

UCLA College Magazine

SUMMER 2017



KNOWLEDGE FOR GOOD

WOMEN IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

2017
COMMENCEMENT
ISSUE



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Dean of Life Sciences

Miguel García-Garibay
Dean of Physical Sciences

Patricia Turner
Senior Dean
Dean and Vice Provost for
Undergraduate Education

David Schaberg
Dean of Humanities

Laura Gómez
Interim Dean of Social Sciences

TOWARD A STRONGER SOCIETY

As a top public research university in one of the world's most diverse cities, UCLA is committed to building a community of scholars that reflects all the people we serve.

This issue highlights how research and education are enriched when we embrace the many perspectives found across our state, our nation and the world. From the humanities and social sciences to the physical and life sciences, you will see examples of how the UCLA community applies these perspectives for the benefit of society.

We need these rich perspectives if we are to continue to advance our understanding of the world around us. Our society is too complex, too diverse, to rely solely on a single point of view.

On the cover and in the center spread, we feature nine remarkable scholars in the social sciences pursuing their doctoral degrees. They

represent the future of research and education in their respective fields. These students will undoubtedly make their mark on disciplines — from anthropology to economics to political science — that are essential to our progress.

Each of them is pursuing knowledge that will deepen our understanding of how our communities function, interact and evolve. Equally important, they are bringing to bear their unique perspectives and asking the questions that will help us build a stronger and more prosperous society.

We hope that you will be inspired by these emerging scholars and their work. We know that one day they will be leaders in their fields.



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Social Scientists

College Development

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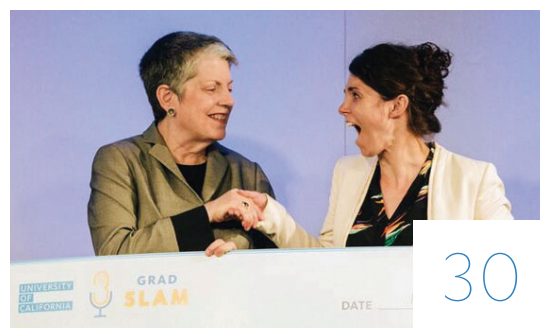
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TOP RANKINGS FOR THE COLLEGE, NEW DEAN, HONORS FOR COLLEGE FACULTY

A dozen UCLA College graduate programs in *U.S. News & World Report* top 20

U.S. News & World Report has ranked 12 graduate programs housed in the College among the top 20 in the nation.

Published in the *Best Graduate Schools* 2018 guidebook, rankings are based on experts' opinions about program excellence and on statistical indicators that measure the quality of a school's faculty, research and students. The data come in large part from surveys sent to administrators at nearly 2,000 graduate programs and more than 16,500 academics and professionals in the disciplines.

GRADUATE PROGRAM RANKINGS

Clinical psychology (No. 1)

Psychology (No. 3, tied)

English (No. 6, tied)

Math (No. 7, tied)

Sociology (No. 8, tied)

History (No. 9, tied)

Political science (No. 12, tied)

Economics (No. 12, tied)

Earth sciences (No. 13, tied)

Chemistry (No. 15, tied)

Physics (No. 18, tied)

Biological sciences (No. 19, tied)



UCLA ranked No. 2 Best Value College

In a new *Forbes* ranking of the Best Value Colleges, UCLA outperformed 298 other private and public institutions, placing second in the nation.

Other University of California campuses included in the Top 25 were Berkeley (No. 1), UC Irvine (No. 8), UC Davis (No. 9), UC San Diego (No. 11) and UC Santa Barbara (No. 22).

"Knowing where you can get the most quality for each tuition dollar spent is the goal of this year's Best Value ranking," *Forbes* reported.

New dean of social sciences announced

Darnell Hunt, UCLA professor of sociology and African American studies and director of the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies, has been selected as the new dean of social sciences in the UCLA College, effective July 1. Hunt is a renowned scholar of race, media and culture and has led the Bunche Center for 15 years. He is the architect of the Bunche Center's Hollywood

Diversity Report, an annual series that examines the relationship between diversity and the bottom line in the entertainment industry. Hunt earned an A.B. in journalism from USC, an M.B.A. from Georgetown, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in sociology from UCLA.



Darnell Hunt

Physicist elected to National Academy of Sciences

Claudio Pellegrini, a distinguished professor emeritus of physics at UCLA, as well as an adjunct professor in photon science at the SLAC (Stanford Linear Accelerator Center) National Accelerator Laboratory, was elected to the National Academy of Sciences for his “distinguished and continuing achievements in original research.” Membership in the academy is one of the highest honors that a U.S. scientist can receive.



Jose Rodriguez

New Searle Scholars

Jose Rodriguez, assistant professor of chemistry and biochemistry, is among 15 scientists named as 2017 Searle Scholars, an honor that recognizes exceptional young scientists who have demonstrated

“the most creative talent,” according to the program. He was honored along with Weizhe Hong, assistant professor in the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine,

making UCLA the only university to have more than one 2017 Searle Scholar. Each researcher is awarded \$300,000 to support research in the biomedical sciences or chemistry over the next three years.

Rodriguez develops and applies new scientific methods in bio-imaging to solve cellular and molecular structures and reveal undiscovered structures that influence chemistry, biology and medicine. Rodriguez earned his B.S. in biophysics and his Ph.D. in molecular biology at UCLA.

UCLA alumna **Diana Libuda** was also selected for the honor. Libuda earned her B.S. degree summa cum laude at UCLA in molecular, cell, and developmental biology, with a music history minor, and is now an assistant professor of biology at the University of Oregon.

English lecturer awarded Guggenheim Fellowship

Michelle Huneven, a lecturer in the English department, is among three UCLA faculty members selected as recipients of 2017 Guggenheim Fellowships. The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation awarded



Michelle Huneven

173 fellowships to a diverse array of scholars, artists and scientists, appointed on the basis of prior achievement and exceptional promise. Huneven, who teaches creative writing to undergraduates, is the author of four critically acclaimed works of fiction. Her most recent novel, *Off Course*, was a *New York Times Editors' Choice*. Huneven will use the grant to finish a novel currently in progress.

Two Sloan Fellowships awarded

Four exceptional young UCLA professors, including two from the College, are among 126 scientists and scholars in the U.S. and Canada selected to receive 2017 Sloan Research Fellowships. UCLA is tied for eighth in the U.S. among institutions with the largest number of Sloan Research Fellowships. >>



From the College, **Pablo Fajgelbaum**, an assistant professor of economics specializing in international trade, was honored. His recent research includes the distributional effects of international trade, the impact of regional tax policies and optimal transport networks in general-equilibrium trade models. He teaches international trade theory at both undergraduate and graduate levels.



Pablo Fajgelbaum

Recipient **Alexander Spokoyne**, an assistant professor of chemistry and biochemistry, takes an interdisciplinary approach, focusing on challenges in chemistry, biology, medicine and materials science.



Alexander Spokoyne

He and his research team establish fundamentally new synthetic avenues and develop an extensive and versatile synthetic toolbox, including multifunctional, atomically precise, nano-sized molecules. Sloan Research

Fellowships are intended to enhance the careers of exceptional young scientists and scholars in chemistry, computer science, economics, mathematics, computational and evolutionary molecular biology, neuroscience, ocean sciences and physics.

Two professors named American Academy of Arts and Sciences fellows

Two faculty members have been selected as members of the 237th class of American Academy of Arts and Sciences fellows.

Judith Carney, a professor of geography, studies Africa and the African agricultural legacy in the Americas. She teaches courses on African ecology and development, the African diaspora, and food and the environment.

Stephanie Jamison, a professor of Asian languages and cultures, also teaches courses in UCLA's Indo-European studies program. She was trained as a historical and Indo-European linguist, and for many years she has concentrated on Indo-Iranian, especially Vedic Sanskrit and Middle Indo-Aryan languages.

Professor receives Distinguished Teaching Award

Faculty member **Abigail Saguy** from the department of sociology has won a 2017 Distinguished Teaching Award. Handed out annually by the UCLA Academic Senate Committee on Teaching, the award recognizes academically and professionally accomplished individuals who bring respect and admiration to the scholarship of teaching. Recipients are selected from nominations received by colleagues and leaders across the campus.



UCLA professor Ian McLean in front of MOSFIRE under the dome of the Keck I Telescope on the summit of Mauna Kea, Hawaii.

McLean to receive American Astronomical Society's Joseph Weber Award

UCLA physics and astronomy professor Ian McLean has been selected to receive the American Astronomical Society's 2017 Joseph Weber Award for Astronomical Instrumentation, which is given for outstanding design, invention or significant improvement of instrumentation leading to advances in astronomy.

McLean is being presented the award in "recognition of over 30 years at the forefront of the development of advanced infrared sensor arrays and for his leadership in the design, construction and deployment of innovative infrared instruments that have had widespread and fundamental scientific impact across a broad community," according to the citation. He will receive the award at the AAS annual meeting in January 2018.

McLean built the world's first infrared camera for wide use by astronomers in 1986. Since then, he has built several increasingly sophisticated infrared cameras and spectrometers — which split light into its component colors. UCLA's infrared laboratory, which McLean founded in 1989, has produced instruments for the W.M. Keck Observatory, Lick Observatory, Gemini Observatory and NASA's Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy.

He and his colleagues built a "time machine" that allows scientists to study for the first time the earliest galaxies in the universe. The five-ton instrument, called MOSFIRE (Multi-Object Spectrometer for Infra-Red Exploration), was installed in the Keck I Telescope at the W.M. Keck Observatory atop Mauna Kea in Hawaii.

"When Eric Becklin and I joined forces in 1989 at UCLA, we had a grand vision of how a laboratory devoted to the development of state-of-the-art infrared instruments could enhance the effectiveness of the Keck 10-meter telescopes, and create a major role for UCLA in the nascent Keck community," McLean said. "Today, we can look back and see our dreams fulfilled."





Chancellor Gene Block bestows the UCLA Medal on Congressman John Lewis.

UCLA MEDALIST JOHN LEWIS DELIVERS WINSTON C. DOBY DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

By Cynthia Lee

In April, U.S. Rep. John Lewis, a living icon of the civil rights movement, relived for 1,300 rapt listeners in Royce Hall key moments in the long struggle for equality, telling compelling personal stories — sometimes dark, but other times lighthearted — taken right out of the pages of American history.

In a talk interrupted frequently by thunderous applause, standing ovations and laughter from the audience, Lewis vividly recalled from his childhood the warnings his family gave him to keep quiet when he questioned why black children had to sit in the balcony to watch movies at their local theater and why he was denied a library card when whites could borrow books from the local library.

“When I asked why,” Lewis recalled, “my family kept saying, ‘That’s the way it is. Don’t get in the way. Don’t make any trouble.’”

