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## Inside this Issue

- 1 NPA Annual Meeting: NIH Director Noted NIH's New Approach to Assist ESIs  
Different Perspectives on the NPA 8th Annual Meeting
- 2 Online Networking Dos and Don'ts for Your Postdoctoral Association
- 3 NPA Holds First Summit on Career Advancement for Women Postdocs
- 4 Enhancing Diversity in STEM Disciplines
- 5 NPA ADVANCE Update
- 6 Postdoctoral Policy Database—Past, Present and Future  
NPA Member Round-Up
- 7 Three Posters Take Home Top Awards at the Annual Meeting
- 8 State of the NPA  
News
- 9 Meetings Committee Welcomes New Chair
- 10 NPA Committee Quarterly Reports
- 11 NPA Meeting Round-Up

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# The POSTDOCK

The Official Newsletter of the National Postdoctoral Association

## NPA Annual Meeting: NIH Director Noted NIH's New Approach to Assist ESIs

*Cathee Johnson Phillips*

National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, delivered his keynote address to postdoctoral scholars, faculty, administrators, NPA sponsors and friends on the second day of the NPA Annual Meeting. Dr. Collins began his address by sharing information about his experience as a postdoctoral scholar and said, "The mix of the joy and the pain is characteristic of science in general... it was a very up and down experience." During his address, he commended the NPA for several of its initiatives, including its support of the NIH Pathway to Independence awards, the development of the NPA Core Competencies, its support of international postdoctoral scholars, and its emphasis on increasing diversity in the scientific



NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, and NPA Board of Directors Chair Stacy L. Gelhaus, PhD, at the NPA 8th Annual Meeting

workforce and improving communication between the research community and the public.

*Meeting, continued on page 2*

## Different Perspectives on the NPA 8th Annual Meeting

*Katie Kelm*

The NPA sets out to make Annual Meetings beneficial for postdoctoral scholars and individuals who are involved at some level with postdoctoral training. Below are different perspectives on the NPA 8th Annual Meeting from an administrator, faculty member, and a postdoctoral scholar.

**Administrator: Caroline Rotondi, PhD.**

In my first two years as an administrator, attending the NPA annual meeting was invaluable. It helped me to identify the work that had been done nationally

to frame the issues facing postdoctoral scholars, to fully understand them, and then to get ideas for the steps we could take to improve the postdoctoral training experience at Brigham and Women's Hospital. Now that we have made significant progress in the development and implementation of our office, resources, programs and policies, I have come to appreciate the added value of the NPA Annual Meeting as a way to network, particularly with other administrators. It has been a great help to learn from the experiences of others who have already worked through complex policy and employment issues at their institutions. For example, Molly Starback from Duke University has really gone above and beyond in this regard to explain to us the process they went through to develop specific policy

*Perspectives, continued on page 9*

# Online Networking Dos and Don'ts for Your Postdoctoral Association

*Madlyn Frisard*

Online social networking is an excellent approach to increase exposure of your organization's postdoctoral association (PDA). It can be used to connect former, current and prospective postdoctoral scholars and keep them informed regarding their institution. For example, online networking sites can be used to post available jobs, announce upcoming meetings or seminars, and initiate collaborative work relationships. Facebook and LinkedIn are currently the two most widely used online networking sites. Whether your PDA decides to use one or both of these sites depends on the primary purpose for establishing the site. Because Facebook is mainly a social site, its format would be appropriate for PDAs wanting to foster non-work-related interactions among postdocs. If the networking site is primarily for job postings or seminar/meeting notifications, LinkedIn may be more useful. Both sites provide step-by-step directions for creating your PDA's site. As with any

online communication, however, there are several things to consider when setting up and maintaining a networking site to ensure both your organization and its members are protected. Here is a short list of items to keep in mind:

1. *Define your goals for setting up your site and focus its content to meet them.* It is much easier to maintain a site once you know its purpose. For example, if your site is going to be used for announcements and notifications, it will need to be set up differently than if you intend to use it for your members to interact on a social level.
2. *Maintain and update your site daily.* Your members will only use your site if it contains the most up-to-date, relevant information. Only a small number of individuals, maybe even just one person, should be responsible for adding and/or updating the site's content on a daily basis.
3. *Consider your privacy settings.* Facebook and LinkedIn both allow you to adjust the privacy settings for your page to protect both your organization and its members.
4. *Be a good role model for your site's members.* Bear in mind that you have created

a public site. If you are going to use it for social purposes, such as sharing pictures from various gatherings, be sensitive about what you post. Not all of your members will want their pictures shared online. The same holds true for blogging or posting comments. Always be positive with what you post about your organization and expect your members to follow suit. Both Facebook and LinkedIn have mechanisms for limiting what, if anything, fans can post.

5. *Enlist help from faculty and key PDA members.* Any online networking site can only be useful to its members if it is utilized. Therefore, if you want to share information across message boards or blogs and promote interaction among postdocs, recruit faculty or active PDA members to monitor the site and foster communication. This interaction is particularly important when the site is first created. Networking sites usually grow rapidly once communication and discussions have been initiated.

