Graduation Celebration 2012

Keck School graduates receive lifelong advice at 2012 commencement

By Amy E. Hamaker

Keck School of Medicine of USC student Ronen Kalay stood in a long line with the rest of his classmates in a side wing of the Los Angeles Shrine Auditorium on May 12, waiting for his commencement ceremony to begin. “I feel like it’s just the start of the road, and we have a long way ahead of us,” said Kalay, who will soon begin his residency at Huntington Memorial Hospital in surgery. “I’m a little anxious, but definitely excited!”

That buzz of excitement and anxiety charged the air in the large auditorium as nearly 2,500 guests watched the Keck School class of 2012 proceed down the side aisle as the ceremony began. The class included 171 M.D. graduates, with five of them receiving a combined M.D./Ph.D. degree. How these graduates will proceed in their careers as medical practitioners was a theme for the afternoon, and commencement speakers had a variety of solid advice to give the graduates.

Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito counseled them on the importance of seeing the larger picture. “Most of you entered our school as generalists, in the sense that you were committed and dedicated to diagnosis and treat disease and extend life.”

A number of commencement ceremonies dotted the USC landscape this month on both the University Park and Health Sciences campuses:

USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy

The division graduated 183 candidates, including 23 who received Bachelor of Science degrees; 126 who received Master of Arts degrees; 32 who received Doctor of Physical Therapy degrees; and two who received a Ph.D. in Occupational Science.

Ronnie Chan, USC trustee and chairman of Hang Lung Group Limited and Hang Lung Properties Limited, encouraged graduates to consider working abroad to bring occupational therapy to countries like China, where the profession is still not widely recognized, but greatly needed.

USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy

The division graduated 99 candidates; of those, 92 received Doctor of Physical Therapy degrees; two received Master of Science in Biokinesiology degrees; and five received a Ph.D. in Biokinesiology.

Commencement speaker Bill Shumard, president and CEO of Special Olympics, Southern California, shared with the graduates his passion to help and serve as presiding president for academic affairs, provost and senior vice president of Health Sciences campuses:

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**Keck School of Medicine honors philanthropist Selim Zilkha**

By Ina Fried

Businessman and philanthropist Selim Zilkha received the Elaine Stevely Hoffman Award May 12 during commencement ceremonies for the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

“The Elaine Stevely Hoffman Award is given each year to an individual for extraordinary service, outstanding contributions and unwavering dedication to the Keck School of Medicine of USC. Selim Zilkha is such an individual,” said Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito in presenting the award.

“He is a forward thinking, imaginative, successful entrepreneur who cares deeply about the human condition,” Puliafito said.

The award was named in memory of Elaine Stevely Hoffman, a Los Angeles philanthropist who contributed to building a research center on the USC Health Sciences campus.

**COMMENCEMENT: Health Sciences campus mints graduates, celebrates their accomplishments**

Continued from page 1 of Science degrees in Dental Hygiene; 44 who received Advanced Specialty Certificates; 11 who received Master of Science degrees; and three who received a Ph.D. (1 graduate received both a Master of Science degree and an Advanced Specialty Certificate.)

Ariishah Sadan, dean of the School of Dentistry, told graduates, “This ceremony marks the completion of an intense and incredibly demanding time in your life, but it also heralds the beginning of so much more. Today celebrates your entry into the profession of dentistry, one of the most trusted professions in the world, and you do so as a member of the Trojan Dental Family.”

John Robinson, former USC and NFL football coach, delivered the keynote address, sharing anecdotes from his 40-year history with USC and what the phrase “Fight On” means to him. “I look at ‘Fight On,’ and I know what it means. As you go through life, you’re going to get it,” Robinson said. “Fight On” has a whispered ‘I got your back’ behind it.”

USC School of Pharmacy “The school awarded a variety of degrees to 232 graduates, including 189 Doctor of Pharmacy degrees (among these recipients, there were four joint/dual degrees: one Pharm.D./M.B.A., two Pharm.D./M.S. in Regulatory Science; and one Pharm.D. Certificate in Gerontology; Ph.D. in Molecular Pharmacology (four); Pharmaceutical Economics & Policy (seven); four Doctor of Regulatory Science degrees; master’s degrees in Regulatory Science (17), Pharmaceutical Economics & Policy (two) and Pharmaceutical Sciences (eight); 31 Resident certificates; and six Fellowship certificates.”

Virginia Herold, executive director of Communications, USC School of Medicine of USC, offered the commencement address. She encouraged the graduates to “get out there and take care of patients.”