But in 1955 when he was 15 years old, Lewis heard of Rosa Parks for the first time and listened to the inspirational words of Martin Luther King Jr. on the radio. Through them, Lewis said, “I found a way to get in the way; I got in trouble.”

Lewis, the son of Alabama sharecroppers who has gone on to represent the people of Georgia in the House of Representatives for more than three decades, came to UCLA to deliver the fifth annual Winston C. Doby Distinguished Lecture and receive the UCLA Medal, the university’s highest honor, from Chancellor Gene Block for the congressman’s relentless fight for equality and social justice.

Established in 1979, the medal is presented to those whose achievements reflect the highest ideals of UCLA. Among the heads of state, artists, scientists, scholars and leaders who have received this honor have been Presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley and UCLA’s legendary coach John Wooden.

“For more than half a century,” Block said in introducing the congressman, “John Lewis has been one of the strongest and most enduring voices of the American conscience.”

At almost every flashpoint in the fight for civil rights, Lewis was there, pushing the movement forward using nonviolent resistance — tactics he learned at the hands of

the Rev. James Lawson Jr., who has taught these same techniques to UCLA students at the UCLA Labor Center. Praised by Lewis as an “unbelievable teacher,” Lawson, sitting in the audience, was given a standing ovation.

“As students, as young people, you must use your education and training to help change America. ... You have a moral obligation, a mission and a mandate to speak up and speak out — and get in the way and get in trouble,” Lewis said.

Established in 2013 by UCLA’s Academic Advancement Program, the sponsor of the event, the Doby lecture series honors AAP’s first director, Winston Doby (1940-2011), who served for more than 40 years as an advocate for access and social justice in higher education for all students.

Learn more:

Watch videos from the event:
<http://ucla.in/2osSrWq>

LGBTQ Studies Program Celebrates 20 Years

By Jessica Wolf

For two decades, the field of queer studies

has been thriving and evolving within the Humanities Division of the UCLA College. Now Alicia Gaspar de Alba, chair of what is currently known as LGBTQ studies, is ready to take the program to the next level by introducing a Ph.D. It would be the first in the nation.

"It's great that we are still here, that we have survived, but now I'm ready to move forward," said Gaspar de Alba, a professor of Chicana and Chicano studies. Her Ph.D. proposal is in the works and she is confident it will succeed – particularly because she was the architect of UCLA's Ph.D. program in Chicana and Chicano studies. A concurrent proposal for changing the program from a freestanding minor to an interdepartmental program with 50 percent full-time faculty is also in progress.

Fall 2017 marks the 20th anniversary of the interdisciplinary program. The program was originally called Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Studies in 1997, but soon after expanded to add the word Transgender.

Recently, faculty and students decided it was important also to add Queer to that title, catching up to the vernacular of the community. It is now formally known as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer Studies.

"It's the most inclusive word, and absolutely about reclaiming the word 'queer' from a pejorative use," said Gaspar de Alba, who began teaching at UCLA in 1994 and was among the first to participate in the Faculty Advisory Committee that launched the minor.

Pioneering efforts

The formation of UCLA's LGBTQ studies was championed by former UCLA professor of anthropology Peter Hammond and initially chaired by Jim Schultz, emeritus professor of Germanic languages. At the time it was one of a few but growing number of academic units in the country to examine the history, culture and challenges of queer individuals.

Other comparable programs exist, though at other universities many are housed within a women's studies or gender studies department.

UCLA's program has remained autonomous and unique. It was among the first in the country to host an annual graduate student conference, called QGrad. That conference changed in 2005 to a broader Queer Studies Conference. Since becoming chair in 2013, Gaspar de Alba has revived QGrad and added an undergraduate conference called QScholars, both of which are programmed, curated and produced by students under her mentorship. In 2015, the program launched an e-journal called *Queer Cats Journal of LGBTQ Studies*.

Learning across disciplines

More than 120 students have graduated from UCLA with the LGBTQ minor. Exponentially more students have taken cross-listed LGBTQ courses as part of other majors.

Students pursuing the minor choose from relevant courses in a variety of humanities and social sciences departments – English, gender studies, Chicana/

Chicano studies, history, sociology – as well as education, law, public policy, musicology and courses from within the Department of World Arts and Cultures and the School of Theater, Film and Television. The program annually hires several UCLA Ph.D. candidates to design new courses, which keeps the curriculum reflective of the issues of the moment.

The minor also requires students to participate in a service-learning course where they intern at local LGBTQ-focused nonprofits.

According to Gaspar de Alba, many former students have gone on to work at those nonprofits or have become journalists, filmmakers and artists. Some go on to pursue graduate degrees, while others aspire to law school and policymaking careers.



Alicia Gaspar de Alba



Left: A mural depicting the 1967 LGBTQ rights protests outside the Black Cat Tavern in Silver Lake was installed in the LGBTQ Studies offices in Haines Hall in 2014.

Above: UCLA lecturer Alma Lopez led students in creating the mural through her "Queer Art in LA" course.

Many students join LGBTQ studies out of a desire to know more about the community with which they personally identify. In recent years more students who don't identify as queer, but want to be allies, also elect to take courses or even commit to the minor, said Tomarian Brown, administrative manager for the program.

Schultz, who returns once a year to teach a section of the introductory course he originally created, said he hopes students take away from queer studies courses a more complex understanding of gender and sexual minorities, and the way those identities intersect with race and social status.

"I think it's eye-opening," he said. "Many students will talk about how these courses have opened up their thinking."

First-year student Meredith Yates specifically chose to attend UCLA because of the LGBTQ studies program. She is the first in her family to leave her home of Virginia to study, and had never traveled outside of the South or East Coast before.

Yates, who volunteers as part of Project One, a team of UCLA students who mentor, befriend and advise queer high schoolers in

Los Angeles, hopes to major in communication studies. She plans to return to the South and use her minor in LGBTQ studies to help spread awareness of existing and emerging resources for queer youth who might find themselves feeling isolated. She's already learning a lot about queer history, she said.

"In the case of the queer rights movement of today, a lot of times we forget that the LGBT rights movement in the U.S., the people who brought it to light, were black and transgender and Latina, people who at the time had been pushed to the very bottom of society," she said.

Honoring LA's role in the movement

In the LGBTQ common spaces in Haines Hall there is a remembrance of Los Angeles' role in fighting for those hard-won rights – and a reminder that the fight is ongoing – by way of a mural depicting the 1967 protests outside the Black Cat Tavern on Sunset Boulevard. It was created in 2014 by UCLA lecturer Alma Lopez and students from her "Queer Art in LA" course.

The mural depicts a scene from 50 years ago this year when members of the queer

community and their allies gathered to formally protest the violent New Year's Eve arrests of patrons of the Black Cat Tavern. These protests predate the well-documented Stonewall riots in Greenwich Village.

"Stonewall is seen as the birthplace of the movement," Gaspar de Alba said. "But we're here in LA and I wanted to commemorate that the movement for gay rights was actually happening here even earlier."

Queer studies students are keenly aware of the challenges this community continues to face, Gaspar de Alba said. Nevertheless, they forge ahead with conviction as they learn to think and write critically; to inquire, debate and attempt to understand opposing points of view; and to understand themselves.

"These spaces become sacred," she said, especially for young students who are just coming out. "These classes become places where they can talk about their own lives and issues, but also truly learn to understand others."

Learn more: <http://lgbtqstudies.ucla.edu>

Fructose and head injuries adversely affect hundreds of brain genes linked to human diseases

By Stuart Wolpert

Consuming fructose, a sugar that's

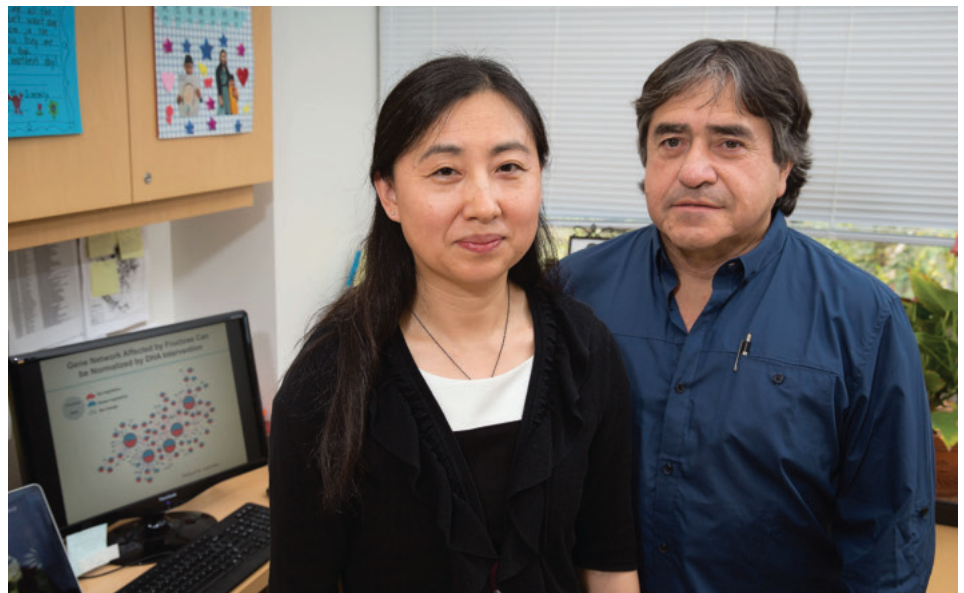
common in the Western diet, alters hundreds of brain genes that may be linked to many diseases, UCLA life scientists report. However, they discovered good news as well: an important omega-3 fatty acid known as DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) seems to reverse the harmful changes produced by fructose.

"DHA changed not just one or two genes, but seems to push the entire gene pattern back to normal, which is remarkable, and we can see why it has such a powerful effect," said Xia Yang, a senior author of the study and a UCLA associate professor of integrative biology and physiology.

DHA is found in brain cell membranes, but "the brain and the body are deficient in the machinery to make DHA; it has to come through our diet," said co-senior author Fernando Gomez-Pinilla, a UCLA professor of neurosurgery and of integrative biology and physiology.

DHA, which strengthens synapses in the brain and enhances learning and memory, is abundant in wild salmon and, to a lesser extent, in fish oil and other fish, while its biochemical precursors are high in walnuts, flaxseed, and to a lesser extent, fruits and vegetables, Gomez-Pinilla said.

Americans consume most of their fructose from processed foods sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup, an inexpensive liquid sweetener made from cornstarch, as well as from sweet drinks, syrups, honey, ice cream and other desserts, he said. It's also in baby food. Fruit contains fructose, but has high levels of fiber, which substantially slows the absorption of fructose and increases the feeling of fullness, Yang said. Fruits also contain many other healthy components that protect the brain and body, they noted.



