Dear Expresso Readers:

Ramadan Mubarak to my colleagues approaching the mid-point of Ramadan. The thirty-day journey, which began this year on April 12, is a time for spiritual focus and to engage more deeply with the Muslim faith, family, and community?the last ten days are generally considered the most spiritually significant. I send my gratitude to Saiqa Anne Qureshi, PhD, MBA, in the Controller?s Office for sharing her sister?s primer on observing Ramadan in the workplace [1] and educating non-Muslims about how we as colleagues can be more supportive toward an informed and inclusive UCSF.

May is Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month [2] as well as the beginning of commencement season! This month you?ll read about how UCSF?s AAPI campus organizations are supporting the AAPI community and how our soon-to-be graduates will be marking their milestone accomplishment. In addition, you?ll learn about a UCSF effort to collect your COVID-19 memorabilia:

- Pomp and Circumstance: Pandemic-Style 2021
- Bystander to Upstander: The Asian Health Institute and the Asian Pacific American Systemwide Alliance
- Don?t Toss That!: UCSF Pandemic Chronicles preserve the record of our COVID-19 lives

I also send an enthusiastic welcome and congratulations to Camara Phyllis Jones, MD, MPH, PhD [3], the recipient of this year?s UCSF Presidential Chair Award. Dr. Jones is among the world?s eminent scholars and activists addressing race, racism, and anti-racism in health and health systems, including academic health centers.

And remember, if you received your COVID-19 vaccine outside of a UCSF location, you must submit proof of your vaccination or declination by June 30, 2021 on the Occupational Health Services portal [4].

Have an idea for a topic that would be fitting for Expresso? Drop me a line at ExecutiveViceChancellor@ucsf.edu [5] and let me know.

With best wishes,
Dan

Pomp and Circumstance: Pandemic-Style 2021

?Pomp and Circumstance? immediately conjures images of students and faculty proceeding
down the aisle in a variety of colorful academic regalia. The traditions of graduation are exciting and can fill your heart with pride. While our degree-granting programs did what they could to provide the 2020 graduates with a meaningful send-off, the "pomp and circumstance" of years gone by was noticeably absent.

With the pandemic declared in March, there was not much time to pivot. Long story short, some programs went straight for a virtual event, others waited a bit longer, and one didn't hold a ceremony at all, but everyone learned a lot. And armed with more time to prepare, they set their sights on 2021 commencement pandemic-style? i.e., virtually.

This is where UCSF Educational Technology Services (ETS) comes into the picture. This team comprises the tech wizards who turned on a dime last spring to create many special moments for our graduates, and who again this year are working tirelessly with the schools and programs to make their ceremonies possible. All will be pre-recorded, which helps avoid technological glitches.

No spoilers, but I will tell you some of the ways our next classes of dentists, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, physicians, and researchers will mark this milestone. Nearly all the ceremonies will feature traditional remarks by selected students and beloved faculty members. Be on the watch for slides prepared by graduates that will include photos, quotes, and messages of thanks. And speaking of thanks? shout-out to the Alumni Association for sending gifts to grads in all the schools and Graduate Division. (Hopes are also high that UC President Michael Drake will make special remarks for his alma mater!)

Now, maestro, please cue "Pomp and Circumstance".

**School of Dentistry:** In 2020, students voted to hold an in-person celebration when the pandemic restrictions allowed. While disappointed that they would need to wait to embrace and high-five their classmates, family, and friends, this didn't stop them from coming together as a class. Class leaders sprang into action and, with the school's help, created their own beautiful, intimate virtual ceremony. This year, the online ceremony will air on June 5, featuring 116 graduates and speeches from U.S. Chief Dental Officer Timothy Ricks as well as alumna Pamela Alston and ever-popular faculty member Robert Ho. Students are coming on-site for individual mini hooding ceremonies, which will be recorded on video and included in the larger ritual, and other special virtual activities are in the works.