*Madlyn Frisard, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia.*

## Meeting, continued from page 1

He described the NIH's new approaches to assist early-stage investigators (ESIs) in their transition to independence: encouraging R01s; cluster grant review, discussion, scoring, and ranking within a study section; and having reviewers focus more on proposed approach than track record. "Many people don't realize," he said, "that we are comparing ESIs with each other. The goal is to have a success rate comparable to established investigators submitting new applications, which should reduce the period of postdoc training."

Dr. Collins also discussed the "desperate need for more diversity in science and medicine in the United States" and the establishment of the NIH Working Group on Women in Biomedical

Careers. He reiterated that the NIH is actively seeking ways to decrease the time to independence.

Dr. Collins asked that the NPA members and friends do their part and suggested that they participate in National Lab Day (<http://www.nationallabday.org/>), educate others about the importance of biomedical research, inspire passion for science in the next generation, and contact NIH with suggestions and comments at [NIH-LISTENS@nih.gov](mailto:NIH-LISTENS@nih.gov).

To read this article in its entirety, please go to: <http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/collins-keynote>.

*Cathee Johnson Phillips is the Executive Director of the NPA.*

## The NPA Seeks Candidates for the Board of Directors

The NPA is seeking six committed and energetic individuals to serve on its NPA Board of Directors for two-year terms. The Call for Nominations will open on June 28, 2010 and close on Aug. 13, 2010. Candidate profiles will be posted on the NPA's Web site by Aug. 23. The election will run from Sept. 22 through October 6.

If you are interested in serving on the Board or would like to nominate someone, please contact the NPA Oversight Officer, Ian Brooks, PhD, [ibrooks@nationalpostdoc.org](mailto:ibrooks@nationalpostdoc.org), for more information.



# NPA Holds First Summit on Career Advancement for Women Postdocs

Kathleen Flint

The NPA recently held the National Summit on Gender and the Postdoctorate in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The summit was the first event of its kind to examine the postdoctoral stage of women's careers and consider the key factors influencing their transition to independent investigator positions. Sessions focused on both the challenges facing women postdoctoral scholars as well as possible solutions for retaining them in academia, such as implementing family-friendly policies, improving mentoring, and training in career and professional development.

The summit preceded the NPA 8th Annual Meeting on March 10-11, 2010 and drew nearly 140 participants from a range of stakeholders, including faculty and administrators, postdoc office and association leaders, professional society and agency staff, postdocs, and graduate students. This diverse audience fostered dynamic discussions on topics such as creative ways to keep a research project going while a postdoc goes on parental leave and how individuals can begin to change their institutional culture to value both excellence and work-life balance (e.g., "having it all").

In her keynote address, Kathie Olsen, PhD, Senior Advisor and former Deputy Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF), noted that the important factors for success as a postdoc are in fact the same factors for all scientists, including both men and women, such as mentoring, obtaining funding and grants, and having direction and vision. Fostering these success factors, however, is especially important for postdoc women who are more likely than postdoc men to leave the academic career path. The presenters argued that the primary reason for this was family formation. Mary Ann Mason, JD, PhD, Professor of Law at the University of California Berkeley, reported that

issues relating to children were the most common reasons cited by postdoc women for changing their career goal away from becoming a research professor. Other issues of particular concern for postdoc women noted by participants include lack of confidence, feelings of isolation, and lack of mentoring.

Throughout the summit, presenters recommended a number of promising practices for aiding postdoc women to transition to the professoriate. These included recommendations for institutions, such as establishing paid parental leave policies available to all postdocs; for funding agencies, such as extending financial support to postdocs experiencing family events; and for professional societies, such as fostering networking opportunities for early-career researchers. The final session concluded with the importance of the individual in any effort to change institutional culture. "We are the institution," said discussant Robert Tillman, PhD,

Director of Faculty Professional Development at Columbia University Medical Center. These recommendations and other promising practices discussed during the summit will appear in a resource book that is under development by NPA ADVANCE (see article in this issue [POSTDOCKET 8(2)] about the NPA ADVANCE project) for release in 2011. Summit participants and those interested in continuing these dialogues are invited to join the NPA ADVANCE project list-serv. Contact NPA ADVANCE project manager [Kathleen Flint](#) to join.

*Kathleen Flint, PhD, is the NPA ADVANCE Project Manager, managing the NPA's NSF-funded project to promote promising practices that aid women to make the postdoc-to-faculty transition. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material or at the National Summit on Gender and the Postdoctorate are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF.*



Discussion during the National Summit working lunch



Keynote speaker, Kathie Olsen, PhD, Senior Advisor and former Deputy Director of the NSF



Breakout session participants

## Enhancing Diversity in STEM Disciplines

Paulette McRae

Of the PhDs awarded in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields between 2005 and 2006, only 20 percent were earned by women, and only 6 percent were earned by African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans (see <http://www.norc.org/projects/survey+of+earned+doctorates.htm>). Women, underrepresented minorities, and persons with disabilities comprise two-thirds of the American work force, yet they account for only one-fourth of the science and technology jobs (see [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06\\_006.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06_006.asp)). Clearly, there is a disparity between the composition of the American population and the composition of people in the STEM fields.