Xia Yang and Fernando Gomez-Pinilla

Lab-tested

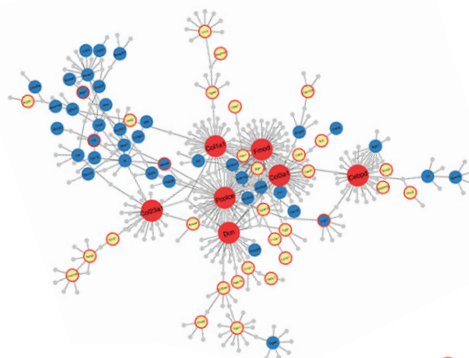
The researchers trained laboratory rats to escape from a maze, then randomly divided the rats into three groups. They gave one group of rats water with fructose added for six weeks that would be roughly equivalent to a person drinking about a liter of soda a day. A second group of rats was given the water with fructose and a diet rich in DHA for six weeks, and a control group was given water without fructose and not given the DHA supplement.

The rats that had been given the fructose had significantly higher blood glucose, triglycerides and insulin levels than the control group, and had impaired memory when navigating the maze; they were about 30 percent slower than the control group in escaping from the maze. The rats given the DHA supplement, however, showed very similar results to the control group.

Yang and Gomez-Pinilla's research team sequenced more than 20,000 genes in the rats, and discovered that fructose adversely affected more than 700 genes in the hypothalamus and more than 200 genes in the hippocampus – genes that interact to regulate metabolism, cell communication and inflammation.

Humans have genes that are counterparts to the genes affected by fructose in rats, and the human genes are associated with obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, depression, bipolar disorder, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other brain diseases, said Yang, a member of UCLA's Institute for Quantitative and Computational Biosciences.

The researchers identified two genes, called *Bgn* and *Fmod*, that are important for cell communication, and are potential



targets for new pharmaceuticals. Fructose seems to act first on these genes, which then affect many other genes, in a cascade effect, Yang said. After the researchers removed these genes in mice, the mice had substantially higher levels of cholesterol and triglycerides.

The research, which used state-of-the-science genomic technology, was published last year in the journal *EBioMedicine*.

This research is the first comprehensive genomics study of all the genes, pathways and gene networks affected by high fructose consumption in brain regions controlling metabolism and brain function.

How food affects the brain

Fructose damages communication between brain cells, and increases toxic molecules in the brain, Gomez-Pinilla's research team reported in 2015. Earlier research has demonstrated how fructose contributes to cancer, diabetes, obesity and fatty liver.

Gomez-Pinilla recommends reducing the sugar and saturated fat we consume, including reducing drinking soda and eating dessert. "Food is like a pharmaceutical compound that affects the brain," said Gomez-Pinilla, also a member of UCLA's Brain Injury Research Center.

Co-authors include lead author Qingying Meng, a postdoctoral scholar in Yang's laboratory; Zhe Ying, a staff research associate in Gomez-Pinilla's laboratory; and colleagues from UCLA, the National Institutes of Health and Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York.

Ties to head trauma

In February 2017, Yang, Gomez-Pinilla and colleagues reported in *EBioMedicine* that head injuries can adversely affect hundreds of genes in the brain that put people at high risk

for diseases including Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, post-traumatic stress disorder, stroke, ADHD, autism, depression and schizophrenia.

"Very little is known about how people exposed to brain trauma, such as football players and soldiers, develop symptoms for other neurological disorders later in life. We hope to learn much more," Gomez-Pinilla said.

The researchers have identified for the first time potential master genes, which they believe control hundreds of other genes that they linked to many neurological and psychiatric disorders. These master genes are likely targets for new pharmaceuticals to potentially treat many diseases of the brain.

"We believe these master genes are a kind of hub responsible for traumatic brain injury adversely triggering changes in many other genes," Yang said.

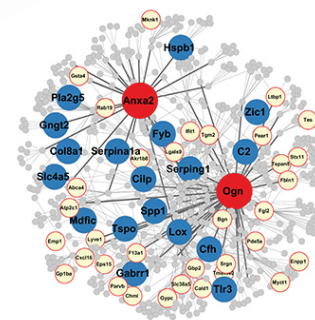
Traumatic brain injury can do damage first to the master genes and then to other "downstream genes" in a couple of ways, she said. One way is to produce different forms of a protein. Another is to reduce, or increase, the number of expressed copies of a gene in each cell. Both can prevent a gene from properly performing its cellular function.

"If a gene turns into the wrong form of protein, it could lead to Alzheimer's disease, for example," Gomez-Pinilla said.

Implications for treating a range of diseases

More than 100 of the genes that changed following the brain injury have human counterparts that have been linked to Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, ADHD and other neurological and psychiatric disorders, the researchers report.

Targeting these genes to treat disease seems promising. "We now know which genes are affected by traumatic brain injury and linked to serious disease, and have



Examples of gene networks in the hippocampus affected by brain trauma. UCLA researchers report that the "master regulator" genes (in red) influence many other genes responsible for the effects of brain trauma.

predicted which genes are the likely master regulators that may have strong therapeutic potential," Yang said.

The research team is further studying whether modifying some of the master genes also modifies large numbers of other genes. If so, then targeting the master genes will be even more promising.

One of the genes, *Fmod*, is also a master regulator in the brain that becomes altered by fructose.

The research may lead to new treatments for traumatic brain injury to get the genes to return to their normal state. In addition the researchers potentially could target and modify the master genes so they won't lead to disease. They may also be able to identify chemical compounds and foods that can fight disease.

Yang's research is funded by the National Institutes of Health and the UCLA Clinical and Translational Science Institute. Gomez-Pinilla's research is funded by the National Institutes of Health and the UCLA Brain Injury Research Center.

UCLA MATHEMATICIANS BRING OCEAN TO LIFE FOR DISNEY'S MOANA

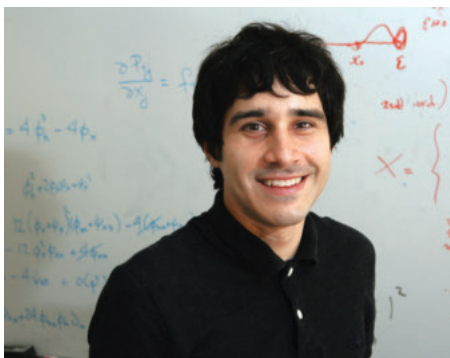
They infuse the magic of realism in animation and apply knowledge to solve real-world problems

By Stuart Wolpert

UCLA mathematics professor Joseph Teran, a Walt Disney consultant on animated movies since 2007, is under no illusion that artists want lengthy mathematics lessons, but many of them realize that the success of animated movies often depends on advanced mathematics.

"In general, the animators and artists at the studios want as little to do with mathematics and physics as possible, but the demands for realism in animated movies are so high," Teran said. "Things are going to look fake if you don't at least start with the correct physics and mathematics for many materials, such as water and snow. If the physics and mathematics are not simulated accurately, it will be very glaring that something is wrong with the animation of the material."

Teran and his research team have helped infuse realism into several Disney movies, including *Frozen*, where they used science to animate snow scenes. Most recently,



Joseph Teran

they applied their knowledge of math, physics and computer science to enliven the 3-D computer-animated hit *Moana*, a tale about an adventurous teenage girl who is drawn to the ocean and is inspired to leave the safety of her island on a daring journey to save her people.

Teran's former doctoral student, Alexey Stomakhin, played an important role in the making of *Moana*. After earning his Ph.D. in applied mathematics in 2013, he became a senior software engineer at Walt Disney Animation Studios. Working with Disney's effects artists, technical directors and software developers, Stomakhin led the development of the code that was used to simulate the movement of water in *Moana*, enabling it to play a role as one of the characters in the film.

"The increased demand for realism and complexity in animated movies makes it preferable to get assistance from computers; this means we have to simulate the movement of the ocean surface and how the water splashes, for example, to make it look believable," Stomakhin explained. "There is a lot of mathematics, physics and computer science under the hood. That's what we do."

Moana has been praised for its stunning visual effects in words the mathematicians love hearing.

"Everything in the movie looks almost real, so the movement of the water has to look real too, and it does," Teran said. "*Moana* has the best water effects I've ever seen, by far."

Building your own universe with math

Stomakhin said his job is fun and "super-interesting, especially when we cheat physics and step beyond physics. It's almost like building your own universe with your own laws of physics and trying to simulate that universe.

"Disney movies are about magic, so magical things happen which do not exist in the real world."

Added the software engineer, "It's our job to add some extra forces and other tricks to help create those effects. If you have an understanding of how the real physical laws work, you can push parameters beyond physical limits and change equations slightly; we can predict the consequences of that."

To make animated movies these days, movie studios need to solve, or nearly solve, partial differential equations. Stomakhin, Teran and their colleagues build the code that solves the partial differential equations. More accurately, they write algorithms that closely approximate the partial differential equations because they cannot be solved perfectly.

"We try to come up with new algorithms that have the highest-quality metrics in all possible categories, including preserving angular momentum perfectly and preserving energy perfectly. Many algorithms don't have these properties," Teran said.

Stomakhin was also involved in creating the ocean's crashing waves that have to break at a certain place and time. That task required him to get creative with physics and use other tricks. "You don't allow physics to completely guide it," he said.



The hit Disney movie *Moana* features stunning visual effects, including the animation of water to such a degree that it becomes a distinct character in the film. A senior software engineer at Walt Disney Animation Studios, Alexey Stomakhin M.A. '11, Ph.D. '13, led the development of the code used to simulate the movement of water in the movie.

“You allow the wave to break only when it needs to break.” Depicting boats on waves posed additional challenges for the scientists.

“It’s easy to simulate a boat traveling through a static lake, but a boat on waves is much more challenging to simulate,” Stomakhin said. “We simulated the fluid around the boat; the challenge was to blend that fluid with the rest of the ocean. It can’t look like the boat is splashing in a little swimming pool — the blend needs to be seamless.”

Stomakhin spent more than a year developing the code and understanding the physics that allowed him to achieve this effect.

“It’s nice to see the great visual effect, something you couldn’t have achieved if you hadn’t designed the algorithm to solve physics accurately,” said Teran, who has taught an undergraduate course on scientific computing for the visual-effects industry.

From silver screen to surgery

While Teran loves spectacular visual effects, he said the research has many other scientific applications as well. It could be used to simulate plasmas, to simulate 3-D printing or for surgical simulation, for example. Teran

is using a related algorithm to build virtual livers to substitute for the animal livers that surgeons train on. He is also using the algorithm to study traumatic leg injuries.

Teran describes the work with Disney as “bread-and-butter, high-performance computing for simulating materials, as mechanical engineers and physicists at national laboratories would. Simulating water for a movie is not so different, but there are, of course, small tweaks to make the water visually compelling. We don’t have a separate branch of research for computer graphics. We create new algorithms that work for simulating wide ranges of materials.”

