this important judgement for yourself.

Jeffrey P. Townsend, Assistant Professor, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Yale University

University of California-Irvine Recognizes Postdoc Leader

When Alberto Roca joined the University of California, Irvine (UCI) in 2003 as a postdoctoral fellow, he faced the usual postdoc pressures: the steep learning curve of a new project, the long hours, the uncertain future. Roca also had the added stress of caring for his wife, Nancy Aguilar-Roca, who was diagnosed that year with epilepsy caused by a brain tumor. He worried that he'd lose his health coverage for his wife's medical care if his fellowship wasn't renewed. His wife recovered, and Roca transitioned to an assistant project scientist position in the Department of Molecular Biology & Biochemistry. The experience exemplified the plight of postdocs that Roca seeks to improve.

His support of these often unsung scholars earned him the spring 2007 Living Our Values award for staff members who have been at UCI under five years.

"Alberto Roca has been an ad hoc champion of postdoc issues," wrote R. Michael Mulligan, Developmental & Cell Biology professor and graduate studies associate dean, in his nomination letter. "Postdocs contribute significantly to the academic enterprise, but are often overlooked. Roca has worked diligently to promote the recognition of their contributions."

Roca has supported postdocs in many ways. He represented UCI at the UC Council of Postdoctoral Scholars, organizing its February 2005 meeting on campus. He acted as a liaison with postdoc groups from other departments, including Biological Chemistry and the ADVANCE Biomedical Trainee Network. He was greatly aided in these efforts by an informal group of current and former postdocs including Jason Poole, David Schneider, Candace Hsieh, and Grace Stutzmann.

"Most postdocs are the engine of innovation and productivity in academia. However, they receive little respect," Roca says. "The University of California system is at the forefront of advancing postdoctoral training, but much work



UC-Irvine Chancellor Michael V. Drake presenting a 2007 Living Our Values Award to Alberto I. Roca.

needs to be done. I enjoy contributing to that effort."

He is an especially strong advocate of underrepresented minority postdocs. As a member of the National Postdoctoral Association, he helped create the organization's Diversity Committee. He's worked with the national Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), receiving the society's Presidential Service Award. He founded the group's Postdoc Committee and created its website, www.minoritypostdoc.org. Roca delegated his \$1,000 Living Our Values contribution to SACNAS.

"Social justice issues have always been a priority of mine," he says.

Because of his efforts on behalf of postdocs, UCI is planning to establish a postdoc office, which will provide comprehensive informational resources to these researchers, according to Sharon Metzger, senior fellowship & postdoctoral scholar program analyst in the Graduate Division, who also nominated Roca.

"Alberto represents the 'voice' of the postdoc population," she wrote.

Living Our Values Award

http://www.chancellor.uci.edu/values/award_program.php

An earlier version of this article was written by Kathryn Bold and appeared on the UC-Irvine website, published with permission of UC-Irvine

Volunteer for the NPA

NPA committees have just restructured! Now is a great time to get on board an NPA committee to help the NPA advance the interests of postdoctoral fellows and the research community in the US. Explore the opportunities available at <http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/membershipcommittees>. Contact a committee chair to become involved today.

POLICY POINT

Lucia Mokres

A disturbing trend for postdoctoral stipend awards has seen no sign of relief in 2008. In January, the NIH announced that NRSA stipends will be frozen for FY2008, representing the second year in a row that stipends have failed to increase, despite the NIH's promise in 2001 to increase stipend amounts (10-12% per year initially; keeping pace with inflation thereafter). Many institutions base their postdoctoral compensation policies on the NRSA stipend, the freeze therefore has widespread impact on the salaries of a substantial number of postdocs. The NPA has sent a letter to NIH Director Elias Zerhouni expressing its concern, a copy of which may be found on the NPA website. The NPA leadership has also met with the Director of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), Jeremy Berg, to discuss this issue.

The NIH budget for FY2009 has already been submitted by the President; and it is up to Congress to facilitate a stipend increase. Therefore, the NPA has initiated a congressional campaign to raise awareness of this issue. We very strongly encourage each of our members to take the time to write a letter to their U.S. Representatives and Senators in congress addressing this issue, and to spread the word amongst their colleagues. A news item, which provides more information on this topic, may be found on the NPA home page, along with a sample letter to refer to when composing the letter. Please note that this sample letter should be used as fodder for thought and content, but that original letters with personal stories, sent by USPS rather than email, are much more effective than form-like emails.

In other policy news, at the request of the NSF, the NPA has drafted a set of recommendations for the implementation of postdoctoral mentoring provisions outlined in the 2007 America COMPETES

Act. Amongst the recommendations is the development of guidelines for formulating a mentoring plan, explicit guidelines for reviewers evaluating mentoring plans, and reporting mechanisms for postdoctoral mentoring activities. Additional recommendations are included in the complete report, which may be found on the NPA website.

The "Postdoc Core Competencies" document, outlining the core competencies that the NPA believes are crucial in any postdoctoral program, was presented during a plenary session at the NPA annual meeting. Member feedback on the document was solicited via the NPA

website as well, and final revisions are currently under consideration.

Finally, the NPA/Sigma Xi Postdoctoral Policy Database has been opened to all institutions, and we strongly encourage all institutions to provide the data for their institution. The database, when complete, will provide a powerful tool for data collection on postdoctoral scholars, and will serve as a valuable resource for those researching or implementing postdoctoral policies. If your institution is not listed, please contact the NPA for a username and password.