On April 28, 2010 the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the Association of American Universities (AAU) released a handbook entitled “Navigating a Complex Landscape to Foster Greater Faculty and Student Diversity in Higher Education” (<http://php.aaas.org/programs/centers/capacity/publications/complexlandscape/>). This handbook, which is the first of its kind from the scientific community, is a forward-thinking document that highlights the importance of diversity initiatives. It gives a legally supported account of the history of diversity initiatives and provides a compelling argument for continued advancements in this area.

The handbook includes commentary from notable experts, such as Scott A. Jackson, who candidly discussed the need for continued advancements in diversity. In the handbook Jackson is quoted as stating, “*The university faculty looks glaringly unlike the undergraduate student body. In the context of these demographics, all students and the entire nation will suffer if we do not address quality of and access to STEM education, while increasing the racial and gender diversity of the workforce available to STEM fields.*”

There have been efforts made to enhance diversity in the STEM fields through targeted funding opportunities. One such opportunity that postdoctoral scholars and Principal Investigators (PI) should be aware of is the “Research Supplements to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research” provided by the National Institute of Health (NIH). With this supplement a PI with current funding from the NIH may request supplemental funds to train individuals from the following groups: 1) individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups; 2) individuals with disabilities; and 3) individuals from socially, culturally, economically, or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds that have impeded their ability to pursue

a career in health-related research.

There is a valiant effort to increase awareness about the importance of diversity in the STEM fields. Enhancing diversity in the academic research setting is a long-term goal of many institutions, companies, and organizations because improving diversity is imperative for the continued success of the research enterprise. It is important not only for all of us to be aware of these efforts but to also support them, so that we may all benefit from a more inclusive scientific community in the future.

*Paulette McRae, PhD, is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and is Co-Diversity Officer of the NPA.*



# Save the Dates!

## The 9th Annual Meeting of the National Postdoctoral Association

### March 25–27, 2011

On the Campus of the  
National Institutes of Health  
Bethesda, MD

Also plan to attend:

### A Day on the Hill

### March 24, 2011



## NPA ADVANCE Update

Kathleen Flint

NPA ADVANCE is the NPA's three-year project to promote promising practices for aiding women postdoctoral scholars to advance their careers in academia. Drawing on practices intended for the general postdoctoral community as well as those intended for faculty women, NPA ADVANCE works to identify and translate these approaches to benefit postdoc women. The project is supported by the National Science Foundation's (NSF) ADVANCE program for the advancement of women scientists and engineers in academia.

The research phase of the project is well underway. NPA staff have conducted a review of the literature on postdoc women. This review formed the basis of a quick-reference fact sheet currently under development and provided a framework for identifying approaches and initiatives that have promise for adaptation. Using this evidence-based framework, NPA ADVANCE also conducted a survey of institutional practices thought to be beneficial to postdoc women. Survey respondents included individuals who have been involved in NSF-funded ADVANCE programs in the past as well as institutional representatives for postdoctoral affairs. The results from the survey, in combination with other background research on promising practices, contribute to the resources and recommendations that will be featured in an upcoming resource handbook to be published in 2011.

In addition, NPA ADVANCE recently held the National Summit on Gender and the Postdoctorate on March 10-11, 2010. The goal of the summit was to examine the reasons that women leave the academic career path and to identify promising practices for retaining them (see article in this issue [POSTDOCKET 8(2)] about the



summit). The summit provided an opportunity to share some initial findings on the issues and challenges facing postdoc women as well as to generate new ideas and approaches for assisting these women to advance in their careers. Perspectives from the summit also will be incorporated into the forthcoming NPA ADVANCE resource handbook.

The next phase of the project will focus

on continuing research and development of the resource handbook and creating an online clearinghouse of information and resources. This will include a new analysis of gender trends from the Sigma Xi Postdoc Survey data and focus groups with former postdoc women to examine any lessons learned from individual experiences in the academic career 'pipeline.' Anyone interested in following the project and contributing to discussions on postdocs and gender is invited to join the NPA ADVANCE project listserv. Contact NPA ADVANCE project manager

Kathleen Flint to join.