Teran, Stomakhin and three other applied mathematicians — Chenfanfu Jiang, Craig Schroeder and Andrew Selle — also developed a state-of-the-art simulation method for fluids in graphics, called APIC, based on months of calculations. It allows for better realism and stunning visual results. Jiang, a UCLA postdoctoral scholar in Teran’s laboratory, won a 2015 UCLA best dissertation prize. Schroeder is a former UCLA postdoctoral scholar who worked with Teran and is now at UC Riverside. Selle, who worked at Walt Disney Animation Studios, is now at Google.



Alexey Stomakhin

Their newest version of APIC has been accepted for publication by the peer-reviewed *Journal of Computational Physics*.

“Alexey is using ideas from high-performance computing to make movies,” Teran said, “and we are contributing to the scientific community by improving the algorithm.”



IN PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE FOR GOOD

Here and on the cover, the *UCLA College Magazine* draws attention to nine exceptionally talented women pursuing doctorates in social science fields at UCLA. Their research spans the globe and could have a profound impact on a number of societal challenges. Aspiring to become professors one day, these women are poised to make their mark on the future of academia.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

"I work on the European Union, and it's a moving target. It's in the headlines every morning and you know there are a lot of questions right now – will it remain? Will it fall apart? So I feel like I'm working on something that is both fresh but also quite challenging." - Grace Ballor (History) studies the economic history of 20th-century European integration.

"As a grad student when you're reading across [disciplines], you realize that similar debates are happening in different places – but those people are totally unaware of each other. So I think the future of social science in general is a lot more interdisciplinarity." - Sara Salazar Hughes (Geography) studies ethnic conflict in contested territory, borders and migration.

"I'm very interested in international migration and qualitative research, and UCLA is the best place in the country to do that sort of research. ... Los Angeles being such a vibrant immigration destination has a lot to do with that." - Tahseen Shams (Sociology) studies the stigmatization of Muslim Americans from South Asian countries.

"LA being a majority-minority city, I knew if I wanted to study race and politics, LA would be the greatest field site to do so, and UCLA would be the greatest university to undertake that research." - Christine Slaughter (Political Science) studies political participation among ethnic minorities and impoverished individuals.

"Interdisciplinary research is really big here at UCLA...My dissertation committee includes professors from classics, anthropology, and english. I really benefit from working with a lot of different kinds of people." - Debby Sneed (Archaeology Interdepartmental Program) studies cultural and societal attitudes toward disability in ancient Greece.

"UCLA's Department of Chicana/o Studies was beginning its first cohort of doctoral students and so it was a really great opportunity to include everything I'm interested in – art, immigration, policy – and create my own area of focus." - Silvia Rodriguez Vega (Chicana/o Studies) studies the effects of immigration raids on children's education and health through art.

"My dream project would be to think about how Indian people in my tribe [the Hoopa Valley Tribe reservation in Northern California] now have adopted the kind of mainstream United States model of policing and prisons and see how we can return to more traditional, transformative justice." - Stephanie Lumsden (Gender Studies) studies the influence of settler colonialism and dispossession of California Indian peoples on the buildup of the prison system in California.

"My mother is an organic gardener and has grown a lot of our family's food and cooked for us from the farm. ... Growing up, that was how we conveyed feeling and family." - Camille Frazier (Anthropology) studies food supply chains and the effect of rapid urban development on agricultural sustainability, food safety and access.

"I chose UCLA because it's of course a great university, very highly ranked for economics. ... I just felt very comfortable. There are lots of Latin Americans in my group, there are professors from all over the world, professors who work in the same topics I'm interested in." - Maria Lucia Yanguas (Economics) studies the effects of computer access on career choice and early income.

Photo (left to right): Grace Ballor (History), Sara Salazar Hughes (Geography), Tahseen Shams (Sociology), Christine Slaughter (Political Science), Debby Sneed (Archaeology Interdepartmental Program), Silvia Rodriguez Vega (Chicana/o Studies), Stephanie Lumsden (Gender Studies), Camille Frazier (Anthropology), Maria Lucia Yanguas (Economics)

WOMEN IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

The road to gender balance among tenure-track faculty

By Jessica Wolf

At UCLA and across the nation, expanding the pipeline of graduate students to be more reflective of our diverse society will transform university research and teaching, according to several campus leaders. In terms of gender balance, progress continues, with women now earning more than



Laura Gómez

half of all doctoral degrees nationally over the past decade, according to the American Council on Education.

Gradually, women are also catching up among the ranks of tenure-track faculty. As of 2014, women make up more than 37 percent of tenure-track faculty

at all American postsecondary institutions, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

Yet this statistic masks significant differences among types of institutions, disciplines and levels of seniority. For example, at most universities (and especially at research universities), there are relatively small proportions of female faculty at the full professor level (which is typically achieved after 12 or more years on the tenure track) and larger proportions at the assistant professor level, reflecting the growth in the number of female Ph.D. students. Within the

UCLA College, three of four divisions—social sciences, humanities and life sciences—have proportions of women among tenure-track faculty that exceed the national average, according to the UCLA Office of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion.

“We’ve made great strides in the United States in reaching gender parity in rates of college graduation and, especially in the humanities and social sciences, in rates of Ph.D. completion,” said Laura E. Gómez, who just completed a term as interim dean of social sciences, the first woman to head that division.

“UCLA’s Ph.D. students are tomorrow’s professors,” Gómez said. “So diversifying the ranks of our graduate students is a high priority if we are to continue the progress made over the past several decades.”

UCLA’s social sciences division is home to nine Ph.D.-granting departments, with the share of female graduate students ranging from a high of 97 percent in the gender studies department to a low of around 20 percent in economics. In almost every field of study, the proportion of female faculty has grown dramatically since the 1980s, but there is still plenty of room for improvement.

Pathways to leadership

While there are now more female faculty members throughout the division, long-established departments such as anthropology, economics, political science and



Nancy Levine

sociology have only recently been chaired by women for the first time. Generally limited to full professors, serving as chair is virtually a prerequisite for top leadership roles such as dean, provost and university president.

Consider anthropology, which used to be dominated by male professors and male graduate students. When she was a graduate student in the late 1970s, Nancy Levine, who just completed a four-year term as chair of the anthropology department, said she could count on one hand the number of women in her doctoral cohort as well as on the UCLA faculty when she joined it.

Today, women are 50 percent of all tenured and tenure-track professors in the department. In addition, from 2005 to 2015, women were 67 percent of all recipients of anthropology Ph.D.s at UCLA, compared with 61 percent nationally, according to the National Science Foundation.

A closer look at the dynamics

Having women in each field not only has an impact on research and teaching, but also plays a subtle and positive role in the ethos of a department and how students maintain support systems during what can be a very



grueling time in their lives, said Barbara Geddes, who is the first woman to chair the political science department.

Currently, about a quarter of UCLA's political science faculty are female, compared with 37 percent of political science professors nationwide. From 2005 to 2015, 39 percent of doctoral recipients in the department were women, versus 41 percent nationally.

According to Geddes, there has traditionally been a divide in political science: research and courses heavily related to mathematics, statistics and data generally are taught and pursued by men, while women fall into the more humanities-driven areas, such as comparative politics, where Geddes, a scholar of Latin American politics, focuses. Geddes said she sees the lines starting to blur along this front, with more women teaching and conducting research in statistically based sub-fields.

Getting young women interested very early in data, math and statistics may be the best way to bridge the persistent gender gap in economics, said economics professor Adriana Lleras-Muney, who for three years has led her department's faculty hiring efforts.

During the period 2005-2015, women made up 31 percent of the doctoral recipients in economics at UCLA, on par with



Kathleen McGarry

She said this trend bodes well for the academic pipeline, suggesting that today's economics undergraduates will become tomorrow's Ph.D. students and, eventually, professors. Moreover, while economics has fewer women faculty than several departments in the social sciences at UCLA, it boasts a greater percentage of female faculty than nearly all of the other top 20 economics departments in the country.

The next generation

Sociology professor Judith Seltzer, who joined the faculty 20 years ago, recalled, "When I first arrived at UCLA, one of my senior colleagues, a very distinguished sociologist of women's employment, told me that when she joined the faculty, it was

the national trend.

Kathleen McGarry, who recently completed four years as the first female chair of economics, noted that now "nearly 50 percent of our students are women, a percentage that is among the highest of any major university."

so unusual for a woman to be a professor that people often thought she was a secretary for her male colleagues. That mistake would not happen today."

Today, almost 40 percent of sociology's tenure-track faculty at UCLA are women, and the number of female Ph.D. recipients in recent years has been on par with the proportion nationally, at around 62 percent.

Sociology professor Vilma Ortiz, who is frequently sought out as a mentor by female doctoral students and especially by women of color, applauds UCLA's Office of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion for raising awareness about the role unconscious bias may play in the faculty hiring process. She noted, however, that creating a more diverse pool of faculty candidates must start even earlier by recruiting women, minorities and first-generation college students into Ph.D. programs and ensuring they receive great mentoring throughout graduate school.

Gómez agreed, noting as well the powerful influence of role models in the undergraduate classroom.

"It makes an incredible difference for a young woman to see someone like herself standing at the head of the class," Gómez said. "It allows her to imagine herself in the same position one day."

UCLA DISABILITY STUDIES PROGRAM CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF ‘REDEFINING NORMAL’

By Rayna Jackson

Nasim Andrews knew exactly what she wanted to do when she was 10 years old: become a doctor. This small town girl from Los Alamos, New Mexico, had a plan. First, get into UCLA. Second, take every pre-med course, extracurricular activity and program that would get her closer to her dreams.

“Anyone who knew me at the beginning of my college career can tell you that I wanted to be a doctor,” recalled Andrews, who just graduated from UCLA with a bachelor’s degree in human biology and society. “I thought that the best way to make an impact on people’s lives was through medicine.”

Andrews didn’t realize it at the time, but now looking back at her academic career, she recognizes that she was about to have a ‘life-changing’ experience. Her major introduced her to “Perspectives on Disability Studies” as one of the electives she could take. After completing the class, Andrews

says that her whole mindset about disability changed. She began to question concepts about ‘normalcy’ in society and began to look at her own perceptions about ability.

“A minor in disability studies signals to a potential employer that this applicant brings an intellectual perspective to the many issues of access and inclusion that are ubiquitous in 21st century workplaces,” said Patricia Turner, dean and vice provost of undergraduate education. “Beyond that, it is a great example of how UCLA embraces teaching innovation and applies contemporary societal issues to create a vibrant curriculum for our students.”

Since the disability studies minor began a decade ago, the class topics and discussions have created buzz among students. The result is that students’ level of interest has increased. The first disability studies course enrolled only a handful of students. Now there are more

than 36 courses offered annually and more than 400 undergraduates enroll in disability studies courses each year. The minor has also graduated more than 100 students.

Disability activism

One out of five people, or 56.7 million Americans, have a disability, according to the 2010 U.S. census. As the number of people with disabilities increases, there is a growing national and global movement to understand and accept disability.

