PGSAO Celebrates 10th Anniversary

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Postdoc and Graduate Student Affairs Office (PGSAO). This significant milestone will be celebrated at the 10th Annual Postdoc and Graduate Student Retreat, to be held on the 18th of September 2014, at the Linda K. Paresky Conference Center, Simmons College (300 The Fenway, Boston, MA), from 8 am – 6 pm. As always, the Retreat will coincide with celebrations for National Postdoc Appreciation Week.

To kick off the retreat, DFCI’s Chief Scientific Officer, Barrett Rollins, MD, PhD will present the inaugural Distinguished Postdoc Alumnus Award to Helen Piwnica-Worms, PhD, current postdocs who have completed their postdoctoral training within the last 5 years, and hence, will be able to provide a timely perspective of the state of their various professions.

Lunch will be followed by a Poster Session and then by Oral Presentations from postdocs and graduate students. Four $1,000 awards will be given out to the two best posters and two best oral presentations. The retreat will culminate with the keynote address to be given by Tyler Jacks, PhD, Director of the Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research at MIT. This will be followed by a cocktail reception, where the winner of the Mentor-of-the-Year Award will be announced. As per tradition, raffle prizes, including a Samsung Galaxy tablet, will be given out during the reception.

Join us in celebrating the 10th anniversary of the PGSAO and show your support to the office that continually strives to provide us with the best training environment possible. We are expecting a big turnout so it should be a fun and enriching experience for all attendees. The venue is only a short walk from DFCI and gift cards will be given out to the first 100 attendees.
Upcoming Boston Pan-PDA Events

Boston-based postdoctoral associations (PDAs) got together in late 2013 to form a pan-PDA consortium aimed at facilitating interactions among postdoc communities in the area. Member institutions currently include Boston Children’s Hospital, Boston University, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Broad Institute, Harvard Medical School, Harvard School of Public Health, Massachusetts General Hospital, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Tufts University and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. The pan-PDA is proud to announce the following flagship events:

Symposium on the Future of Research. Do you have opinions about current policies that affect academic research but don’t have a forum to voice them? Come and attend this 2-day symposium, which will feature talks and panel discussions about funding dynamics, changing publication practices and questions about training and workforce stability. The ultimate goal of this symposium is to write a white paper that documents the consensus opinion, to be circulated to administrators, journals and policy-makers. The event is scheduled for October 2nd and 3rd 2013 at the CGS Auditorium, Boston University. The Keynote Address will be delivered by Henry Bourne, Professor Emeritus, University of California San Francisco. To register, log on to www.futureofresearch.org.

Career Development Fair 2015. Day 1 of this event will feature Randall Ribaudo and Larry Petcovic, co-founders of SciPhD, who will conduct their signature 1-day workshop on transitioning successfully from academia to industry. Day 2 will feature panel discussions on alternative career paths and seminars on effective leadership and management. It will also include a workshop on networking strategies by Joanne Kamens, Executive Director of Addgene, followed by an informal networking event. This event is scheduled for Spring 2015 (venue TBA). Details will be posted on the PGSAO events website.

Science Blogs: A Productive Pastime for Pesky Incubations

As a postdoc or grad student, you may occasionally find yourself with a few minutes to spare. Whether you are waiting for your gel to run, your culture to grow, or a computational analysis to be completed, it can be challenging to find something productive to do during incubation time. Perusing science blogs is a great way to delve into different areas of research and gain a fresh perspective in a relatively small amount of time. Listed below are several web forums that house great blog posts, which may even drive you to add another 5 minutes to your timer.

Wired: Science Blogs. http://www.wired.com/category/scienceblogs/. Maintained by a group of “all-star” science bloggers, Wired: Science Blogs spits out daily posts and news stories about a wide range of topics that include “The Quest to Brew Beer With Space Yeast”, “Absurd Creature of the Week: Satanic Leaf-Tailed Gecko” and “How Do Barnacles Mate?”. Be sure to keep an eye out for the section on “Space Photo of the Day”, which allows the reader to visit moon craters, star clusters and hidden black holes.

Lablit.com. http://www.lablit.com/. Edited by experienced cell biologist Dr. Jennifer Rohn, Lablit.com is geared towards demonstrating how science and laboratory life is portrayed in fiction and in the media, with a goal to “inform, entertain and surprise”. Lablit.com has generated a comprehensive index of novels, films, plays and TV programs that focus on various scientific themes; it attempts to provide a Hollywood-type glimpse into the world of a scientific researcher. Lablit.com also provides an outlet for in-house fiction and is open to the public for individual submissions.

Science blogs. http://scienceblogs.com/. As a truly open forum, Science blogs consists of a gaggle of posts contributed by scientists from all over the world who aim to cover various aspects of life, physical, and environment sciences, and examine how science relates to politics, humanities and technology. Sections such as “The Last 24 Hrs” and “Editor’s Picks” are great starting points for your journey. Use the “category” and “tag” features to tailor this experience according to your personal interests.
Prepare for Public Speaking

Scientific presentations are an important part of a postdoc’s responsibilities. Here are a few local opportunities that will help you practice your talk and prepare for public speaking:

**Volunteer** to give a talk at the monthly Brain Lunch – PGSAO Science Program Director Sonal Jhaveri and the audience will give constructive feedback on the talk. Contact Seminars co-chairs Leah Hogdal or Alison Taylor.

**Join a Toastmaster’s club.** There are many opportunities to give 5 to 7 minute prepared speeches and 2 to 4 minute impromptu speeches, and to receive informative feedback.

**Organize a nanocourse.** This is 6-hour course on a specific topic, offered through the Harvard Medical School and delivered over a period of 2 days. For the opportunity to teach in the Spring term, submit a one-paragraph description that outlines the course and the subjects you plan to cover to the HMS Curriculum Fellows Program (CFP@hms.harvard.edu) by November 1.