*Kathleen Flint, PhD, is the NPA ADVANCE Project Manager, managing the NPA's NSF-funded project to promote promising practices that aid women to make the postdoc-to-faculty transition. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material or at the summit are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF.*

## New Items at the NPA Store



[www.cafepress.com/thenpastore](http://www.cafepress.com/thenpastore)

# Postdoctoral Policy Database—Past, Present and Future

Keith Micoli

The tremendous impact that the NPA has had on postdoctoral training and policy makes it easy to forget that as little as 10 to 15 years ago things were very different. Offices devoted to postdoctoral issues were rare, with probably fewer than 10 in existence in 1997. Although there was the sense that postdoctoral training was becoming a dangerously undefined and unregulated enterprise, it was not until the Committee on Science, Engineering and Public Policy published “Enhancing the Postdoctoral Experience for Scientists and Engineers” in 2000 that efforts to make improvements reached a national stage. This landmark study highlighted the fact that the number of postdocs had doubled between 1985 and 1997 and showed signs of increasing rates of growth with little or no institutional oversight devoted to this vulnerable and critical sector of the scientific workforce. Critical data required to guide policy decisions were almost completely lacking, as there was little consensus on postdoctoral job titles, who could or couldn’t be a postdoc, how long a postdoc position should last, or how much money a postdoc should be paid.

The NPA played a major role in defining the best practices for postdoctoral training by issuing Recommended Practices in 2005 and collecting data on institutional policies and practices. The NPA Institutional Policy Database quickly grew from 25 institutions and 15 data fields to well over 100 institutions and over 30 data fields. These data, collected independently from publicly available Web sites, not only helped identify what policies were in existence but also became a valuable resource for institutions that wanted to emulate the best practices across the country. The publication of the Sigma Xi Postdoctoral Survey showed that the most significant factor impacting postdoc satisfaction was structured mentoring, which is best achieved

by having a strong postdoctoral office and a vibrant postdoctoral association.

Because postdocs are neither students nor faculty, the office that serves them doesn’t easily fit within existing frameworks set up to provide graduate education and faculty development. This lack of definition at the institution often resulted in postdocs feeling isolated and marginalized. The prominence of the NPA Institutional Policy Database allowed users to see how other postdoctoral offices were developed, funded, and operated at similar institutions. It is remarkable that the initial database effort found fewer than 50 offices in existence in 2005, but only two years later there were well over 100 offices.

The new NPA Institutional Database promises to be far more powerful, flexible

and manageable as a living resource for all of our stakeholders. The information that will be collected and made available will inform postdocs of the best institutions to work and train, allow administrators to collaborate more effectively, and guide policy in a data-driven and cost-effective way that has been impossible until now. The NPA has always believed that the best advocate is an informed constituency, and the Policy Database is the most powerful and efficient means of collecting, analyzing and distributing unbiased data to all stakeholders.

*Keith Micoli, PhD, is the former Chair of the NPA Policy Committee and was NPA Board of Directors Chair from 2004–2006. He is currently the Postdoctoral Program Manager at NYU School of Medicine’s Sackler Institute of Graduate Biomedical Sciences.*

## 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

- New York University

### RENEWED

- Association of American Medical Colleges
- Boston University School of Medicine
- Dana Farber Cancer Institute
- Desert Research Institute
- Ernest Gallo Clinic and Research Center
- Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
- Indiana University, Purdue at Indianapolis
- Massachusetts General Hospital
- Medical College of Wisconsin
- Medical University of South Carolina
- National Cancer Institute
- National Institutes of Health (Office of Intramural Training and Education)
- Ohio State University College of Medicine
- Rice University
- Stanford University
- Texas Tech University/Texas Tech University Health Science Center
- Thomas Jefferson University
- University of California-Irvine
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln
- University of Southern California

# Three Posters Take Home Top Awards at the Annual Meeting

Katie Kelm

The NPA was thrilled to have 23 posters covering a variety of topics at the NPA 8th Annual Meeting. During the poster presentation session, all presenters were evaluated by six judges on the overall visual appeal of the poster, relevance of the poster content to the goals of the NPA, and the oral presentation of the poster. Based on these criteria, three posters were selected that the judges thought would have the greatest impact on the postdoctoral community.

Susan Rottenberg and colleagues' poster, **"Brown's Postdoctoral Advisory Panel: Bridging the Biomedical-University Divide,"** highlighted a novel issue for postdocs who are at institutions with medical schools that often have postdoctoral associations and administrative offices that are separate from those in the rest of the university. Brown University currently supports over 200 postdocs, and they are equally split between the Division of BioMed and the Humanities, Physical & Social Sciences (HPSS). In an effort to forge a Brown-wide sense of community among postdoctoral scholars, benefit from the diverse perspectives of these trainees, and promote uniform practices, the Postdoc Advisory Panel (PAP) was formed. The PAP initially consisted of four BioMed postdocs, but now has 21 members, 60% of which are BioMed postdocs and 40% of which are HPSS postdocs. Through attrition, the PAP continues to strive for a 50/50 split as it recruits HPSS postdocs. The interactions between postdoctoral scholars across Brown University have been enriching for all and have helped the administration consider postdoctoral issues in a broader and more inclusive context.