**School of Medicine:** Last year, Anthony Fauci was a surprise speaker, followed by actress Katherine Heigl, trailblazing former 49ers coach Katie Sowers, alumna-turned-philanthropist Priscilla Chan Zuckerberg, and beloved former Dean of Admissions David Wofsy. People signed in from all over the world, including Africa and Europe, to watch and celebrate the 163 graduates. (Shout-out to event mastermind Dennis Chan, who credits a love of Disney for his belief that "pixie dust" was the magic that made the day special.) This year on May 15, 173 graduates will hear from California Surgeon General Nadine Burke Harris, the first person to hold that position, which was created in 2019. The school traditionally foregoes having the dean or faculty hood graduates, signifying their arrival as MDs, and instead lets each student choose one or two special "hooders." This year, due to the online environment, students will submit a photo of their honorary hooders, with the only limit being how many people each frame can hold.

**School of Nursing:** Last spring, the school celebrated its 170 graduates as well as faculty, student, and alumni award recipients in a virtual awards ceremony. This year, the school will
host an awards celebration on May 18 to honor its award recipients, plus a virtual commencement on June 11 for more than 180 nurses and nurse scientists who make up its graduating Class of 2021. In addition, last year’s Class of 2020 will be recognized during commencement. The keynote speaker will be U.S. Representative Lauren Underwood of Illinois, a registered nurse who, in 2018 at age 32, became the youngest Black woman elected to Congress. The event will include a fun video comprising student-submitted photos tracing their journey at UCSF, as well as school-organized watch parties. And who doesn’t like a swag bag? Soon-to-be graduates will receive a special gift box mailed directly to their homes courtesy of the school.

**School of Pharmacy:** Last year, like students in the other three schools, those in pharmacy held out hope for an in-person ceremony. Students organized a celebration in spring 2020, and in fall 2020 when it became apparent that an in-person event could not happen, the school worked with the graduating class to present an online ceremony on December 26. Two ceremonies are planned this year: May 15 for the 130 students who were on the former four-year curriculum, and May 21 for the 92 students who took the transformed three-year curriculum. Former U.S. Surgeon General and UCSF alum Richard Carmona will address both classes. In addition to sponsoring each student’s regalia, the school also will give each student a stole of gratitude, which they can present to someone meaningful in their educational journey.

**Graduate Division:** As the saying goes, ?The more the merrier?! Without a 2020 ceremony, some of last year’s graduates will join this year’s 133-student roster in an online ceremony slated for May 27. Professor Kathy Giacomini will deliver the commencement address while program directors will acknowledge their respective graduates. Interim Dean Liz Silva will emcee, and Chief of Staff Wendy Winkler and Assistant Dean for Diversity and Learner Success D?Anne Duncan will share the name reading responsibilities. The team has some late-night show tricks in store, so keep your eyes peeled!

**Physical Therapy:** Students helped plan the 2020 online ceremony, including creative and fitting ideas like a stretch break. (That means you too, so get up and away from your screen!) Graduates received special gifts including personalized notes from faculty. Building on that success, students also helped plan this year’s June 12 virtual ceremony. As with last year, the YouTube video will be accompanied by a Zoom hangout for running commentary.

**Global Health:** Since their 2020 commencement happened later than most other schools, IGHS had the benefit of more time to plan and more examples of how to design an online ceremony. They were inspired by the SOM commencement and produced something similar with the help of the great team at ETS. Although it was definitely a bit of a scramble to get a few dozen video greetings from faculty, alumni, and global health leaders from around the world, they were able to translate almost all the regular components of their traditional ceremony to online (except for the cake and champagne at the end!). This year will be similar in many ways, and they plan to have an amazing keynote speaker to boot! (Remember?no spoilers.)
While many people are disappointed not to be gathering at Davies Symphony Hall or Herbst Auditorium for in-person ceremonies, there is one silver lining: The number of guests were often limited due to venue capacity, and other important people may not have been able to travel to the commencement because of cost or long distances. With online ceremonies, many of our graduates' family members and key supporters around the world can tune in and share their special moment.

back to top

**Bystander to Upstander: The Asian Health Institute and the Asian Pacific American Systemwide Alliance**

From ignorant and bigoted words on the street to violent attacks, the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community feels under siege, and it’s up to all of us to show that acts of hatred will not be tolerated.