Associate professor Cynthia Liao thanked family and friends who have supported graduates in so many ways on their paths to this culminating moment of achievement. Susie Park, an assistant professor, administered the pharmacy oath at the end of the ceremony.

**KECK SCHOOL: Entering the Shrine Auditorium as students, but leaving as physicians**

Continued from page 1 of “Sometimes in the most difficult times of your or her life. You are not simply doctors with a mastery of facts; you are lifelong learners with broad perspectives and a keen eye to the fluidity of the future.”

Nadine Gracia, acting dean of the Keck School of Medicine and a medical benefactor. From 1998 to 2005, Zilkha, a pioneer in new technologies in the energy industry, was a whispered ‘I got your back’ behind it.”

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On May 11, the USC Primary Care Physician Assistant Program had a total of 45 graduates who received Master of Physician Assistant Practice degrees at a ceremony held at the University Park campus. The students will take the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam over the next few months.

Also on May 11, the Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Studies Program awarded 67 degrees for Health Promotion and eight degrees for Global Health during a commencement ceremony held at Town and Gown at the University Park Campus. To view the complete list of Keck School senior and faculty award recipients, visit http://tinyurl.com/6uwwev6.
Keck School Dean’s Research Scholars chosen

By Amy E. Hamaker
Keck School of Medicine of USC Dean Carmen A. Puliafito recently announced that 10 new students will join the ranks of the prestigious Dean’s Research Scholars. The Dean’s Research Scholars (DRS) Program provides medical students with an opportunity to take a full year to pursue a research experience with either a Keck School faculty member or an approved USC faculty member outside of the Keck School.

The program is open to any student in good academic standing who has completed his or her second year of medical school. There are a limited number of scholarships; students may also join the program if their project is approved and funding can be identified from their mentor or from an outside source approved by the Keck School.

For the 2012-13 academic year, eight students will receive funding:

- Ali Arastu, “Analysis of Health Policy and Barriers to Care on Skid Row” (from Eastern Sierra, Calif.; faculty mentor: Michael R. Cousineau, associate professor of research, division of community health family medicine)
- Elizabeth Joiner, “Progression of Schaumburg After Skeletal Maturity” (from Edina, Minn.; faculty mentor: David Skaggs, professor of orthopaedic surgery)
- Nikhil Karnataka, “Control of Intracellular Synthesist and Salt Transporters by the Novel Metabolic Paedic surgery” (from Simi Valley, Calif.; faculty mentor: John Koo, professor of clinical dermatology)
- Jarrad Merriman, “Serum Interleukin-6 blockade Inhibits Monocyte-Induced Neuroblastoma Growth and Enhances Chemotherapy” (from Simi Valley, Calif.; faculty mentor: Robert Segec, professor of pediatrics)
- Derek Sechhausen, “Quality of Life Assessment in Adults with Birth Brachial Plexus Palsy” (from West Chester, Penn.; faculty mentor: David Skaggs)
- Matthew Webb, “CSF-1 Blockade Inhibits Multiple Sclerosis After Skeletal Maturity” (from Eastern Sierra, Calif.; faculty mentor: Alicia McDonough, professor, cell & neuroscience)
- Jarrad Merriman, “Seizure Interleukin-6 as a Marker of Periperticular Shoulder Infection” (from Bakersfield, Calif.; faculty mentor: George F. Hutch III, assistant professor of clinical medicine)
- Lauren Nosanov, “Incorporation of Full-Body Low-Dosage, Digital X-Ray (Lodox/Statscan) into Trauma Protocol at a Level One Trauma Center” (from Glen Head, N.Y.; faculty mentor: Kenji Inaba, visiting assistant professor of clinical surgery)
- Isaac Schmale, “Enhanced Cerebral Sensitivity to Inhibiting (f-Catenin/CRP-Signal in Head and Neck Squamous Cell Carcinoma (HNSCC))” (from Santa Cruz, Calif.; faculty mentor: Umut K. Sinha, assistant professor and vice chairman, otorhinolaryngology)

In addition, two students will be funded from external sources:

- Michael Weintraub, “Enhanced Monocyte-Induced Neuroblastoma Growth and Enhances Chemotherapy” (from Simi Valley, Calif.; faculty mentor: John Koo, professor of clinical dermatology, UCSCF)

“Some students do not want to complete a Ph.D. but want a more in-depth research experience, and that is where the Dean’s Research Scholars Program plays an important role,” said David R. Hinton, the Gavin S. Herbert Professor of Retinal Research and a professor of pathology and ophthalmology at the Keck School, who is the new director of the DRS program.

