

EVCP Expresso ? July 2018

July 2, 2018

Dear Colleagues:

Yet again, to help offset the troubling news blanketing the nation, my spirits are lifted by the remarkable work that happens here at UCSF. Thank goodness for all of you.

(BTW ? if you have a few minutes free, please check out ?The Fourth Great Awakening [1], ? an editorial by David Brooks in the *New York Times* last month, in which he attempts to view the current cultural trends around the globe from a mythological perspective ? very sobering?)

But back to home ? one thing that makes this place so strong is our constant desire for improvement. This month, I?m taking a look at efforts to help make the research environment at UCSF even better. This includes nurturing a healthy lab culture in which all employees feel valued and stress is minimized. You?ll also read about protecting one of our most vulnerable populations in the event of immigration enforcement activity at UCSF.

This month?s topics:

- Standing up for Immigrant Rights: Protecting the dream
- Running the UCSF Research Enterprise: A new outlook and fresh approach
- Healthy Labs: Taking some of the stress out of research

If you have any thoughts on these issues, or perhaps another topic that I could shine a light on, drop me a line at ExecutiveViceChancellor@ucsf.edu [2].

Thanks,

Dan

Standing up for Immigrant Rights: Protecting the dream

I just learned that June was #ImmigrantHeritageMonth. Sadly, in the past year and a half, immigrants ? particularly undocumented immigrants ? have been under attack. And just this week, we?ve followed the continuing crisis at our border with Mexico and seen the Supreme Court uphold President Trump?s ban on travel from several predominantly Muslim countries. Last September, the Trump administration sought to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, known as DACA. These are the Dreamers, the children brought to the U.S.A. at a young age and raised here.

Since the Obama Administration adopted DACA in 2012, thousands of Dreamers have

registered. In 2014, the first Dreamer enrolled at UCSF, in the School of Medicine, and now we have about fifteen Dreamers across the four schools and graduate programs, according to Alejandra Rincón, assistant vice chancellor and chief of staff in UCSF's Office of Diversity and Outreach. However, because of the DACA reversal, she explains, "These students continue their studies but under the threat of deportation, and some with a limited ability to work." When the Dreamers were told in 2012 they could stay, they registered with the government, revealing where they lived, worked, and went to school. Now that information exposes them to immigration agents seeking to deport them, often to countries they haven't seen since early childhood.

When the Trump policy was released last fall, UCSF held a "Defending DACA" forum, drawing a full house to Cole Hall and reaching 100,000 people via social media. Chancellor Sam Hawgood and I pledged the administration's support. The UC Office of the President has given three years of funding to all campuses to help our Dreamers, including \$50,000 per year to UCSF, but Alejandra says it's not enough, and it's ending soon: "Their need is huge. They're incurring enormous debt." Learn about one student's journey ^[3] and stay connected with the Pre-Health Dreamers ^[4].

As efforts in Congress to protect the Dreamers fall short, many lawsuits are trying to stop the reversal, including one from the state of California and one from the UC system. An injunction has put the administration's plan to end the program on hold for now.

California also has taken legislative steps to protect Dreamers. The most recent was Assembly Bill 21, Access to Higher Education for Every Student, which Governor Jerry Brown signed into law last year. According to a letter from UC President Janet Napolitano, the law requires the CSUs and community colleges, and requests the UC system, "to establish certain policies and procedures to foster a campus environment that is safe and welcoming for all members of our community, regardless of immigration status." Policies include instructions on what to do if an immigration enforcement officer shows up on campus, and how to protect the privacy rights of all students.

In addition, the UC system had already enacted most of the requirements in its Statement of Principles in Support of Undocumented Members of the UC Community ^[5]. The UC Office of the President maintains a website with information on immigration ^[6] and regular updates on the status of the law. Through its Office of Diversity and Outreach, UCSF also maintains a site for undocumented students ^[7] with links to many helpful resources, including legal services.