UCLA students who are a part of disability studies take their new understanding and become disability advocates in their own sphere of influence. In the last decade, students have completed close to 25,000 service hours through the minor, benefiting 36 local, state and national organizations that work directly with disabled communities.

“We have the opportunity to change our built environment, our policies and our laws,” chair of disability studies Vic Marks said. “That is to say that we can be change makers within our own lives, our families and in our larger community. Disability studies students do this every day.”

Disability studies also gives students the opportunity to practice disability activism through the lens of philanthropy. Last spring, students had the rare opportunity to distribute a \$75,000 grant to local nonprofits that served people with disabilities through the philanthropy course “Confronting Challenges of Serving the Disabled.”

In the philanthropy course, students had to collectively decide how to distribute grant monies to local nonprofits that served people with disabilities. They researched 20 local organizations, made site visits, developed requirements and a process for funding, and then negotiated who the awardees would be and how the funds would be distributed.



Nasim Andrews '17 says that being part of UCLA’s disability studies program was a “life-changing” experience.



Andrews (left) with families at Shane's Inspiration site in Anthony C. Beilenson Park in Los Angeles. UCLA disabilities studies students awarded a grant to Shane's Inspiration through the philanthropy course "Confronting Challenges of Serving the Disabled."

Shane's Inspiration, a local nonprofit organization that designs and develops inclusive playgrounds and educational programs to unite children of all abilities, received \$25,000 from the philanthropy course. The investment will allow the organization to reach more students and educators within the Los Angeles community. Additionally, Shane's Inspiration has been able to use the grant monies to expand its reach into higher education.

Andrews was among the students in the philanthropy course that awarded grant money to Shane's Inspiration. She immediately saw the importance of their work with children. Andrews quickly became the nonprofit's biggest advocate in class and even sought an internship opportunity with the organization. Both the class and her work at Shane's Inspiration prompted her to think differently about her lifelong goal of becoming a doctor.

"I would always say, 'When I grow up I want to go to work as a doctor and know that I am making an impact on somebody's life,'" Andrews said. "To get that same feeling from being on the playground at

Shane's Inspiration was the exact same feeling I was looking for."

Tiffany Harris, CEO and co-founder of Shane's Inspiration, believes that the disability studies program gives students like Andrews the opportunity to challenge misconceptions about disabilities, which in turn will allow them to be better at their chosen profession.

"Every one of us within our lifetime is going to be in a position to interface with someone with a disability, or perhaps face a disability ourselves," Harris said. "By having access to a class like this, students are able to expand their understanding of their perceptions of people with disabilities, and by doing so, create a new opportunity for connection in the future."

After years of planning her life, Andrews did not graduate as a pre-med student. She wouldn't have it any other way.

"Joining the minor was one of the best decisions that I made while at UCLA," Andrews said. "There is no doubt that the classes and experiences in the minor helped me to learn more about myself and helped me realize that even with my diverse interests, I can have an impact in people's lives."

Andrews now combines her passion for health care with her passion and understanding of disability in a new role with Triage Consulting Group in San Francisco.

Expanding the global reach of disability studies

In a milestone for the program, disability studies marked its 10-year anniversary in April by hosting UCLA's first international conference, "Disability as Spectacle." The conference brought together thought leaders from the United Kingdom, Taiwan, South Africa, India, Malawi, Sweden and the United States to examine how spectacle can be used as a tactic for social change.

As disability studies continues to grow, more attention will be brought to the vibrant nature of the program both locally and abroad. And undoubtedly, like Andrews, more students will have "life-changing" experiences through the disability studies program at UCLA.

Learn more:

<http://www.uei.ucla.edu/dsminor.htm>

BUMPER CROP OF ENDOWED CHAIRS FOR CHEMISTRY AND BIOCHEMISTRY

Four new endowed chairs established in a single year

By Margaret MacDonald

Gifts from a UCLA alumnus and two chemistry professors have resulted in a bumper crop of new endowed chairs in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. The windfall of faculty support was aided by a gift matching program made possible by the sale of UCLA's royalty interest in Xtandi, a leading prostate cancer medication developed by distinguished professor of chemistry Michael Jung. With its share of the proceeds, UCLA has matched a number of gifts in support of faculty research, graduate fellowships and undergraduate scholarships.

"Xtandi has not only saved lives, it has led to the establishment of all-important endowed chairs that provide resources for the next big research breakthroughs," said physical sciences dean Miguel García-Garibay.

Department chair Catherine Clarke said the establishment of four new endowed chairs in one year was "a truly remarkable milestone for chemistry and biochemistry at UCLA. We are so grateful to Mike Jung, Mike Hong and Jeff Zink for their incredible generosity. Their gifts will undoubtedly lead to new lifesaving discoveries."

Chair in medicinal chemistry

Jung and his wife, Alice, took advantage of the matching program, donating \$1 million, matched dollar-for-dollar by UCLA, to create the Michael and Alice Jung Endowed Chair in Medicinal Chemistry and Drug Discovery.

"My wife and I hope that this gift will enable UCLA to hire a faculty member who could continue to do similar drug discovery research well into the future, with the hope of producing more useful drugs," Jung said.

Jung, who joined the faculty in 1974, is an authority on synthetic organic and medicinal



Michael Jung

chemistry. He is an inventor on 34 issued patents and 36 patent applications arising from both his consulting activities and his own research, which in recent years has focused on medicinal chemistry. He has more than 15 ongoing academic collaborations and consults for more than 20 industrial laboratories in both biotechnology and pharmaceutical company settings.

Jung's current research holds promise for the development of new drugs for the treatment of various diseases and conditions, e.g. breast, lung and prostate cancer; antiviral diseases; muscular dystrophy; multiple sclerosis; osteoporosis; and even hair loss.

Chairs in polymer and materials science

UCLA alumnus Myung Ki ('Mike') Hong gave \$2 million, matched dollar-for-dollar by UCLA, to establish the Dr. Myung Ki Hong Endowed Chair in Polymer Science and the Dr. Myung Ki Hong Endowed Chair in Materials Innovation.

These new chairs will bolster research that has widespread applications ranging from regenerative medicine to environmental sustainability. The department has



Myung Ki ('Mike') Hong

more than 120 students, including postdocs, graduate students and undergraduates, studying or working on polymers.

Hong came to the U.S. from South Korea in 1954 as an exchange student and graduated from UCLA in 1959 with a B.S. in chemistry. After working for Whittaker Coatings for 22 years, he founded Dura Coat Products Inc., where he formulated a breakthrough eco-friendly water-based product, one of several technologies distributed by the firm throughout the world.

In 1992 after the civil unrest in Los Angeles, Hong dedicated himself to promoting cultural understanding and tolerance. He served as chairman of a foundation focused on preserving the memory of Dosan Ahn Chang Ho, an early leader of the local Korean American immigrant community. In 2002 he established the Bright World Foundation to foster optimism and inspire the human spirit. The organization's name is based on a translation of his own name, which means "bright place."

"As a proud Bruin, I am delighted to give back to the university and the department that gave me the foundation for my success," Hong said.



Jeffrey Zink

Term chair in chemistry

Distinguished professor of chemistry Jeffrey Zink and his wife, Helo, gave \$500,000, matched dollar-for-dollar by UCLA, to establish the Jeffrey and Helo Zink Endowed Professional Development Term Chair in Chemistry, to be awarded in rotation every five years to early-career faculty.

"One of the reasons I gave the gift is that the department believed in me and hired me straight out of graduate school, and I've been here ever since," Zink said. "I really wanted to help younger faculty who are starting out, at a most vulnerable time, to have a little extra help."

Zink's pioneering work on designing multifunctional nanoparticles and molecular machines to deliver drugs to the site of a tumor or infection has the potential to revolutionize the treatment of cancer and infectious diseases.

Learn more:

<http://www.chemistry.ucla.edu/>

"Their gifts will undoubtedly lead to new lifesaving discoveries."

– Chemistry and Biochemistry Department Chair Catherine Clarke on the generosity of the alumnus and faculty who helped establish four new endowed chairs

New chairs in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

Dr. Myung Ki Hong Endowed Chair in Polymer Science

Dr. Myung Ki Hong Endowed Chair in Materials Innovation

Michael and Alice Jung Endowed Chair in Medicinal Chemistry and Drug Discovery

Jeffrey and Helo Zink Endowed Professional Development Term Chair in Chemistry

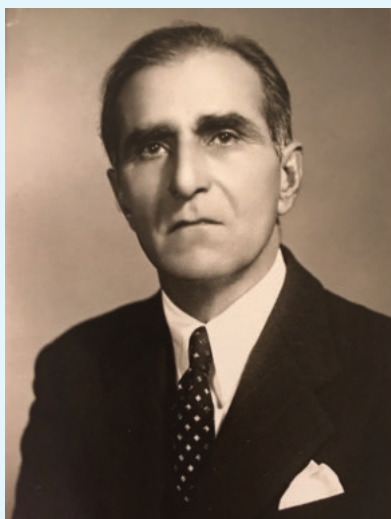
HONORING A PIONEERING SCHOLAR OF ANCIENT IRAN

By Margaret MacDonald

UCLA has established the Pourdavoud Center for the Study of the Iranian World, the first center in the Western Hemisphere that aims to advance the knowledge of ancient Iranian languages, history and religions.

The center is named for the late professor Ebrahim Pourdavoud, a pioneering scholar of ancient Persia and a professor in Europe, Iran and Iraq. The center was made possible by a gift from his granddaughter, Dr. Anahita Naficy Lovelace, and her husband, James B. Lovelace.

“My grandfather devoted a lifetime to the study of the history, languages, religions and culture of ancient Iran,” Lovelace said. “I am so grateful that Jim and I have the good fortune to be able to honor and extend the impact of his important contributions.”



Ebrahim Pourdavoud (1885-1968) was a dedicated scholar who pioneered the first Persian translation of the Avesta, the holy book of the ancient Zoroastrian religion. Over a span of 67 years, he conducted extensive research on ancient history and ancient Iranian languages, and trained many scholars and Iranists.



Dr. Anahita Naficy Lovelace and James B. Lovelace

The center will engage in transformative research on all aspects of Iranian antiquity, including its reception in the medieval and modern periods, by expanding on the traditional domains of Old Iranian studies and promoting cross-cultural and interdisciplinary scholarship.

A critical time to study the past

“At UCLA, we recognize that the study of ancient cultures is more important today than ever,” said David Schaberg, dean of humanities in the UCLA College. “It reveals the rich tapestry of human history and identity, and allows us to understand and uphold the highest values our forebears espoused.”

He said the center would complement UCLA’s doctoral program in Iranian studies, established in 1963 and the largest and most comprehensive doctoral program in the Americas. The Iranian studies program is led by professor M. Rahim Shayegan, holder of the Jahangir and Eleanor Amuzegar Chair of Iranian Studies.