The poster entitled **"Industry Exploration Program: Advancing the Careers of Massachusetts General Hospital Postdocs"** was submitted by Adnan Abu-Yousif, PhD, and colleagues and discussed an effective new program that benefits the postdoc community. This past year the Mass General Postdoc Association (MGPA) and the Office for Research Career Development at Massachusetts General Hospital developed the Industry Exploration Program in collaboration with the MassBioEd Foundation, MassBio, and members of the biotech community. This program provides postdocs with the opportunity to experience the culture of industry research by visiting local companies. During each visit, postdocs hear about career paths for scientists within the company, engage in scientific discussions with company scientists, network, and learn about transitioning from academia to industry. Ultimately, this program will enable postdocs to make more informed decisions regarding their career path.

Also highlighting an effective new program was the poster submitted by Praveen Sekhar, PhD, and colleagues, **"Combinatorial Strategies Adopted by Los Alamos Postdoc Association (LAPA) for Person-**

**al and Professional Growth of Postdocs."** LAPA is comprised of five committees (career, communication, finance, policy and social) with unique functions. For example, the career committee is tasked with finding and making information available to LANL postdocs concerning internal and external career opportunities. This task includes bringing companies to LANL to interview postdocs, organizing seminars by lab management, and organizing the annual career fair. With the help of the executive members of the LAPA, the career and communication committees came together to plan the Los Alamos Postdoc Research Day (LAPRD), which is an event where postdocs present a summary of their LANL research to an audience that includes staff scientists and upper management. Such a platform facilitates collaborations and technical discussions while exposing postdocs to potential hiring managers. The LAPA has found that the five committees work in synergy to develop programs that accelerate the professional and personal growth of its postdocs.

*Katie Kelm, PhD, is Editor-in-Chief of the POSTDOCKET and is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Psychology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.*

## ATTENTION: POSTDOCS

### Do you need health insurance?

**If your institution or PI does not provide health insurance or does not subsidize your premiums, you may be eligible for health insurance through a new NPA member benefit.**

The National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) and Garnett-Powers and Associates, Inc. have joined together to offer the **Postdoctoral Scholar Injury and Sickness Insurance Plan**.

- Low monthly cost, ranging from \$182.50 to \$215.50 per month (subject to change)
- Access to a large nationwide panel of physicians
- Low co-pays and co-insurance for doctor's visits, hospitalization, lab, x-ray and prescriptions
- Coverage is available for your eligible dependents, including domestic partners
- Maternity is covered
- Coverage is guaranteed regardless of any medical condition
- All J1 visa requirements for medical coverage, repatriation and medical evacuation are satisfied by enrollment in this plan.
- Benefit coverage is provided through StudentResources, a UnitedHealthcare company specializing in university health programs
- The postdoc must be a **full, individual member** of the NPA to be eligible for the plan; the full, individual membership fee for postdoctoral scholars is only \$35 a year.

For more information or to enroll in this plan, [click here](#).





## State of the NPA

Stacy Gelhaus

Dear NPA Membership:

The NPA 8th Annual Meeting, which took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is already over two months behind us. This year the meeting hit record attendance due in part to the postdoctoral association/organization innovation sessions; new workshop topics, including workshops on policy and advocacy; and the mentoring plenary given by Audrey Murrell, PhD. Other highlights included the poster competition, a Philly style dinner with Quizzo, and the bestowal of the Distinguished Service Award to Trevor Penning, PhD.

No doubt, one of the other major influences on meeting attendance was our keynote speaker, NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD. Dr. Collins spoke at length in his address about the importance of young scientists in the U.S. research enterprise. The fact that he was familiar with the work of the NPA and had even read documentation submitted by the NPA speaks volumes for his support. It demonstrates that the NPA is

becoming a powerful organization with a national voice, and it confirms that the NPA's advocacy efforts are being recognized. During lunch with Dr. Collins and his brief meeting with the Board of Directors, he advised us on how we should direct our efforts to Congress.



NATIONAL  
POSTDOCTORAL  
ASSOCIATION

Although we have the support of the Director of NIH and the President of the United States, it is Congress who will make the ultimate decision regarding the 6% increase in training stipends as well as other possible legislation that will affect postdocs.

Because of this, it is extremely important for Congress to hear the voice of the NPA. We have submitted testimony to the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies. You can make a difference by going to <http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/policy/briefing-room/stipends/2011stipends> and sending out letters to the Senators and Representatives on this Subcommittee. They will be making recommendations to Congress on the 2011 budget. The time to advocate is now!

*Stacy L. Gelhaus, PhD, is Chair of the Board of Directors.*

## NEWS

### New Handbook Provides Legal Outlook on Diversity and the Postdoc

This week the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the Association of American Universities released a "first-of-its-kind handbook" that "offers in-depth, cross-referenced legal resources to help promote effective diversity programs for science faculty and students."