“These students are given the opportunity to spend a full year working on a focused research project in the laboratory of a Keck School faculty member to gain research skills, publish scholarly articles and often to present their work at national meetings,” he explained. “Having such an experience prepares them for further research after graduation, and provides support for the development of an academic medical career.”

Members of the Dean’s Research Scholars Program include (from left): Nikhil Karnataka, Matthew Webb, Lauren Nosanov, Elizabeth Joiner, Isaac Schmale and Jarrad Merriman.

The Weekly NEWSMAKERS

U.S. News & World Report
On May 14 ran an op-ed by Ibrahim Busnaina, a resident in psychiatry at the Keck School, on the need for medical students to study cultural diversity. He recommended that medical professionals prepare by identifying the languages spoken in the population they serve. “Familiarize yourself with language charts, which list languages that patients can point to in order to identify their native tongue, so that you can call in an interpreter,” Busnaina wrote.

A May 11 article by Asian News International featured research led by Cheng-Ming Chuong, professor of pathology at the Keck School, that examines how hair and feathers are regenerated. Chuong and Randall Wildelitz, Ping Wu and Tingxin Jiang of the Keck School reviewed dozens of papers on nonuniform, noninjury related regrowth as it occurs over a mammal or bird’s life. Further study could teach scientists how to regrow hair or skin after serious injuries leading to scar tissue, or even regenerating fingers or toes.

A May 10 post on Science Blog also featured the paper.

GNC: Campaign raises $1.5 million

Continued from page 1

three years ago. At a special check presentation held recently at the hospitals, Evans and Sayles thanked employees for their gifts and recognition, hospital campaign leaders Lindsey Lawrence, Gina Greco and Bill Goreinstein for rallying their colleagues.

“The work that we do at the hospitals is often stressful, but the people who work here are so generous and caring,” said Lawrence. “An employee leader, I got to be an integral part of funneling that generosity into the surrounding communities. Times are tough, but each year I’ve been continually awed by the number of employees who give what they can because they see the good that comes out of this campaign.”

Nearly 6,000 people across the University contributed to the $1.5 million in donations—100 percent of which will be used on partnership programs in the neighborhoods around the University Park and Health Sciences campuses.

Now in its 18th year, the campaign offered online giving for the first time, which may have helped boost donations, according to Carolina Castillo, executive director of development for USC Civic Engagement.

“We realized that philanthropy is trending toward accessible giving platforms, so we figured an online, streamlined presence would encourage people to give more,” Castillo said. “Based on the results, we believe we succeeded.”

The GNC has raised more than $13.5 million to support more than 450 partnerships between USC and the community that provide needed services, safer streets for children and improved college access for those in the neighborhoods surrounding the university’s campuses.

Symposium focuses on status of tobacco and war on cancer

On June 5, California voters will decide whether to pass Proposition 29, which would add $1 to the cost of a pack of cigarettes. With that initiative as a backdrop, the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center is organizing a symposium to inform the USC community and the public about the status of tobacco legislation and the 40-year-long fight to find a cure for cancer.

“Tobacco, Proposition 29 and the War on Cancer” is scheduled from noon – 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 30, at Arcteryx Auditorium and Conference Center, lower ground level of the Halffyne J. Norris Cancer Research Tower at the Health Sciences campus. A box lunch will be served at 11:30 a.m.

The moderator is Stephen B. Grunder, director, USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. Welcoming remarks will be made by Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito.

The symposium features expert presentations and panel discussions including:

- “Keeping California in the Fight Against Tobacco-related Cancer” by John Pierce, Walton Chair for Cancer Research and professor of family and preventive medicine, University of California San Diego.
- “Get ‘em Young and Train ‘em Right: Tobacco Industry Targeting of Teens,” by Robert Jackle, Sewall Professor and Chair, Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Stanford University School of Medicine.
- A panel of cancer patients and survivors moderated by Umut K. Sinha.

Advance registration is required. To register online: www.usc.edu/ espv (code: TCR). For information, call (325) 865-0801.
Calendar of Events
This Calendar of Events is also online at www.usc.edu/hsc/calendar for the Health Sciences campus community

Saturday, May 19
8 a.m.–11 a.m. Department of Surgery Symposium: “Professionalism and Systems of Care: Challenges and Opportunities,” various speakers. NRT Aresty Auditorium. Info: (323) 442-2506

Monday, May 21

1 p.m.–4:30 p.m. ZNI Mini-Symposium: “Advancing Biomedical Technologies,” various speakers. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-2144

Tuesday, May 22
8 a.m.–1:30 p.m. Cancer Center Grand Rounds. Annual USC Norris Cancer Center Poster Session for Postdoctoral Fellows and Graduate Students: “Searching for Creativity.” NRT LG 51/504 and Aretsy Foyer. Info: (323) 442-7893

