

THE PGA POST

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DANA-FARBER
POSTDOC AND
GRADUATE STUDENT
ASSOCIATION

A Message From the Editorial Team

Aim of the PGA:

"To build a strong post-doctoral and graduate student community at DFCI with the ultimate goal of improving the postdoc and grad student experience at the scientific, professional, and social levels through training, mentorship and organized activities. Postdocs and grad students who have their primary appointment at DFCI are automatically members of the PGA."



The Postdoc and Graduate Student Association of DFCI (PGA) is pleased to introduce the first issue of the newsletter, written by and dedicated to postdocs and graduate students. A little bit of history: The PGA was previously called the Research Fellows Association (RFA), but the

name was changed in 2008 to reflect our constituency. February 2010 marked our fifth birthday. Over these years, the PGA has been organized solely by volunteers from the postdoc and graduate student community at DFCI and continues to grow in number of members and events.

This year, the PGA decided to publish *The PGA Post* as a way to reach out to its members. We hope that it will now be easier to keep you updated on our activities, to stay in touch, and to make our experience at DFCI the best possible. We would appreciate any feedback or suggestions, and are always looking for volunteers to lend a helping hand.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter!

-The Editorial Team

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A Treat and a Retreat All in One

A flagship event of the PGA, the PGA retreat serves as an effective exercise in peer collaboration and networking for our members. Postdocs and graduate students benefit greatly from presenting their work to the DFCI community at large, and also have the opportunity of forging personal and scientific connections with their peers. The event serves as a great community builder and is a lot of fun. Already looking for-

ward to this year's retreat? Here's a sneak preview of the event:

September 24th, National Postdoc day, is also the day of the PGA retreat this year. You can take the PARTNERS free shuttle from DFCI to Holiday Inn Boston at Beacon Hill, where the retreat will take place. Speakers include Dr. Robert Langer (MIT) and Peter Fiske, a well known speaker on career development and author of several books on the topic. In addi-

tion, there will be talks and poster presentations by postdocs and graduate students. And yes, there will be prizes too!

Make sure to save the date and be a part of the PGA retreat this year!



A postdoc asks a question at a retreat seminar.

On the Hot Seat: an Interview with Marc Lafleur

Marc grew up in Timmins, a small city in northern Ontario in Canada. He still remembers the long, cold winters in Timmins, which he describes as being much worse than Boston (there are worse places to be than Boston in the winter time!). After getting his undergraduate degree in Canada, he moved to the UK and graduated with a PhD from the University of East Anglia. Marc completed his postdoctoral training at DFCI and now works at Amgen. While at DFCI, Marc was the chair of the PGA from 2008 to 2009; it is fitting that he is the first DFCI alumnus to be featured "on the hot seat". Read on; we hope you enjoy what Marc had to say to us in the interview.

Why did you choose to pursue science as a career?

From a young age, I have been fascinated by how things work, and took keen interest in my science classes at school. I always

knew I would do something related to science and now here I am doing science for a living! Science as a career isn't always easy, but I'd have it no other way.

"...it probably would have served me better to make more professional connections earlier on."

What brought you to DFCI and how would you say your experience at DFCI influenced your career?

My PhD studies focused on angiogenesis and cancer, therefore coming to a renowned cancer center made sense. The research skills that I acquired while at DFCI, as well as the scientific knowledge gained through seminars and other trainings, certainly did help to shape me into a

better scientist for the next phase of my career.

What would you do differently if you were starting your postdoc at DFCI all over again? That's a tough question. I guess I would say I would take advantage of the networking opportunities in the Longwood Medical Area. I started attending some networking events closer to the end of my postdoc, and it probably would have served me better to make more professional connections earlier on. Don't they say it's all about who you know?

What do you miss the most and what do you miss the least about your life in Boston and at DFCI?

I most miss the large number of Universities/Research Hospitals, all in one area. What I miss least is the weather, especially



Marc Lafleur

since I now live in sunny California!

As a researcher, did you have any "aha" moments that you would care to share with us? I'd love to be able to say that I had one big eureka moment, which lead to the discovery of something really outstanding like gravity, but sadly I had nothing that big! However, I did have plenty of smaller aha moments which occurred, for instance, while staring at a newly developed X-ray film and seeing a result that

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Near and Far: International Destinations



Courtesy of the Arnold Arboretum Archives.

Sonja Stoffel, PhD, a postdoctoral Research Fellow in Medical Oncology from Basel, Switzerland shares her favorite locations with us:

Nicest place near her home: Petite Camargue Alsace
1, rue de la Pisciculture F - 68300 Saint-Louis

A beautiful natural reserve and an ideal place to have a nice picnic, go for a bike ride or take romantic strolls. Website: www.petitecamarguealsacienne.com

Nicest place in the Boston area: The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University
125 Arborway, Boston, MA 02130-3500

The Arboretum is a part of Boston's Emerald Necklace of parks. It is the oldest public arboretum in North America and serves both as a research institution as well as a public landscape. Events and family activities are offered throughout the summer. Website: www.arboretum.harvard.edu

By T: Orange Line to Forest Hills **By bus:** #39 bus to Custer Street

AroundDFCI—Biking to Work

The sun is shining. The flowers are blooming. The bus is late...again. Suddenly the allure of the wind in your hair has become quite irresistible and you've decided to start biking to DFCI! Whether you are a seasoned biker or a newbie to cycling, there are a few things you should know (or be reminded of) that will help in the daily bike ride.