This handbook, titled "Navigating a Complex Landscape to Foster Greater Faculty and Student Diversity in Higher Education," includes a list of the factors to consider when deciding whether to classify postdocs as employees in relation to supporting diversity. The handbook can be downloaded at this site: <http://php.aaas.org/programs/centers/capacity/publications/complexlandscape/>. Be sure to read pp. 119-125 of the PDF.

Shirley Malcom, PhD, Director of AAAS Education and Human Resources Programs (EHR), and Daryl Chubin, PhD, Director of Center for Advancing Science & Engineering Capacity at AAAS, each served as a co-project director and contributor for this handbook. They are longtime friends of the NPA.

# You asked for it,



# and you got it!

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Receive a 0% introductory rate, plus when you make your first purchase, Capital One Card Lab Connect will make a \$50 donation to the NPA.

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# Meetings Committee Welcomes New Chair

Uzma Alam

The NPA welcomes Mahadeo Sukhai, PhD, as Chair of the Meetings Committee. Dave Taylor is stepping down as Chair of the committee to serve on the NPA Board of Directors.

Dr. Sukhai is a postdoctoral fellow at the University Health Network in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and is an Associate Researcher at the Centre for the Study of Students in Postsecondary Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. He was a



Mahadeo Sukhai, PhD, is the new Chair of the Meetings Committee.

founding member and inaugural secretary of the University of Toronto Postdoctoral Association (UTPDA) in 2007 and helped design the UTPDA's constitution. Under his leadership, the UTPDA created and ran

a postdoctoral experience survey for more than 1600 postdocs, which was the first of its kind in Canada. He brings to the NPA his substantial leadership and governance experience from his days as a student leader at the University of Toronto, where he served in several executive capacities. Dr. Sukhai was an integral member of the Meetings Committee in 2009-2010, co-directing the NPA "Innovation in Action" Discussion Sessions at the 2010 meeting.

*Uzma Alam, PhD, is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Yale University and is Vice Chair of the Meetings Committee.*

## Perspectives, continued from page 1

language. At the most recent meeting, I was pleased to see a range of career and professional development topics, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, which is a personality assessment that can be applied to improve an individual's work environment, as well as the institutional development sessions that are the core of the meeting. I would strongly encourage any administrator to attend the NPA Annual Meetings.

**Faculty Member: Richard Nowakowski, PhD.** I certainly have the perspective of a faculty member, as I have been a faculty member at a major medical school for over 28 years. Biasing my perspective, however, are my other "hats" as Co-Director of a Postdoctoral Career Development Program, new Chair of a Department, and, most importantly, my entry into my 34th year of postdoctoral training. I found that attending the NPA Annual Meeting benefits all of my roles. By far the most influential experience comes simply from listening and talking to the postdocs. In many ways, their concerns are the same that I faced, but in many ways they are different. The major difference is the even larger concern about the next step in the career ladder. Faculty need to be more aware that the situation facing current postdocs is more challenging than ever. The job market is tight, and most of the

available jobs are not in academia. We need to help the postdocs in our labs by providing them with contacts and experiences to help them help themselves as they move from our labs into their own futures. The lecture from National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, tells us that NIH is working to do this, and one of the lessons that I learned both for me and for my students and postdocs is that mentoring is crucial. I have already repeated many times the message of Audrey Murrell, PhD, that each of us needs mentoring in several areas of career development and that we need THREE mentors in each area. This was a "doh" realization for me, forcing me to re-evaluate the mentoring that I use in my own career. Career development and re-evaluation does not stop for postdocs or faculty with many years of experience.

**Postdoctoral Scholar: Melissa Muller, PhD.** As a fifth year postdoctoral fellow and an active member of the postdoctoral association (PDA) at my institution, attendance at the NPA Annual Meeting in Philadelphia was a very rewarding experience for both networking and exploring career options. The "Innovation in Action" session on Friday was highly interactive and provided lively discussions for new ideas to improve communication among postdoctoral scholars and build

and retain interest in postdoctoral activities. Attendance at postdoctoral events and interest in joining the PDA is often a concern. The opportunity to network and learn from the experiences of others followed by brainstorming sessions to find options that may be implemented at our home institution proved to be very helpful. These discussion sessions provided many new ideas to boost attendance and interest in postdoctoral events, such as newsletters, recognition events, mentored lunches, and raffles. Other exemplary sessions included the keynote address by Dr. Collins. His talk was entertaining, educational and encouraging. The leadership component of the meeting included the Myers-Briggs type indicator assessment. The information provided by the assessment is crucial to understanding differences between individuals and gives great suggestions for improving interactions at work and enhancing leadership skills. In spite of the bad weather, the NPA 8th Annual Meeting was a success. I would certainly encourage postdoctoral fellows to attend, so that they too may gain invaluable networking experience and career development advice.