Peter Chin-Hong, professor in the Department of Medicine and infectious disease specialist, calls on us to be ?upstanders,? an effective flip of the word ?bystander,? urging us to stand up for others. If anyone witnesses anything ranging from a microaggression to blatant misinformation deployed against ?one of our Asian brothers and sisters,? Peter says, we need to ?pause and acknowledge what has happened.? If the situation permits, we can make sure the person is okay, and if you feel you can do so safely, you can address whatever misinformation led to the attack.

Peter works closely with Diana Lau, director of the UCSF Asian Health Institute (AHI) [14], a campus organization with a longstanding dedication to the Asian American community. Over the past ten years the AHI newsletter has grown to approximately 15,000 subscribers, connecting UCSF to the Asian American community, on as well as off campus and the medical center. (To sign up for the biweekly emails, send a message to ahi@ucsf.edu [15] with ?add email to listserv? in the subject line.) While the overall intent of the newsletter is to support and inform its readers about health and other relevant topics, it also brings visibility to many of UCSF’s Asian American faculty and clinicians, and those who have related expertise. AHI also has a unique, bilingual (English/Chinese) website (https://ahi.ucsf.edu [16]) that contains useful clinical information, including news and guidance related to COVID-19, as well as advocacy and media work.

In March 2020, the focus of AHI turned to COVID-19, and they hit the ground running with virtual town halls in both English and Cantonese. Early on, AHI had access to studies from Hong Kong researchers who showed how effective wearing masks was in preventing the spread of novel coronavirus. Diana uses the AHI town halls as an educational venue to impart vital medical information and dispel myths and misinformation related to COVID-19 and vaccination efforts. In addition, partnering with local Asian media, Diana and Peter both address the community’s skepticism and hesitancy on vaccinations, as well as racism and hatred that have many AAPIs on edge.

As the pandemic continued, the communication continued to give important information about the virus, but it quickly became messages of support, too. On a deeper level, Peter says he
and Diana also interweave issues around upstanding or resilience... even if we’re talking about a molecule or a vaccine. We always have a message about community building and solidarity. Diana always has an inspirational message for people. Peter believes that it helps to empower people with knowledge, so they can push back against hate that’s based on misinformation? for example, how people have blamed Chinese people for starting and spreading the virus.

Also inspiring us: the Asian Pacific American Systemwide Alliance (APASA) [17], a staff organization made up of volunteers that started at UCSF in 1988. Years later, the organization had a dormant phase, but was revived in 2018 and is now a vital and welcome resource as UCSF endeavors to build on its diversity, helping make sure that all voices are heard.

?It’s really the voice of the community, of our membership, elevating our concerns,? says Peter Weber, a project manager in the School of Nursing and APASA co-chair. ?Those voices haven’t always made it to the right avenues to leadership. But now when we’re elevating those voices, a lot of what we’re being met with is thoughtfulness from leadership and action. For us, that’s validating.?

Darlene Mergillano, a graduate affairs officer for Global Health Sciences and APASA co-chair, says while APASA represents staff, for the past several months, in light of all the things that have been going on, we are becoming more and more connected with faculty and learners on campus.

For instance, the day after the Atlanta shootings in March [18] that killed eight people, including six Asian women, APASA held an impromptu online healing circle attended by 128 people from all parts of our organization. Darlene says, ?Although we are historically represented mainly in staff, the bigger reality is that we are all hurting regardless of our role. We all need support.?

?It is important that we work at a place that has an Anti-Racism Initiative [19] that we can all get behind to fight this awful thing,? Peter says.

APASA stood up for Black Lives Matter when George Floyd and others were killed and protests multiplied last summer, demonstrating what we already knew: We all need to stand with and for each other to fight racism and stop hate. The work never ends.