Friday, May 25
8:30 a.m. Pulmonary & Critical Care Research Seminar: “Molecular Mechanisms of Lung Destruction in Emphysema Pathobiology.” Richard Barberds, UCS. IBD 732-734. Info: (323) 226-7923

8:30 a.m. Surgical Grand Rounds: “Instrumental: A Tale of the Tools of Our Trade Told in Verses.” Jonathan Hatt, UCLA DOH 1st Floor Auditorium. Info: (323) 442-2506

Neon, Medicine Grand Rounds: “McKenzie Mycosis,” Kenneth Lee, USC. BPT Conference Rm. B. Info: (323) 226-7555


1 p.m.–3:30 p.m. Partners in Discovery and Health Symposium: “Building an Institution-Wide Research Cohort with Integrated Health Records and Biospecimens,” Thomas Insel, National Institute of Mental Health. NRT Aresty Auditorium. Info: (323) 442-3163

Wednesday, May 30

Thursday, May 31
Noon. Cardiology Grand Rounds. “Diabetes and Stable Ischemic Heart Disease,” Prakash Doodwala, USGF BCC 1st Floor Conference Room. Info: (323) 442-7419

Friday, June 1
10:45 a.m. SCEEIS Center Seminar: “Measuring Solar Ultraviolet Exposure Over the Life Course,” Myloocks Gustave, USC. SBH 116. Info: (323) 442-1096

Friday, June 8
8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Bund Stem Cell Symposium: “The Stem Cell Niche in Development and Regeneration,” various speakers. NRT Aresty Aud. Info: (323) 442-0809

Monday, June 11
Neon, KSOIM Research Seminar: “The End of Illness,” David Agus, USC. NRT Aresty Auditorium. Info: (323) 442-0679

Friday, June 15
8 a.m. – 2 p.m. Southern California Alzheimer’s Disease Centers Research Symposium 2012: “Vascular Cognitive Impairment and Dementia,” various speakers. IPC (GER Auditorium. Info: (323) 930-6280

Monday, June 18

By Matthew Kredell
A portrait of KAM liked to play doctor. But she didn’t use toys; she used real stethoscopes, blood-pressure pumps and other medical instruments that she got from physicians and nurses at the USC Norris Cancer Hospital.

In the room next door, her mother was receiving radiation treatment for Hodgkin lymphoma. The experience could have been frightening and confusing, but staff members at USC Norris made KAM feel like she and her mother were in safe hands.

Fast forward to today: Hodges is graduating with a master’s degree from the USC Keck School of Medicine. While childhood memories of accompanying her mother to the cancer hospital are, at times, hazy, she is certain the experience led to her becoming a medical professional.

“Now studying medicine and knowing how the brain works, I think you encode those things and really do process them when you are a kid,” Hodges said. “To me, the hospital wasn’t scary. It was this great place with these amazing people who took care of my mom. Everyone was so nice. It gets encoded in there that this is such a friendly profession.”

Every day for six weeks, as Hodgins was left in the care of her mother, she chose to become a physician assistant because she wanted to have more of a personal life away from work and, more importantly, have more time to spend with patients.

“As a physician assistant, I can make a difference and help to improve lives just as the medical team did for my mother,” Hodges said. “Physician assistants have more patient encounters and time with patients. I really liked that aspect of getting to be with the patients more.”

At USC, Hodges served as a volunteer for the Keck Student Run Community Clinic and at health fairs to provide free screenings for residents in the neighborhood.

After completing her advanced rotation at the Fullerton Neurology and Headache Center, she decided that she wanted to go into pediatric neurology.

Hodges plans to take three years to study for the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam. She hopes one day to land a job in Southern California doing for others what the cancer hospital did for her and her mother.

In case of an emergency…

Call the Emergency Information Phone: (213) 740-9233 The emergency telephone system can handle 1,400 simultaneous calls. It also has a backup system on the East Coast.

Visit the USC Web: http://emergency.usc.edu This page will be activated in case of an emergency. Backup Web servers on the East Coast will function if the USC servers are incapacitated.

Notice: Deadline for calendar submission is 4 p.m. Monday to be considered for that week’s issue—although three weeks’ advance notice of events is recommended. Please note that timely submission does not guarantee an item will be printed. Send calendar items to The Weekly, KAM 400 or fax to (323) 442-2812, or email to ebllaw@usc. edu. Entries must include day, date, time, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location and a phone number for information.

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Valerie Zapanta

Physician Assistant graduate focuses on putting patients first