*Katie Kelm, PhD, is Editor-in-Chief of the POSTDOCKET and is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Psychology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.*

# NPA Committee Quarterly Reports

The following section is devoted to summarizing the vast array of activities underway within each of the four NPA Committees of the Membership — Advocacy, Outreach, Resource Development and Meetings. If you are interested in gaining professional experience in postdoc issues at the national level, please contact a Committee Leader directly. We seek interested and dedicated individuals who are willing to volunteer 3-10 hours/month. A comprehensive list of NPA Committee leaders can be found at the [Committee Leaders and Officers](#) page on the NPA Web site.

## Advocacy Committee

*Juliet Moncaster*

In February 2010, President Obama released his Fiscal Year 2011 budget that included a 6% increase in the amount of money allocated to National Institutes of Health (NIH) training stipends. The NPA applauds President Obama for recognizing the important and essential contribution of new scientists to the U.S. research enterprise. However, the House and Senate need to approve the 6% increase before this comes into effect. To increase the chances that this does happen, it is important for the Senators and Representatives to hear the voices of the postdoctoral scholars and their supporters. Therefore, the NPA has initiated a call to all NPA members and beyond to speak out and let their support for a long overdue 6% increase in stipends be heard.

In order for you to support this effort, the NPA has posted a template letter on its Web site that can be used to send a message in support of the 6% increase to the Senators and Representatives on the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies. Anyone can support this bill; it is not just open to postdocs. In addition, international persons can voice their support.

We encourage everyone to help the NPA in supporting the 6% increase in NIH stipends. For further details see: <http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/no-modules/393-2011stipends>

If the topics above interest you, or if there are other issues that you think would be of interest to AdCom, please feel free to contact the AdCom Chair or Vice Chair. AdCom is always looking for new volunteers to join the committee.

*Juliet Moncaster, PhD, is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Boston University School of Medicine and the Chair of the NPA Advocacy Committee.*

## Outreach Committee

*L. Dave Finger*

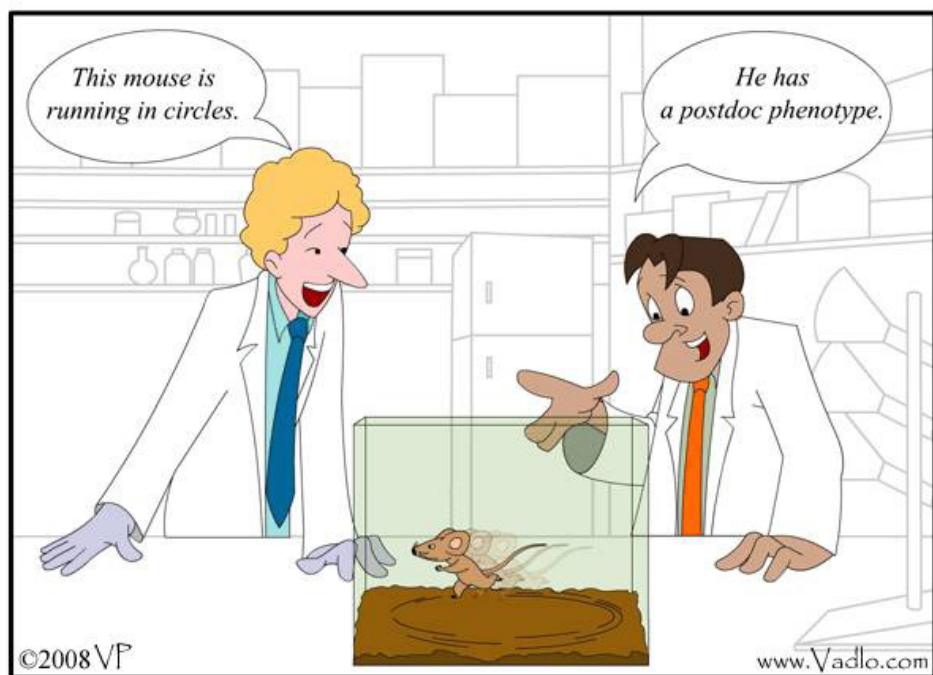
With the close of the NPA 8th Annual Meeting, the Outreach Committee (OC) began planning for the NPA's next big event, National Postdoc Appreciation Day (NPAD). For those who have not already heard via the NPA Web site, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn group, or Wikipedia pages, the NPAD will take place this year on September 24, 2010. This year the OC is striving for Congressional Recognition of the day as well as an increase in the number of participating institutions. In

addition, the committee hopes to build on last year's success by offering participating institutions the opportunity to buy gifts from the NPA store for their postdoctoral scholars that commemorate the day.

The OC continues to advertise NPA resources and products via our social networking sites. The number of people who have joined our group continues to increase, and as a result, the NPA message is reaching more people than ever. In addition to promoting NPA events, resources, and sales, we encourage our members to use the Facebook Wall to promote other events related to science, postdocs, graduate students, faculty, or administration. We certainly would not mind the NPA social networking sites being one-stop shops where you can stay informed on issues pertaining to our ever growing NPA community!