The following tips may help you to appear confident and poised, and to present a clear informative speech:

**Organize the talk:** As for a scientific paper, use sections such as Introduction, Methods, Results and Conclusions and connect them with clear transitions. Follow the aphorism "Tell'em what you are going to tell'em. Tell'em. Then tell'em what you told'em.” In other words, repetition will help the audience comprehend and remember the main points of the talk. End with 2 to 3 take-home points.

**Practice the talk** aloud several times, to be sure that the timing of each section, and of the talk as a whole, is within the time limit. It is better for a talk to be short and to the point, especially if there are multiple speakers per session.

Careful preparation that incorporates feedback and clear take-home points are the keys to a well-received, successful talk.

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**National Postdoc Appreciation Week Celebrations**

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<tr>
<th>Monday 9/15</th>
<th>Tuesday 9/16</th>
<th>Wednesday 9/17</th>
<th>Thursday 9/18</th>
<th>Friday 9/19</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PGA Open House</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ice Cream Social</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lunch with Dr. Benz</strong></td>
<td><strong>10th Annual RETREAT</strong></td>
<td><strong>Donut Friday</strong></td>
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<td>11:30 AM – 1:30 PM Outside Yawkey Cafeteria</td>
<td>2:30 - 4:00 PM Smith 308/309</td>
<td>12:00 - 1:30 PM Benacerraf Reading Room</td>
<td>8am - 6pm Simmons College</td>
<td>9:00 - 10:30 AM Smith 347</td>
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<td>Stop by and learn more about what the PGA is doing for the postdoc and graduate student community!</td>
<td>A yearly tradition! Come by and enjoy free ice cream from J. LICKS</td>
<td>Limited to 10 postdocs and graduate students!</td>
<td>To register &amp; find more info search “retreat” on DFCI Online or email: <a href="mailto:DFCI_PGSAO@dfci.harvard.edu">DFCI_PGSAO@dfci.harvard.edu</a></td>
<td>Enjoy coffee and a variety of donuts in the PGSAO Lounge</td>
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**Postdoc Benefits Town Hall Meeting**

“We’re enthusiastically inviting you to hear about the more inclusive employee benefits all DFCI postdocs will be offered in the coming months, regardless of funding origins. Please join us on Tuesday, September 16th at 10AM in Yawkey 306 to learn more.” - DFCI HR

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**Editorial Team**
Reina Improgo, Siddha Kasar, Nicole Spardy, and Monica Ter-Minassian

Special thanks to Jennifer Molina and Sonal Jhaveri.
If you are interested in contributing to the PGA Newsletter, email us at dfci_pgapost@dfci.harvard.edu
Comments and suggestions are also welcomed!
Author Nate Silver presents the power and pitfalls of predictive statistics in a wide variety of fields, including baseball, poker, chess, political polling, weather forecasting, earthquakes and climate change to name a few. Remarkably accurate predictions can be achieved in fields with a few variables that have relatively simple relationships and a lot of historical data (sports, games, even the daily weather). Pitfalls in forecasting can occur when there is little historical data to rely on, when variables have complex relationships, or if projections are made too far in advance (especially in fields such as earthquake prediction and climate change). Some key advice: know your subject matter, but be aware that there may be unknown unknowns, and don’t be afraid to change your model as new pertinent information is obtained. Anyone doing data analysis will enjoy this highly readable insightful book.

Mobile Apps to the Busy Scientist’s Rescue

For all tech-savvy postdocs and grad students out there, here’s a list of some iOS and Android apps that can come in very handy:

**MyGels**: Don’t have image acquisition and analysis software? No problem. You can take a picture of your gel, annotate lanes, and measure band intensities with this app. You can export your annotated gel as a jpeg or pdf and your raw data in csv format.

**Cloningbench**: It's the Swiss army knife for molecular biology. Key features include Double Digest Finder, Vector-to-Insert Molar ratio calculator, Bacterial Growth Timer, and Gene size estimator from known protein size, and vice-versa.

**GeneWall Genome Browser**: Long ride home? Explore your favorite gene locus with this awesome app, which lets you search by gene name, position and ontology. Make gene lists and export your results. You can even load your own UCSC bed format tracks.

**Protocolpedia**: Repository of thousands of referenced molecular biology protocols at your fingertips, along with relevant videos. Live forums are available for sharing ideas and troubleshooting.

**iGrants**: This can be useful during your pathway to independence. Track the status of grants.gov submissions, set grant deadline reminders and receive live RSS feeds.

Book Review: The Signal and The Noise

Author Nate Silver presents the power and pitfalls of predictive statistics in a wide variety of fields, including baseball, poker, chess, political polling, weather forecasting, earthquakes and climate change to name a few. Remarkably accurate predictions can be achieved in fields with a few variables that have relatively simple relationships and a lot of historical data (sports, games, even the daily weather). Pitfalls in forecasting can occur when there is little historical data to rely on, when variables have complex relationships, or if projections are made too far in advance (especially in fields such as earthquake prediction and climate change). Some key advice: know your subject matter, but be aware that there may be unknown unknowns, and don’t be afraid to change your model as new pertinent information is obtained. Anyone doing data analysis will enjoy this highly readable insightful book.

Summer PGA Event: Wine-Tasting Night
Postdocs enjoy wine and advice from wine expert Maia Gosselin, Owner, Sip Wine Education, LLC.

Join the PGA Cheer Team @ The Jimmy Fund Walk
Date: Sunday, September 21, 2014
Help us give cheers of encouragement to the Jimmy Fund walkers as they approach the finish line!
Email Jennifer_Molina@dfci.harvard.edu to sign up.