“We are grateful to the Lovelaces for providing us crucial resources to revive the study of Iranian antiquity,” said Shayegan, who is guiding the center as it launches its inaugural year. “A research institute of this magnitude can have a transformative impact on the fortunes of the whole discipline, decisively reversing its decline and reinforcing its foundation.”

A deeply personal gift

Anahita Lovelace, who spent the first 18 years of her life in Tehran, has fond memories of childhood visits to her grandparents’ home.

“Our grandfather would typically receive us in his study, where he spent most of his time,” she recalled. “He was surrounded by his beloved books on ancient Iran, in different languages, alongside encyclopedias, reference books, dictionaries and books on a variety of related subjects. Though a formal man, he was very warm and light-hearted at the same time.”

As for the gift to UCLA, Lovelace said that she was impressed by the caliber of the program of Iranian studies and faculty, and that she anticipated the field would thrive in such a vibrant setting.

“With new tools for discovery and expanding opportunities for exchange of ideas, it behooves us all to work together to keep our ancient civilizations alive and relevant for future generations,” she said.

Lovelace is a clinical psychologist practicing in Los Angeles. She holds a bachelor of arts in psychology from Princeton University and a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from The University of Texas at Austin. A native Californian and graduate of Swarthmore College, James Lovelace is an equity portfolio manager at Capital Group, a global financial services company based in Los Angeles.

Learn more: <http://pourdavoud.ucla.edu/>

HISTORY FOR THE GREATER GOOD

\$5 million gift from Meyer Luskin establishes research center for history and policy

By Margaret MacDonald

Thanks to a \$5 million gift from longtime supporter Meyer Luskin, UCLA will establish the Luskin Center for History and Policy, the first academic research center on the West Coast devoted to using history to publish knowledge that promotes solutions to present-day issues.

The center will foster teaching, research and collaborations across campus and beyond the university that will direct historical insights to shaping policies and solving problems.

"I believe we can use history to better our lives," said Luskin, the chairman, president and CEO of Scope Industries. "The best way to choose the path to the future is to know the roads that brought us to the present."

The Luskin Center for History and Policy will be a pioneer in translating historical research into tangible and accessible sources of knowledge. The center will support policy-oriented projects developed by UCLA history faculty and their colleagues across campus, host visiting scholars and postdoctoral fellows and provide funding for graduate students. It will also sponsor new courses that will train students to analyze historical events and apply their knowledge to current issues.

"Meyer Luskin has given UCLA the means to build a new pathway to using historical knowledge for the greater good," said Scott Waugh, UCLA's executive vice chancellor and provost. "Situated in a global university with a public mission, the new center is well placed to have a decisive impact, from the local level all the way to the international level."

Actively linking history to policy

The history department can already cite at least one recent example of the influence of historical research on public action. In 2015, Zev Yaroslavsky, a former Los Angeles County supervisor and now a senior fellow in history at UCLA, led a project examining the city's bidding process for the 1984 Olympics. The

results were distilled into an op-ed published in the *Los Angeles Times* and contributed to the decision by the Los Angeles City Council to delay a vote on the Olympic bid until all its provisions could be properly debated.

Stephen Aron, the Robert N. Burr Department Chair of the history department, said the center would be a hub for collaborative projects bringing together researchers from the social sciences and the humanities as well as campus units including the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health and the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs.

"My goal is to make history matter more to more people, and I can't think of a better way to do that than through this center," Aron said. "We are indebted to Meyer for his generous and visionary action."

Initially, the center will be under the direction of history professor and former department chair David Myers, working closely with Aron.

"There is a new urgency to understand and apply our historical knowledge to today's world," said Myers, holder of the Sady and Ludwig Kahn Chair in Jewish History. "The new Luskin Center will be a national trendsetter in bringing many different angles of historical perspective to bear on key issues in the country – and world – today."



Meyer Luskin

Luskin, who graduated in 1949, and his wife, Renee, who graduated in 1953, are among UCLA's most generous supporters. In 2011, they donated \$100 million – the second-largest gift ever to the campus – to support academic programs and capital improvements. Luskin co-chairs the UCLA Centennial Campaign Cabinet, serves on the campaign executive committee, and is a member of the UCLA Foundation board of directors.

"The study of history creates important knowledge — but equally important is how you assemble and use that knowledge."

— Meyer Luskin, 2014 Department of History commencement speaker

EXTRAORDINARY MINDS

BRUIN BASKETBALL LEGEND and a cadre of other distinguished alumni give commencement speeches in UCLA College ceremonies





COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY, PAULEY PAVILION

ANITA ORTEGA '82

As an 11-year-old in South Los Angeles, Ortega set her sights on UCLA as her ticket out of poverty. Not only was she the first in her family to attend a four-year university, but she received a partial academic scholarship and made the UCLA women's basketball team as a walk-on. Her performance during her freshman year earned her a full athletic scholarship the following year. In 1978, Ortega helped lead the team to its first national championship and earned All-American honorable mention recognition.

Ortega paused her studies to play professional basketball in the Women's Professional Basketball League and then returned to UCLA to complete her bachelor's degree in psychology in 1982. After graduating, she served as an assistant coach for the women's basketball team for two years.

She joined the LAPD in 1984, and in 2002 she attained the rank of area captain of the Hollenbeck Division, which serves a community of about 200,000 residents on Los Angeles' Eastside. She managed and supervised more than 250 sworn and civilian employees. Ortega retired from the LAPD in July 2016.

Ortega was inducted into the UCLA Athletic Hall of Fame in 2002, and she

remains connected to basketball as an NCAA Division I women's basketball official. She also is the president of Motivational Enterprises Inc., through which she gives inspirational talks about strength, determination and focus to children, young adults and women.

Ortega has earned numerous accolades for her accomplishments off the basketball court. She was the UCLA Latino Alumni Association's Alumna of the Year in 2011 and she received the UCLA Alumni Association's Public Service Award in 2015. She also has been named Woman of the Year for the 46th District by the California State Assembly and a "woman of excellence" by the National Latina Business Women Association, and she received the Roman of Excellence Award from Los Angeles High School, her alma mater.

"Anita's achievements are a testament to her perseverance, her dedication to public service, and her Bruin spirit. UCLA may have opened the door, but she forged her own path to success. Our new graduates were inspired and energized by her words."

— Patricia Turner, senior dean of the UCLA College and dean and vice provost of undergraduate education

IN HER OWN WORDS

What impact has UCLA had on your life?

UCLA had an immeasurable impact on me even as a young girl growing up in South Los Angeles. It was a life-changer for me, and I will always cherish my college experience. Not only was the education valuable, but I encountered so many people from different cultures and backgrounds.

My UCLA experience played a huge role in my success as a police officer. My psychology degree enhanced my understanding and appreciation of others, and my collegiate athletic experience taught me the importance of patience, determination and teamwork.

For over 20 years, I've had an up close and personal look at the progression and development of the student-athlete. Sometimes, I'm just amazed by the advancement of women's basketball over the many decades. I'm so proud to be one of the sport's pioneers.

What are your goals in this phase of your life?

I'm very passionate about encouraging and motivating others to pursue their dreams without hesitation. I'm passionate about women pursuing leadership and management roles in large companies and organizations. My inspirational speaking business, Motivational Enterprises Inc., provides an avenue for me to inspire and motivate as many people as I can.

What is your advice for the Class of 2017?

There's an abundance of opportunities for each of you. Don't let negativity or social concerns shatter your dreams to make a difference in society.

Commencement weekend — Friday, June 16 through Sunday, June 18, 2017 — celebrated the remarkable accomplishments of the Class of 2017.

BY THE NUMBERS

8,124

bachelor's degrees awarded

ALUMNI DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS

COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT 2017



MATHEMATICS CEREMONY, COURT OF SCIENCES

DEMETRI BRIZOLIS B.A. '67, M.A. '69, Ph.D. '73

“ From the halls of Royce to the Court of Sciences, I found UCLA’s intellectual depth stunning and the diversity of its student body eye-opening. It was an Utterly Contagious Learning Atmosphere: that’s UCLA!”

Three-time UCLA alumnus Demetri Brizolis is president of Daabco Industries Inc., a privately held investment company that he and his wife Ann founded in 1989. Prior to forming Daabco, Brizolis was senior vice president of Imperial Corporation of America, a multibillion dollar financial services company based in San Diego, where he headed the commercial real estate lending division.

Before joining Imperial, Brizolis was a tenured

associate professor of mathematics at Cal Poly Pomona and a visiting assistant professor of mathematics at USC. During his career in academia, he conducted research and published papers in the area of algebraic number theory.

Brizolis earned his B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in mathematics at UCLA, where he has served as a part-time visiting associate professor since 2013. He and his wife live in Rancho Santa Fe. Their son, Alex, is also a graduate of UCLA.



ECONOMICS CEREMONY, PAULEY PAVILION

JUDY BRUNER '80

“ UCLA was instrumental in shaping my philosophies and helping me develop an analytical approach to problem solving, both of which have served me well throughout my career. My UCLA economics degree provided me a solid grounding in how economics really work. This in turn gave me a deep appreciation and respect for the business world, which is essential to growing the world’s prosperity.”

Judy Bruner serves on the boards of Applied Materials, Brocade Communications Systems, Rapid7 and Varian Medical Systems, as well as on the board of the Computer History Museum. Her career has been focused in the high technology industry with her most recent operating role being executive vice president of administration and chief financial officer of SanDisk Corporation from 2004 to 2016, when SanDisk was sold to Western Digital. At SanDisk, a global leader in flash storage solutions, Bruner was responsible for finance, investor relations, information

technology, legal and facilities. She previously served on SanDisk’s board for two years.

Prior to joining SanDisk, Bruner was senior vice president and chief financial officer of Palm Inc., a provider of handheld computing and communications solutions. She was responsible for executing the company’s separation from 3Com Corporation and its IPO in 2000. Bruner previously held senior roles at 3Com and Ridge Computers, and began her career at Hewlett-Packard. She earned a B.A. in economics from UCLA and an M.B.A. from Santa Clara University.



PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY CEREMONY, ACKERMAN BALLROOM

BARAK BUSSEL M.S. '93, M.B.A. '95

“UCLA has shaped my life in profound ways. I grew up close by and my brother and sister went there as undergrads. It was where I was doing my Ph.D. in theoretical physics and attending business school at the same time. Most important of all, it was at UCLA that I was fortunate enough to meet my wife.”

Barak H. Bussel is a managing partner at Third Wave Ventures, a leading Los Angeles-based venture capital firm. He is a veteran entrepreneur and a strong advocate for the importance of fundamental hardware technologies in propelling global society forward.

Bussel serves on the boards of Ostendo Technologies and Ingenu Inc., among others. He also served on the board of Neven Vision until its acquisition by Google. In 2005, he co-headed the restructuring group of Greencool/Kelon in China

on behalf of Third Wave. Prior to joining the firm, Bussel founded Airport.com, an internet partner for the world's largest airport retailers.