The OC continues to seek out more membership incentives to keep our members involved. Help the OC and ask your fellow postdocs, graduate students, faculty members and administrators to join the NPA or become members of our social networking sites. For more information on how you can become involved with

**Committees, continued on page 11**



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**Committees**, continued from page 10  
OC activities, please contact Dave Finger at [LFingerJr@coh.org](mailto:LFingerJr@coh.org).

*L. David Finger, PhD, is a Postdoctoral Scholar at the City of Hope Beckman Research Institute and Chair of the NPA Outreach Committee.*

### **Resource Development Committee** *Pallavi Eswara and Sanjukta Chakraborty*

The Resource Development Committee (RDC) develops and maintains resources for postdoctoral scholars, postdoctoral associations (PDA), and postdoctoral offices (PDO). Our resources are mostly available on the NPA Web site ([www.nationalpostdoc.org](http://www.nationalpostdoc.org)) in the form of articles, toolkits, and databases.

The recent NPA National Science Foundation ADVANCE Summit on Gender and the Postdoctorate and the NPA 8th Annual Meeting were great opportunities to interact with other committee chairs, vice chairs, and several postdoctoral scholars from different institutions. The poster sessions allowed us to interact with several postdocs and postdoc office administrators and recruit these individuals to the RDC.

One of our core tasks is the ongoing annual review of the Web site. This project is well underway with the enthusiasm of several new volunteers. The committee members have also been working on creating a database of various professional societies, which will be used as an internal resource to select key professional societies and collaborate with them on mutually beneficial issues.

The NPA is a diverse organization and is committed to the causes of postdocs from underrepresented minorities and of international origin. In collaboration with the International and Diversity Officers, we are working on creating a database of grants with no citizenship requirements and grants and fellowships for minority postdocs. In addition to these tasks, we will soon embark on other projects, such as creating toolkits relevant to managing

finances, filing taxes and finding careers in non-academic fields.

We urge you to become involved in the RDC's activities and its various projects. If you are interested in knowing more about these projects and how you can help, please contact Pallavi at [pxe10@psu.edu](mailto:pxe10@psu.edu).

*Pallavi Eswara, MS, is at the Office of Postdoc Affairs at Penn State University and Chair of the NPA Resource Development Committee. Sanjukta Chakraborty, PhD, is an American Heart Association Postdoctoral Research Associate at Texas A&M Health Science Center and Vice Chair of the NPA Resource Development Committee.*

### **Meetings Committee**

*Mahadeo Sukhai and Uzma Alam*

The 8th Annual Meeting of the NPA was a remarkable success, bringing with it a number of exciting milestones for the NPA. The meeting provided the first venue for the NPA to celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit of postdoctoral scholars in the scientific community. During the opening session, the 2010 Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation Outstanding Postdoctoral Entrepreneur and Emerging Postdoctoral Entrepreneur were awarded to Stephen W. Turner, PhD, Chief Technology Officer of Pacific Biosciences, and Antonio R. Webb, PhD, Co-founder, Senior Scientist and Lead Development Engineer of VesselTek.

Congratulations are also in order for Susan Rottenberg (Brown University), Adnan Abu-Yousif, PhD (Massachusetts General Hospital), and Praveen K. Sekhar, PhD (Los Alamos National Laboratory), the winners of the new annual meeting poster competition. These individuals presented outstanding posters focused on postdoctoral advocacy and leadership.

Trevor Penning, PhD, Director of the Center of Excellence in Environmental Toxicology at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, was presented with the NPA's 2010 Distinguished Service Award. This award celebrates the exceptional contributions of individuals and organizations to the postdoctoral

community. Dr. Penning is a long-standing advocate for the postdoctoral community and oversaw the formation of the Biomedical Postdoctoral Program at Penn, one of the first in the country. He joins a brief but very distinguished and accomplished list of previous awardees.

With an exciting 2010 Annual Meeting complete, the NPA Meetings Committee is already focused on planning a bigger and better meeting in 2011 at Bethesda, MD.

*Mahadeo Sukhai, PhD, is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University Health Network in Toronto, Canada and is Chair of the NPA Meetings Committee. Uzma Alam, PhD, is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Yale University and is Vice Chair of the Meetings 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 300 national and regional meetings. In addition, NPA materials have been distributed at scores of meetings. Here is a round-up of recent and upcoming activities (presented in chronological order).

### **MARCH**

- American Chemical Society Mentoring Symposium: Successful Mentoring Strategies to Facilitate the Advancement of Women Faculty, San Francisco, CA; presentation "Tips and Tools for Mentoring Postdoc Women" by Kathleen Flint, Ph.D., NPA Project Manager.

### **APRIL**

- Mount Saint Mary's University, Emmitsburg, MD; a presentation to science undergraduates, "The Complexities of a Research Career and Cancer Research," by Stacy L. Gelhaus, Ph.D., Chair, NPA Board of Directors.
- University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD; site visit and presentation "Thinking Long-term: The Keys to a Successful Postdoc" by Cathee Johnson Phillips, M.A., NPA Executive Director.