I close with a poem by UCSF fourth-year medical student Billy Zeng [20]. He captures the complexity, vitality, and vulnerability of the AAPI community beautifully:

????? Please Listen to us
We are frightened, upset, and frustrated

?????? Please talk to us
In Hoisanwah, Thai, Mandarin,
In Vietnamese, Khmer, Cantonese In Korean, Japanese, Hakka,
In Tagalog, Cebuano, Teochew And in many languages we speak
Which may or may not include English
Don't Toss That!: UCSF Pandemic Chronicles preserve the record of our COVID-19 lives

Believe it or not, what you are reading this very moment is a historical document. Yes, my *Expresso* newsletter is being collected by the UCSF Archives and Special Collections!

Polina Ilieva, archivist and assistant university librarian, is collecting everything she can that relates to the COVID-19 pandemic: news stories, blog posts, tweets, and even flyers tacked up to bulletin boards. All of it will help inform future historians about this extraordinary time we continue to endure.

UCSF is already home to one of the world’s most significant archives of material relating to HIV and AIDS [21]. That archive launched in 1987, six years after the first AIDS cases appeared. "Documenting these things as they happen and as people’s memories are fresh is critical," says Chris Shaffer, university librarian and assistant vice chancellor for Academic Information Management. "It really is important to capture the history now rather than waiting five years. So, so much was lost in the AIDS epidemic because it wasn’t documented as well as it could have been at the time."

Polina started thinking about collecting material as soon as news of the coronavirus started spreading in this country in February 2020. UCSF already had established the capability to archive digital material, including social media posts, more than ten years ago. Teaming up with others across UCSF, including the Office of Communications, the EVCP communications team, and the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Polina and her team created the UCSF COVID-19 Pandemic Chronicles [22].
There’s a form for you to submit items and materials: photos, videos, signs, t-shirts, emails, letters, classroom presentations — nearly anything qualifies. The intent is to document the experiences of our front-line health care workers, researchers studying the virus and its treatments and vaccines, our educators and the way education pivoted at the onset of shutdown mandates, and our administrative teams as they shifted to telework. But Polina is open to any contribution that reflects how life changed professionally and personally.

?We want to have that community component to our collection,? Polina says. She?s hoping patients will add to it as well; while she is mindful of patient privacy, many people put their own COVID experiences on social media, and perhaps they will share their stories with the Pandemic Chronicles too.

Of course, COVID-19 has been the backdrop of many other 2020 events that shook us to our core, including social reckoning for racial justice, a consequential presidential election and subsequent insurrection, and historic wildfires. Archivists are experts on our past, but they also have an eye to see how our history is happening right before our very eyes. Polina considers it all fodder for the Pandemic Chronicles, particularly as it relates to health care and issues of health equity.

Thinking about historians studying this pandemic fifty or one hundred years from now makes me think how valuable it would have been if we had a similarly thorough archive documenting the 1918 influenza pandemic. (Well?we did have some clues as to how bad the spread could get?)

Some researchers have already contacted the archive. We?re seeing stories harkening back to those early days of March 2020 marking the anniversary of the WHO’s declaration of a pandemic. In the fog of the past year, it?s amazing what we have already forgotten.

So please: contribute to the UCSF Pandemic Chronicles. ?This really is a community project, and it relies on its members to help us,? Chris says. ?It?s the library’s role to collect an archive and make all of these materials available now and in the future. But it really takes that community effort of others sharing what they have and what they have collected, in order for us to be successful.?

back to top

**Dan?s Tip of the Month**
For poets, it only takes a single line to convey an essential truth or mystery. Poems offer a restorative wind-down or way to begin your day, a way to find balance and focus your attention. As we move from National Poetry Month to AAPI Heritage Month, there are many AAPI poets to discover and return to on the Academy of American Poets website [link]. From Sally Wen Mao’s re-envisioning of early film star Anna May Wong, to Mai Der Vang’s message of Hmong familial loss, to Hieu Minh Nguyen’s meditation on our altered pandemic lives, you’ll find a trove of poems to explore through texts, audio, and video. In San Francisco, one in every three residents is AAPI, representing people with ancestry from more than forty countries. Please take a pause and connect with the expanse of the AAPI experience across generations and themes, as well as the art and power of language, memory, and storytelling.

Clockwise from upper left: Aimee Nezhukumatathil, Mai Der Vang, Hieu Minh Nguyen, and Sally Wen Mao.