Bussel holds an M.B.A. in finance and strategy from the UCLA Anderson School of Management and an M.S. in theoretical physics from the UCLA Department of Physics, where he was doing his Ph.D. in quantum gravity. He also holds a bachelor's degree in mathematical physics from Harvey Mudd College.



HISTORY CEREMONY, DICKSON COURT NORTH

DIANA DERYCZ-KESSLER '87

“When I think of my days at UCLA, a big smile comes over my face. Being part of the UCLA community meant daily access to distinguished and entertaining faculty, great facilities, and peers who were academic and fun at the same time. I met some of my best friends at UCLA!”

Diana Derycz-Kessler is president and CEO of the Los Angeles Film School, a college of media arts. She began her career as an international oil and gas lawyer, working closely with developing countries. She co-founded an investment firm with her husband in 2000, and since then has invested in education, oil and gas, biotechnology, technology, entertainment and real estate. An investment dear to her heart is in Act One Ventures, a fund focused on startups launched by UCLA alumni in Los Angeles.

She became a partner in UNESCO's TeachHer program in 2016, a private-public

sector partnership aimed at bridging the global gender gap in education. She also joined the board of Tellurian Inc., which develops low-cost liquefied natural gas projects. The daughter of immigrant parents from Mexico and Ukraine, Derycz-Kessler earned B.A. degrees in history and Latin American studies from UCLA. She later received a J.D. from Harvard Law School, where one of her classmates was former President Obama, and an M.A. in Latin American studies from Stanford University. Fluent in Spanish, she enjoys spending time with her husband and five children, as well as reading and exercising.



HISTORY

128

students were awarded UCLA's first degrees in 1925. The class included 98 women and 30 men.

15

commencements took place at the Hollywood Bowl, from 1928 to 1940 and from 1950 to 1951.

CONTINUED >>

HISTORY

1941

First graduation exercises held on the Westwood campus, Open Air Theater on June 14

1965

The Edwin W. Pauley Pavilion was dedicated during the first commencement ceremony held in the Pavilion



AAP CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE, CARNESALE COMMONS

RICHARD A. DOWNER '90

“ For me, UCLA is the symbolic springboard of opportunity and offers unrivalled preparation in applying the theoretical to the real world. Along with the name recognition that comes with being a Bruin, there’s an undercurrent of dominance girded by excellence.”

Richard A. Downer is first vice president and portfolio manager at Morgan Stanley Wealth Management in Los Angeles. For more than two decades he has used his expertise in both fixed income securities and equities as he invests for nonprofit organizations, endowments and corporations, while advising roughly 250 private wealth clients. He is also licensed as an insurance agent, mortgage broker and certified divorce financial analyst.

Downer has been recognized for both his business achievements and his civic and philanthropic efforts. In his spare time he mentors individuals

from the UCLA Anderson Black Business Student Association (BBSA) who show an interest in Wall Street. In addition, when asked, he spends time giving lectures and seminars about rudimentary principles related to finance and economics.

Downer graduated from UCLA with a B.A. in sociology with a concentration in economics. He earned his M.B.A. from Pepperdine Graziadio School of Business and Management. He has completed 10 consecutive Los Angeles marathons and regularly participates in triathlons. He lives with his wife and two children in Redondo Beach.



SOCIOLOGY CEREMONY, WILSON PLAZA

TIM HARRIS '83

“ Anything of any significance in my life has traces of UCLA embedded in it, regardless of the degrees of separation. And for that I am forever grateful.”

Tim Harris has led business and marketing efforts for the Los Angeles Lakers for the past 16 years. As chief operating officer and business operations/chief marketing officer, he is responsible for the Lakers’ day-to-day business operations. In this role, he oversees the team’s broadcast, sponsorship, ticketing, community relations, game entertainment and digital media departments.

Harris joined the Laker organization in 1990, tasked with promoting and marketing the Great Western Forum, where the Lakers were based. He was appointed vice president of marketing for the Forum in 1995. Following the sale of the Forum in 1997, he was responsible for managing the Lakers’ transition out of Inglewood to both the Staples Center and a new training facility.

He was brought on to work solely on sales and marketing efforts for the team in 2000.

He played goalkeeper for the UCLA men’s soccer team for four seasons, earning second team All-American honors and finishing his career ranked third on UCLA’s career victories list. He was later named to the UCLA Athletic Department Hall of Fame as one of the school’s 25 all-time greatest athletes. After graduating with a B.A. in sociology in 1983, he played five years professionally, including three for the Los Angeles Lakers of the Major Indoor Soccer League. He was also a member of the United States men’s national soccer team in 1985. An Inglewood native, Harris resides in Manhattan Beach with his wife and three children.



POLITICAL SCIENCE CEREMONY, PAULEY PAVILION

JIM LANZONE '93

“ I spent my entire childhood wanting to be a Bruin, and from my first night in Sproul Hall to graduation ceremonies in Pauley Pavilion, my adventures at UCLA always exceeded my expectations. I learned so much, met so many of my best friends, and had so many unforgettable experiences as a student there. I came to Westwood as a Silicon Valley kid who loved media, and I’m still living at the intersection of those two worlds today.”

Jim Lanzone is chief digital officer of CBS Corporation and CEO of CBS Interactive, the sixth largest internet property in the United States with more than 160 million users per month. CBS Interactive operates leading online brands such as CBS.com, CNET, CBSsports.com, GameSpot, CBSNews.com, Last.fm and TVGuide.com; popular new services such as CBS All Access and CBSN; and major online events from the Super Bowl to the Grammys.

Prior to joining CBS, Lanzone was the founder and CEO of Clicker Media, which was acquired by

CBS in March 2011. Previously he served as CEO of Ask.com (formerly Ask Jeeves), a top 10 global internet property acquired by IAC/InterActiveCorp in 2005. From 2001 to 2008 he held various executive roles at Ask, including senior vice president of product management, general manager of Ask Jeeves U.S., and finally CEO. Before joining Ask, Lanzone was co-founder and president of eTour.com, which was acquired by Ask in May 2001. Lanzone holds a B.A. in political science from UCLA and a J.D./M.B.A. from Emory University.

10 MOST POPULAR MAJORS

In Fall 2016, UCLA offered more than 126 undergraduate majors.

1. Biology
2. Business Economics
3. Political Science
4. Psychology
5. Psychobiology
6. Economics
7. Sociology
8. Biochemistry
9. English
10. Neuroscience



ENGLISH CEREMONY, PAULEY PAVILION

RANDALL PARK '97

“ UCLA is where I discovered my passions. It was the most fertile soil for the seeds of my future self.”

A successful actor and writer in TV and film, Randall Park is

also breaking ground for Asian Americans in entertainment. Park stars in the hit ABC comedy series *Fresh Off the Boat*, now going into its fourth season. It was the first network television show to focus on an Asian American family in more than 20 years. His work in the series earned him a 2016 Critics Choice nomination for best actor in a comedy series. Other film and TV credits include *Trainwreck*, *Wet Hot American Summer: First Day of Camp*, *Neighbors*, *The Five-Year Engagement*, *Veep*, *The Office*, *New Girl*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*,

House, *The Mindy Project*, *Cold Case*, *CSI*, *Reno 911* and *The Sarah Silverman Program*.

While at UCLA, Park majored in English and creative writing. After discovering his love for writing plays, he co-founded an Asian American theater group called LCC (Lapu, the Coyote that Cares Theatre Company), which recently celebrated its 22nd anniversary. Park received the Asian Pacific Alumni's Alumnus of the Year Award at their inaugural gala in 2015. In 2010 he won the Best Actor Award at NBC's Short Cuts Film Festival. He is the recipient of the 2016 UCLA Edward A. Dickson Alumnus of the Year Award. He resides in Los Angeles with his wife and daughter.

CONTINUED >>

BY THE NUMBERS

60%

of freshmen earn a degree in the major they chose in their first year

87%

of all undergraduate degrees are awarded by the College



ANTHROPOLOGY CEREMONY, DICKSON COURT NORTH

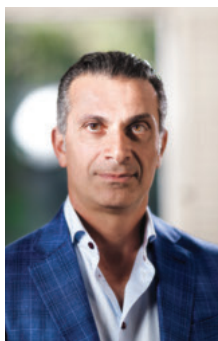
DAVID SACKMAN '80

“ UCLA taught me how to learn and encouraged me to exercise my curiosity. As an undergraduate, I was allowed to take courses at the graduate level, where I discovered my love of both research and business. These twin passions went on to form the basis of my career.”

David Sackman is chairman and chief executive officer of Lieberman Research Worldwide (LRW), one of the world’s largest custom market research firms. He led its growth from a \$5 million local company to one with nearly \$200 million in global sales. He also founded AppliedVR, whose ultimate goal is to use virtual reality to help create positive behavior change to make the world a better place. Sackman honed his marketing strategy and new product development expertise over 30 years of experience across multiple product categories. He is frequently asked to speak to CEO groups around the world, and in 2015 presented a TEDx Talk in London on virtual reality.

Prior to joining LRW more than 25 years ago, Sackman was director of research at Columbia Pictures. He previously led marketing for the Winchell’s Division of Denny’s Restaurants and subsequently for the Group Health Services Division of American Medical International.

Sackman has served on the board of directors of the Marketing Research Association and Council of American Survey Research Organizations, as well as the boards of several privately held companies. He was named a 2015 Tech Visionary by *Survey magazine’s* Technology Trendsetters. He received a B.A. in anthropology from UCLA.



CHEMISTRY AND BIOCHEMISTRY CEREMONY, COURT OF SCIENCES

SEP SARSHAR '89

“ In my sophomore year, a chance meeting with my undergraduate adviser professor Michael Jung, in a corridor of Young Hall changed my life. He suggested I consider switching my major from math to chemistry, and without giving it much thought, I said, ‘OK.’”

Sep Sarshar ended up earning a bachelor’s degree in both chemistry and applied mathematics, and went on to receive his Ph.D. in organic chemistry from Harvard University in 1994, where his adviser was Nobel Laureate E. J. Corey. He began his industrial career as a medicinal chemist at Ontogen, a San Diego startup that helped pioneer the field of combinatorial chemistry. He joined Pfizer in 1997 and continued his research in the development of novel anti-angiogenic drugs.

Sarshar founded La Jolla-based Auspex Pharmaceuticals in 2001, specializing in the application of deuterium substitution to known molecules

with metabolic liabilities. The goal was to create novel therapies with the potential for improved safety and efficacy profiles. Auspex was acquired in 2015 by Teva Pharmaceuticals for \$3.5 billion. Its lead compound, SD-809 (Austedo), has recently been approved by the FDA for the treatment of chorea, the abnormal involuntary movements associated with Huntington’s disease and other dyskinesias. Sarshar has authored several papers and holds more than 100 patents. He is currently a principal at Peritus Partners, a commercial real estate development company. In his spare time he enjoys traveling, surfing, skiing and scuba diving.