Lucia Mokres DVM, Chair of Advocacy, National Postdoctoral Association



UC San Diego
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

**Division of International Health
and Cross-Cultural Medicine**

Paid Internship Opportunities for Postdoctoral and Junior Faculty

The Center for HIV/AIDS Minority Pipeline in Substance Abuse (CHAMPS) provides 4-6 month intensive internship opportunities for underrepresented scholars who will become the next generation of prevention scientists with expertise in HIV, substance use and co-occurring conditions. The NIH-funded CHAMPS program will prepare underrepresented minority postdoctoral fellows and junior faculty with career development training, as well as improved skills in manuscript writing, grantsmanship, presentation skills and methodologies deemed to be important for designing and conducting studies on the prevention of HIV, substance abuse and related comorbidities. Travel and "seed" grants are available to further critical professional experience. For more information, please visit: <http://ihccm.ucsd.edu> or contact:

Steffanie Strathdee, Ph.D.
Telephone: (858) 822-1952
Email: ssstrathdee@ucsd.edu

The Center for HIV/AIDS Minority Pipeline in Substance Abuse (CHAMPS) is supported by a grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Annual Meeting, *continued from page 1*
 Office of Science and Technology Policy (standing in for Dr. John Marburger III, Science Advisor to the President). Dr. Hays spoke on the policy making processes, explaining that change takes time in this top-down model. The lack of any imminent increase in NIH funding levels means that the current situation will remain unchanged within the next few years. Many postdocs are already considering career options requiring skills “beyond the lab bench”.

Representatives from NIH, NSF and NPA discussed increasing awareness of the importance of effective mentoring in a plenary session on “Mentoring – The Role of the Federal Government”. In conjunction with this, a discussion session chaired by Dr. Joan Chesney, Director of the Office of Academic Programs, at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, focused on the development of six Core Competencies for postdocs.

Fifteen workshops offered concurrently over three sessions addressed Responsible Conduct of Research, improving postdoctoral training, diversity and international postdocs, and other issues important to PDAs and PDOs. Estimates showed that approximately half the PDA delegates were first time attendees. This demonstrates an increasingly active movement for change within the postdoctoral community, and increasing awareness of the NPA and its mission. The NPA is ready to meet this challenge, said Board of Directors Vice-Chair, Dr. Jonathan Gitlin, who presented the new internal structure of the NPA. The new, four committee framework aims to remove previous redundancies, and use a streamlined approach to focus on the NPA’s strategic goals.

A poster session showcased PDA and PDO activities, and introduced the newly restructured NPA committees. Winners of the poster session were Wake Forest School of Medicine for most innovative program, Harvard School of Public Health for overall presentation, and University of Tennessee Health Science Center for best new PDA. The NPA distinguished service award was presented to Shirley Malcom, Head of the Education and

Human Resources Directorate at AAAS, who was instrumental in obtaining support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and AAAS for the launching of the NPA.

Ian Brooks is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Pharmacology at the Uni-

versity of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) and chair of the UTHSC Postdoc Association. Rachel Rublen is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Missouri, co-chair of the MU Postdoctoral Association, and chair of the NPA Resource Development Committee.

NPA MEETING ROUND-UP

The NPA continues to provide a national voice for postdoctoral scholars. Since our inception, we have represented postdocs at over 200 national and regional meetings. Here is a round-up of recent and upcoming activity:

MARCH

- Fellows & Young Investigators Colloquium, NCI/CCR, Ocean City, MD
- NPA Team Visit to University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, Houston, TX
- NPA Team Visit to Iowa State University, Ames, IA
- Postdoc Seminar at Argonne National Laboratory, Argonne, IL

APRIL

- Infectio Network Day, Center for Infectious Diseases, Quebec City, Canada
- NIEHS Career Fair, Research Triangle Park, NC

- NPA Team Visit to Tufts University, Boston, MA
- ORI Conference on Responsible Conduct of Research Education, Instruction and Training, St. Louis, MO

MAY

- Fellowship Roundtable, Washington, DC
- Workshop on Postdoctoral Scholars, NAFSA Annual Meeting, Washington, DC
- L’Oreal Women in Science Luncheon, New York, NY
- Teaching Research Ethics Workshop, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

JUNE

- Regional Postdoctoral Symposium, Philadelphia, PA



NATIONAL POSTDOCTORAL ASSOCIATION
Bring RCR Home Project

Seed Grant Opportunity DEVELOP RESEARCH INTEGRITY PROGRAMS FOR POSTDOCS

The NPA offers seed funding of up to \$1000 to support responsible conduct of research programming directed at postdocs.

**For application details and resources visit
http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/RCR_SeedGrants**

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: June 13, 2008

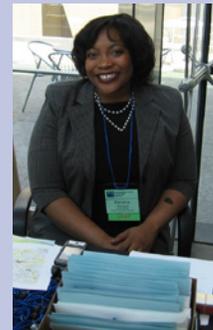
Annual Meeting 2008



Key figures in the NPA's founding and early days gather at the opening reception (l to r): Shirley Malcom, Michael Teitelbaum, Avi Spier, Sam Castaneda and Keith Micoli.



Participants at the joint session of postdoc office and association leaders discussing changes to postdoc policies at their home institutions over the past 8 years.



NPA Program Manager Kenetia Thompson greeted meeting participants at the registration desk.



NPA Board Chair Crystal Icenhour (l) with Shirley Malcom (r) after presenting her with the 2008 Distinguished Service Award.



A small group of postdoc association leaders consult during a breakout discussion on a beautiful Spring day outside the Harvard Conference Center.



Meetings Committee Vice Chair Martha Skendar showing off her ticket purchase in the NPA's first prize raffle.



Postdoc office administrators meeting in small groups during the "data blitz" on best practices.



Keynote speaker Sharon Hays (l), Deputy Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, with NPA Board Chair Crystal Icenhour (r).



The poster session and social hour draws a large crowd.