Alejandra, who is working on a new chapter to update her 2008 book, *Undocumented Immigrants and Higher Education*, says it's important to stand up for these students for a host of reasons. For one, immigrant students often wind up providing health services in underserved communities. In addition, protecting them will help attract future immigrant students to UCSF. These laws "have propelled us into action," she adds. "It's good we have some infrastructure to work with. We have a supportive community of faculty, students, and staff and are coming up with new and creative ideas. The tenacity of the young people here is amazing. Day to day, it's so difficult to have your family at risk of deportation. But they put themselves at risk, and they work with others to assert their right to be in this country and live a life with dignity."

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Running the UCSF Research Enterprise: A new outlook and fresh approach

Last November Lindsey Criswell [8], UCSF alum and longstanding faculty member as well as renowned scientist, embarked on a new professional journey as vice chancellor for research [9]. With a multi-faceted perspective, Lindsey has made streamlining communications and committees two of her top priorities towards making the research enterprise run more efficiently.

While I wrote about email overload in February 2016 [10], we still have a ways to go. Lindsey sees ? as many of us do ? many different research-related communications coming from different channels. Researchers are getting too much administrative information, and it?s unclear what is important and what is not. Conflicting or inaccurate messaging is a bad situation, and the seemingly ad-hoc timing of broadcast emails can be annoying. In the worst-case scenario, the audience stops reading them all together. One factor is the almost all or nothing nature of listservs ? you either can?t opt out, or you can?t discover the ones that would be useful to you. We currently don?t have a way to curate lists to reach the target audiences.

Lindsey?s vision is to take all the different research communications and consolidate them into a single monthly email communique. ?It will be very brief, with bullet points, a couple of highlights, and then links to longer but concise stories,? she says. (She says she?s modeling it on *Expresso!* I am humbled.) She adds, ?I?m really excited at the prospect of both decreasing the burden on the researchers and increasing the quality of the information they?re receiving,? For example, the Research Development Office can still develop its own content, ?but what will go out is a link in my newsletter to their larger story, instead of having them send it to everybody.?

In tackling the communication issue, Lindsey also notes the proliferation of committees. ?There hasn?t been a lot of effort to think globally about the different research-related committees we have,? she says. ?Some of the committees have a lack of clarity about what their charge is, or maybe their original charge may not be so relevant. It?s not always clear what authority committees have ? it?s not clear to the members, and it?s no longer clear to many others. One major concern is the waste of human resources, the time that our faculty and staff are devoting. That?s another related issue that I?m interested in taking a deep look at.? Some committees may be eliminated or refined; others may be encouraged to collaborate more. Broad committees like the Research Advisory Board (RAB) and the Academic Senate?s Committee on Research ?might decide upon less overlapping and more distinct areas of focus, kind of a divide and conquer approach.?

And that leads to one more project Lindsey has on the horizon: UCSF?s challenges in collaborating with industry on clinical trials. This is an issue I?ve covered since the very first *Expresso* [11], particularly the report our consultants delivered in 2014 [12] enumerating the amount of red tape we seem to throw in the way of industry partners. ?UCSF is a fabulous place for research and clinical trials because of the quality of the faculty and the intellectual power here,? Lindsey explains. ?However, the administrative processes are viewed as being so broken that potential industry partners are really discouraged from even reaching out to

us.?

Lindsey and her team, along with the Project Management Office and many dedicated faculty and staff, are going through a three-day process improvement workshop focusing on industry-sponsored clinical trials. That initial effort is nearly complete, and it's identifying many areas in which we can improve. The next step will be a group effort pulling together key stakeholders and communication experts who will pick up where the workshop leaves off and shepherd this process of ongoing improvement over the coming year and beyond.

And that brings Lindsey full-circle: The new research newsletter, which she plans to launch mid-July, is going to provide an opportunity to highlight on a monthly basis the progress that we're making. No doubt I'll be an eager reader!

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Healthy Labs: Taking some of the stress out of research

What does it mean to have a healthy lab? The editors at *Nature* contend that a healthy research environment is fundamental to good science: it helps people to produce their best work, and feel satisfied in doing so.

To address this question, the editors traveled to more than a dozen research institutions worldwide and subsequently surveyed over 3,000 lab employees. You can read about the results of that survey online ^[13]. The May issue of *Nature* was devoted to healthy labs (read an overview ^[14]).