COMMUNICATION STUDIES CEREMONY, ROYCE HALL

LESLIE SIEBERT '84

“ UCLA and the communication studies major not only gave me the confidence to run a \$100 million company, but also the mastery needed to listen, guide and support artists and actors in pursuing their dreams.”

Leslie T. Siebert is a senior managing partner at the Gersh Agency, and has led its talent division for the last 33 years. Her clients include actors such as seven-time Emmy winner Allison Janney; Jeffrey Tambor, who won Emmy, SAG and Golden Globe awards for his role as a transgender woman in the groundbreaking show *Transparent*; Kyle Chandler, Emmy award winner for *Friday Night Lights* and Emmy nominee for *Bloodline*; two-time Oscar

nominee Catherine Keener; and David Schwimmer, nominated for Emmy awards for *Friends* and *The People v. O. J. Simpson: American Crime Story*. Other notable clients include Mandy Moore, Angela Bassett, Meg Ryan, Sela Ward, Calista Flockhart, Debra Messing, Eric McCormack and Kate Walsh.

Siebert received her B.A. in communication studies from UCLA. She lives in Westwood with her husband Steven, and they have two sons who are both in college.



STATISTICS CEREMONY, POWELL COURTYARD

NATHAN YAU M.S. '07, Ph.D. '13

“ Coming into UCLA, I didn't know what I wanted to do with statistics. Leaving UCLA, through my professors, advisers and experiences, I was ready to find the best path.”

Statistician Nathan Yau is best known for his popular website *FlowingData.com*, which explores how statisticians, designers, data scientists and others use analysis, visualization and exploration to understand data and ourselves. *FlowingData* recently won Best Site in the Information is Beautiful awards and Best Visualization in the *Fast Company* Innovation By Design awards, and was featured in the 2016 edition of *The Best American Infographics*.

Yau wrote his dissertation on how visualization can help nonexperts better understand their personal data. His interest in personal data collection expanded to more general types of data, visualization and design for a wider audience. He started *FlowingData* “on a whim” as a UCLA

statistics graduate student, and it grew into his full-time job after he completed his Ph.D.

Yau is the author of two books, *Visualize This* and *Data Points*, and has written many other practical data visualization guides. He has completed various visual data projects including a reworking of the *1870 Statistical Atlas of the United States* using modern data, brewed beer based on county demographics, and illustrated famous movie quotes as charts.

A native of Fresno, Yau holds a B.S. in electrical engineering and computer science with a minor in statistics from UC Berkeley. When he's not playing with data, he can usually be found cooking, eating, brewing beer, cycling, watching basketball, or spending time with his wife and kids.

DID YOU KNOW?



The color of your tassel is determined by your school and degree. In the UCLA College:

WHITE TASSEL:
Bachelor of Arts

YELLOW TASSEL:
Bachelor of Sciences

The Senior Class Giving Fund:

\$20.17
donation the Class of 2017 asks each graduate for their Senior Class Giving Fund

\$50,000+
raised by the Class of 2016 for their Senior Class Giving Fund

UCLA PSYCHOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENT WINS UC GRAD SLAM COMPETITION

Contest challenges graduate students to explain their research – and why it matters – in plain English

By Nicole Freeling, University of California

A UCLA psychology student claimed the Grad Slam championship, explaining in three crisp and engaging minutes how her research into depression and anxiety led to development of an online tool to help college students cope with stress.

Leslie Rith-Najarian won the systemwide trophy — known as the Slammy — after edging out lightning-paced presentations on everything from building a tabletop particle accelerator to understanding how brain chemistry helps parents love their children.

Rith-Najarian, who became interested

in addressing mental health issues after losing two friends to suicide when she was an undergrad, said she was encouraged by winning the top prize.

“A lot of time in grad school you are focusing on what needs to be improved, and you don’t spend much time thinking about why you got into this work in the first place,” Rith-Najarian said. “This reinforces for me the knowledge that this research is worth doing — that it matters.”

Now in its third year, Grad Slam helps master’s and Ph.D. students strengthen their

communications chops by challenging them to present their research in three engaging, jargon-free minutes.

The contest, which was livestreamed, is one of the ways that UC is helping graduate students hone the skills to explain what they do — and why their work makes a difference — to the public outside academia’s ivory tower.

Critical skills at a critical time

Those skills are particularly needed now, at a time of heightened skepticism about the



2017 winner and UCLA graduate student Leslie Rith-Najarian

UC President Janet Napolitano presents Rith-Najarian with a check in the crowning moment of Grad Slam.



value of university research and scholarship, said UC President Janet Napolitano, who has emceed Grad Slam since its inception in 2015.

“Making university research engaging, accessible and exciting to the world beyond a classroom or laboratory is one of my top priorities at the University of California,” she said. “That’s especially important today [as] the future of federal university research funding remains somewhat uncertain.”

The contest was held at the San Francisco headquarters of LinkedIn. Napolitano was joined by a panel of leaders from industry, the media and higher education, who had the difficult task of choosing first, second and third place winners from among the presenters.

Participants were judged on how well they engaged the audience, how clearly they communicated key concepts and how effectively they focused on and presented their idea — all in 180 seconds or less.

This year, for the first time, the judges had help from viewers themselves, who were able to vote online after the contest to select a People’s Choice winner. That award went to UC Santa Barbara’s Leah Foltz.

UC event follows campus competitions

The 10 outstanding presenters who faced off had worked their way through qualifying rounds at their respective campuses where each had claimed first prize in similar contests.

For Rith-Najarian, whose research deals with concepts familiar to most people, the key to producing a compelling talk was making the case for why the work is important.

“This research isn’t rocket science – but mental health affects everyone, on every day,” she said.

She focuses on preventing anxiety and depression among college students — not an easy task when some students consider stress a badge of honor.

Just as diet and exercise work to keep the body healthy, simple interventions like getting enough sleep, practicing mindfulness and carving out time for hobbies and social interaction have been shown to improve mental well-being, she said.

But as with physical health, the trick is motivation. Some of that, according to Rith-Najarian, comes down to marketing.

Her online program rewards students for practicing positive habits to strengthen their mental health. She also tested how to get students to sign up — and found that she needed two different program names to get both men and women to participate. Women were more likely to sign up for the Happiness Challenge, while ReBoot Camp appealed to men.

Other than the names, the two programs are exactly the same and have shown marked improvements in mood among the 5,000 students who use them. The trick isn’t knowing how to improve mental health, it’s getting people to stick with those activities, she said.

“Effective programs are out there — we just have to figure out the right incentives to get people to use them,” she said. Along with bringing home campus glory, Rith-Najarian won \$6,000 in prize money, which she said will reduce her need to take

on extra teaching loads and give her more time over the next few months to focus on her research.

Along with offering the public a fun and engaging window into research, the event also strives to connect talent from UC graduate programs to California employers.

This year’s event brought UC Ph.D. alumni from some of the Bay Area’s top employers — including Facebook, Salesforce, Kaiser Permanente, Genentech and McKinsey and Company — to network with participants and “minute-mentor” students over the lunch break, as judges tallied their scores. Many of the UC alumni watching the talks said they wished they’d had an opportunity like Grad Slam when they were in school.

“I think it’s brilliant,” said Eddie Santos, a UC Santa Cruz physics Ph.D. who now works in machine learning at Airbnb.

Graduate students offer the razor sharp intelligence and fearless problem-solving that companies seek, he said. One skill many lack, however, is an ability to describe the research they’ve dedicated years of their lives to in a quick and descriptive fashion.

“If they can learn to sell themselves,” he said, “they’ll be rock stars.”

WATCH IT HERE: Leslie Rith-Najarian’s winning Grad Slam presentation: <https://youtu.be/hey6Lzalx58>



“UCLA exposed me to so many different cultures and opened my eyes to a world that was right in my backyard.”

IN CONVERSATION WITH KAWANNA BROWN '96

By Margaret MacDonald

Kawanna Brown is the quietly determined force of nature overseeing operations at Magic Johnson Enterprises (MJE), one of the best known African American-owned and operated brands in the U.S.

Raised in South Los Angeles by a single mother, Brown was the first in her family to attend college. After graduating from UCLA in 1996 with a B.A. in sociology and a specialization in business administration, she was hired as a receptionist by MJE. Less than a decade later, she became president of the Magic Johnson Foundation, spearheading its efforts to address the educational, health and social needs of urban communities. She returned to MJE as COO in 2004.

Who inspires you?

Even though my mom passed away five years ago, she continues to inspire me every day. She was very strong, very protective, and she was strict with homework. We lived with my grandmother, a brilliant woman who was a driving force behind my education.

Who is your mentor?

Taylor Michaels was my boss at the store where I worked during college. She was a brilliant young firecracker with a heart of gold. She used to say, “Kawanna, I see

something in you. ... You are a leader.” The way she said it made me believe her. Taylor went on to become COO at the Magic Johnson Foundation and convinced me to take my first job there. Her work ethic was incredible, and I learned so much from her. We had so much to do and build in the early days of MJF, I felt like I got my master’s and Ph.D. on the job!

What’s your most distinct memory of UCLA?

I remember going to study in the large room in Ackerman with lots of couches. I’d put in my earplugs, get comfortable, and zone out on my studies in complete silence with people all around me. It was somehow comforting.

What were you like as a student?

I was a serious student. I studied, worked full-time throughout college, lived at home, and had a boyfriend (Jay Brown, who would become my husband). The only sporting event I ever attended was the basketball rally after the Bruins won the NCAA championship, and that was only after a friend talked me into going!

What has UCLA meant to you?

Apart from my education, UCLA exposed me to so many different cultures and opened my

eyes to a world that was right in my backyard. I wasn’t sure how it would be that first quarter, but I felt at home as soon as I arrived on campus. I took advantage of the Academic Advancement Program’s peer tutoring program; it saved my life more than once, especially early on. Telling people I went to UCLA gave me an element of confidence. I’m very proud to say I’m a UCLA graduate.

What’s the most important thing in your life right now?

My family. When my third child was born, I decided to regain some balance in my life and spend more time with my kids. We make the most of family time and look forward to simple things like sitting around the dinner table and playing silly games. Those little moments of just talking to each other are really important.

What advice would you give to new college graduates?

Take your time. You might be uncertain and unclear as to your path but that’s OK. You have to be realistic and patient, and you have to listen. You have to be open to saying, “I can always learn more.” That’s what I do. I’m always learning.



*LET
THERE
BE **LIVES**
CHANGED*

“I GIVE because, by providing funding for graduate students, my late husband’s research will continue, and his memory will live on in their work.”

DONKA MINKOVA
DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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AND MORE PROSPEROUS SOCIETY

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