1. It cannot be said often enough: Safety first. *Wear a helmet* and be conscious of your surroundings. Hundreds of bikes frolic in the Longwood area, as do people, cars, and occasionally wildlife—no, they are not mutually exclusive. Neither separate, nor shared bike lanes are common and Boston drivers and traffic are thought to be among the craziest (in the U.S. at least).

2. Lock up your ride! In addition to riding your bike to work, you would also like to ride your bike *home* at the end of the day. Here are some tips. Bike thefts are not uncommon in Boston, particularly if you own a new shiny one; keep in mind, though, that a little 'vintage' rust confers a glamour that apparently also appeals thieves. Be sure to buy a *serious* lock. A second lock will be "donated" by security if you leave the bike in any unapproved areas.

DFCI has two bike cages available for employees: one is located at the back of the Smith building and is substantially big; the other is between the food court and the Dana building. Your DFCI ID grants you access to these cages. As you might expect, these cages fill up by about 10am, so plan accordingly.



3. Stay visible. If you ride to work before the sun rises or after it sets, make sure you are awake in both cases and *use some lights*. Again, despite the large number of bikers, drivers are not accustomed to look for them. We know you don't like to resemble a Christmas tree on wheels, but the brighter the safer.

4. Get rewarded. Being healthy and green are rewarding in themselves but be sure to take advantage of the benefits offered by DFCI too! MASCO offers a

program called Commute-Fit which is an incentive program through which you can earn gift cards based on the number of miles you bike to work. Additionally, there is an annual "Bike Week," a sort of biker's celebration, with goodies, raffles, and free breakfast. For more information and other biking resources, visit

<http://www.masco.org/commuteworks/>

Enjoy your ride!

PGA Resources—Lounging Around

Need a change of scenery, information about upcoming events, or just a place to chat and relax? Try visiting the Postdoc and Graduate Student Lounge located in **Smith 347**.

The lounge is a resource available to the postdoc and graduate student community at Dana-Farber. Outside the office, scien-

tists can take a look at posters contributed by their colleagues, and learn about the exciting research being done throughout DFCI. If you're interested in having your poster displayed, email brooke_johnson@dfci.harvard.edu.

Inside the lounge, you will find a bulletin board filled with information about

events or activities at DFCI or throughout the Boston area. There are computer workstations available for general use (like checking email, for example). The office also provides coffee, water, a microwave, and comfortable seats for you to enjoy your free time. There is also a TV for when you *really* need to rest your brain!

So, next time you have a long incubation, or if you just need a casual meeting spot, drop by the Postdoc and Graduate Student Lounge in Smith 347. You may even meet some new friends, make some new scientific connections, or find out what flavor of coffee is your new favorite.

On the Hot Seat with Marc Lafleur. Continued from Page 2

made a light bulb turn on in my brain, and finally everything made sense.

What aspects of being in the PGA did you enjoy the most? I really enjoyed meeting and working with a great group of diverse people. It was also personally satisfying to work on issues and projects that helped improve our post-doctoral training. Being actively involved as chair of the PGA helped me during my job search, to show

employers that I possessed leadership skills.

What is it like to work at Amgen; is it very different from working in academia?

A major difference between working in industry versus academia is that in industry you can focus on doing the science, rather than on grant writing! In my current role in a toxicology group, I am exposed to many different branches of biology because Amgen has programs in many different

therapeutic areas such as cancer, diabetes, inflammation, neuroscience etc.; therefore the science never gets boring.

What are your plans for the future? I am quite happy in my current environment and would like to stay at Amgen. I am very excited about working in the drug development process leading to the realization of therapeutics. I hope to continue down this road for a very long time.

Editorial Team

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Special thanks to Sonja D. Stoffel, Sonal Jhaveri, and Brooke Johnson.

We are looking for new contributors to the Newsletter! Please email if interested, dfci_pgapost@dfci.harvard.edu

Comments and suggestions are also welcomed!



Ask Brooke!

Brooke Johnson is the Program Administrator for the Postdoc and Graduate Student Affairs Office.

Q: I'm a DFCI postdoc. How do I get my Harvard ID?

A: Great question! You receive a Harvard ID once the paperwork for your HMS appointment is completed and accepted. This can take up to 3 months. The process is different in every department. There is an admin in each department who helps research fellows with their HMS appointment paperwork. Ask within your department to determine how to get the process started. To help expedite the process, work on getting your CV in Harvard format as soon as possible: <http://cv.hms.harvard.edu/>

Check in with me if you cannot determine who in your department submits HMS appointment paperwork. Your Harvard ID will give you access to a variety of resources including the Countway Library and the M2 Shuttle. Hope that helps!

Have a question for Brooke? Email her at brooke_johnson@dfci.harvard.edu

PGA Calendar

July 22, 2010 Writing Basics, 2-3:30PM, Smith 308/309

July 23, 2010 Brain Lunch, 12:00-1:00 PM, JF 836 A/B

July 28, 2010 Breakfast and Benefits, 9:30 - 11:30, Smith 347D

July 29, 2010 Everything you Wanted to Know About Green Cards (But were Afraid to Ask) 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM, Smith 308/309

August 26, 2010 How to Write a Scientific Paper Session 1 of 5, 2-4PM, Smith 308/309

September 24, 2010 Postdoc and Graduate Student Retreat, Holiday Inn at Beacon Hill

September 24, 2010 National Postdoc Appreciation Day!

Events subject to Change. Visit <http://dfcionline.org/departments/postdoc/events/default.aspx> for updates.