Nature editor-in-chief Sir Philip Campbell held one of his listening sessions at UCSF last September. More than thirty postdocs and principal investigators participated. I also attended and found the discussion fascinating.

Nearing the end of Sir Philip's tour; he held another session at UC Berkeley last October. Larry Tabak, principal deputy director of the National Institutes of Health, and France Córdova, director of the National Science Foundation,-- attended the October session and participated in a discussion on how to run labs in healthy ways.

UCSF physiology postdoc Katie Thompson-Peer was the only postdoc actually working in a lab to participate in the forum. Katie was selected because of her role in P-value*, a UCSF postdoc think tank that examined the postdoctoral training experience.

Katie contributed a short opinion piece to the May issue of *Nature*, in which a handful of scientists offered tips ^[15] on what lab leaders could do to make science more productive, rigorous and happy. Katie said they should encourage trainees to seek out other mentors, as it is in the best interest of the student and the science to have multiple eyes and perspectives.

She describes her practical actionable recommendation, "There are so many smart people at UCSF. It's just a matter of encouraging students and trainees to make those connections, and encouraging PIs to be explicit that their trainees go and find mentors."

UCSF cancer biology postdoc Tracy Chow also contributed to the same *Nature* piece, urging trainees to be clear about their expectations. Tracy feels lucky to have trained in a lab in which the PIs encouraged students to talk about their expectations for the mentors, and to share what was and wasn't working.

The effects of high-pressure research environments can be felt not only by postdocs and students. Lab staff also face challenges and can benefit from having mentors from other areas. The university should encourage lab staff to seek mentors and guidance outside their department, says Sandy DeVries, manager of a biospecimen bank that deals with clinical trials. She also appreciated the *Nature* report's assertion that "Words Matter" [13], urging people toward kindness and collaboration and away from competition and stress.

Mentorship is a topic in its own right, so I'll be writing more about the generational aspect in next month's issue. Back to the story?

To maintain a healthy lab amidst the sometimes intense atmosphere noted by Sandy, Diane Barber, chair of the Department of Cell and Tissue Biology, indicates the importance of lab members being "stakeholders," which can be accomplished through the principles of engagement, transparency, and open communication. To make labs healthier in spite of the pressure, she elaborates:

- Engagement includes the responsibility of reading and thinking broadly about unresolved questions the group and each member are addressing.
- Transparency is facilitated by an awareness of the challenges the lab faces and extends beyond an experimental focus to grant funding and group efforts toward grant applications, whether for the lab or individual fellowships.
- Open communication requires constructive evaluations and consideration of alternative views, and is enhanced by diversity to add a range of perspectives and different strengths.

In Diane's words, "A healthy lab of stakeholders managed by a PI who values disparate ideas, fosters an interactive team, and promotes career development enables risk-taking, which is a cornerstone of testing new ideas and moving forward, and doing it with fun." Hear, hear!

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Dan's Tip of the Month



Want to escape the heat of summer? Come to

Parnassus! If you commute here on a regular basis from any direction ? from the North, East, or South Bay? or even from Mission Bay ? you know that layering is imperative. I recently learned about a very cool (or hot?) app from my friend and colleague Brad Monash that lets you stay on top of the Bay Area microclimates. Check out Mr. Chilly ^[16]!

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- [1] <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/21/opinion/marvel-video-games-religion.html>
- [2] <mailto:ExecutiveViceChancellor@ucsf.edu>
- [3] <https://giving.ucsf.edu/stories/remarkable-new-american-6>
- [4] <http://www.phdreamers.org/>
- [5] <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/sites/default/files/Statement-of-Principles-in-Support-of-Undocumented-Members-of-UC.pdf>
- [6] <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/immigration>
- [7] <https://undocu.ucsf.edu>
- [8] <https://profiles.ucsf.edu/lindsey.criswell>

- [9] <https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2017/11/408631/lindsey-criswell-named-vice-chancellor-research>
- [10] <https://evcprovost.ucsf.edu/evcp-expresso/201602#smartmail>
- [11] <https://evcprovost.ucsf.edu/evcp-expresso/201509#redtape>
- [12] <https://evcprovost.ucsf.edu/evcp-expresso/201606#clinres>
- [13] <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-05143-8>
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