**Keck School of Medicine to launch online public health program**

By Hope Hamashige

The Keck School of Medicine of USC will begin educating the next generation of public health leaders online next semester, in the spring of 2013, in an effort to help meet growing demand for professionals in this area.

There’s an acute shortage of public health workers both nationally and globally,” explained Shubha Kumar, director of the Keck School’s online Master of Public Health program and assistant professor of clinical preventive medicine. “USC started this program to respond to that need.”

The new platform will allow the Keck School to admit, and ultimately graduate, more students. It also opens the field of prospective students to working professionals, many of whom are clinicians, who want the opportunity to pursue further education while keeping their jobs, as well as to people who live out of state or even overseas.

The Association of Schools of Public Health describes the shortfall of the public health workforce facing the United States as a “crisis” as the population ages, as changes in the delivery of health care take place at a rapid pace and as globalization all pose new challenges. According to the ASPH, there may be as many as 250,000 unfilled public health jobs by 2020 as demand for this expertise is on the rise.

“The online M.P.H. program is yet another reflection of USC’s commitment to transforming education, providing greater access to, and accountability in, higher education in a rapidly changing world,” said Kumar.

The online classes, said Kumar, are going to integrate the best practices in distance education, including a mix of video lectures and narrated slide presentations from Keck School faculty members. In addition, there will be interactive discussion boards, case studies, and to sign up to pledge their support.

Organizers are hoping at least 50 percent of USC’s faculty and staff will participate to help achieve this year’s goal of raising $1.6 million. Last year, nearly 6,000 people affiliated with USC contributed, raising over $1.5 million.

Of the programs that received funds last year, a dozen were health care-related initiatives. Nearly $300,000 was given to groups related to health sciences that included the USC Neighborhood Mobile Dental Clinic, the Engineering for Health Academy, Science for Life, USC Health and Science Expo, USC Physic-Therapy Fit Families Program, the USC Med-COR program, and the USC Community Health and Wellness Foundation.

As in years past, donations can be made through payroll deduction or by check and are tax deductible. This year it is also possible to make a recurring donation using a credit card.

Donations to the campaign can be made online, but those interested in participating will be able to sign up at the kickoff.

“The faculty, staff and students of the Health Sciences campus have been strong supporters of the Good Neighbors campaign in years past and for good reason,” said Dean Carmen A. Puliafito of the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

“Many of the programs supported by Good Neighbors have goals that are in line with our own because they promote better health and science and math education in our community. I expect our faculty and staff will again be major supporters of this worthwhile project this year,” he added.

School of Pharmacy Dean R. Pete Vanderveen, an avid supporter of the Good Neighbors Campaign, has seen the impact that the program has had in our community.

"USC is a leader in so many fields, and the Good Neighbor Campaign gives each of us an opportunity to share our expertise with our neighbors," said Vanderveen. "At our school alone, the GNC has helped us produce fotonovelas on diabetes and depression, educate children and parents about poison prevention, and promote better health and science and math education in our community."
$3.5 million gift establishes USC/UKRO Kidney Research Center

By Amy E. Hamaker

The Keck School of Medicine of USC and the University Kidney Research Organization (UKRO), a Los Angeles-based nonprofit group that supports medical research concerning the causes, improvement treatments for, and prevention of kidney disease, announced the establishment of the USC/UKRO Kidney Research Center at the Keck School.

The new center was created with the help of a recent gift pledging $3.5 million from UKRO. At the announcement, made on Sept. 19, entertainment lawyer and UKRO founder Ken Kleinberg said he was inspired to raise awareness and funds for kidney research after suffering from a kidney ailment in 1999, leading to a kidney transplant in 2007. "I was told at the time, 'We've known about [the kidney disease] for years, but we don't know what causes it,'” he said. "That was in 1999, today, in 2022, we still don't know what causes it. The lesson of all this, of course, is the only way we can conquer kidney disease is through research."

Singer, songwriter and performer Natalie Cole, who attended USC briefly as a student, remembered her time as a kidney transplant patient in 2009 as difficult. "I really didn't know what to expect," she said. "Symptoms don't always show; I found out there are so many people with kidney disease who don't even know they have it, and that scares me. This moment [of creating the Kidney Research Center] is one that's most overdue, but welcome."

Vito Campese, professor of medicine at the Keck School and chair of UKRO’s Medical Scientific Advisory Board, and Edward Crandall, chair of the Department of Medicine at the Keck School, described the importance of prioritizing kidney research through the Kidney Research Center. "With determination and perseverance, Ken Kleinberg and UKRO have really driven this initiative and helped USC make it happen," said Crandall. "The center will be operated as part of the Keck School of Medicine's division of nephrology in the Department of Medicine. "This inauguration is certainly a landmark in the future of the division of nephrology and kidney research at the Keck School of Medicine, and we're very happy to work with UKRO,” said Campese, chief of the division. "Partnering together, I think we will create the best research center in nephrology on the West Coast."

—Vito Campese, professor of medicine at the Keck School

ONLINE: Online M.P.H. students to graduate with same degree as on-campus students

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M.P.H. students graduate with same degree as on-campus students

Student-faculty and student-student interaction,” said Kumar. The program is fully accredited, and online students will graduate with the same degree as students who attend courses on the USC Health Sciences campus. Online students will take a set of core courses and choose one of three tracks of study: biostatistics and epidemiology, health education and promotion, or global health leadership. There are also plans for a health policy track to be offered in the future. Public health encompasses a wide range of jobs, said Kumar. Some graduates enter the policy field, others conduct epidemiological research at academic hospitals, and some work in hospital administration. Some work in community clinics in some of the world's most dire settings, while others will help hospitals and government agencies prepare for emergencies such as outbreaks or bio-terror attacks at home. Given the growing concern most students have over the cost of their education, one publication recently did an analysis of the cost of a degree and weighed it against future job prospects and average salaries. After combing through several professional degrees, Kiplinger declared M.P.H. degrees among the top graduate degrees worth pursuing. According to its 2011 report, Kiplinger noted that public health administrators earn, on average, salaries higher than $90,000. "That salary, combined with the huge and growing demand for this field, means the degree will more than pay for itself. Still, the field is more than lucrative and relatively secure in an unsteady economy. "There are many things you can do with a public health degree,” said Kumar, and many of the jobs are not only interesting, but also very rewarding given the impacts they can have on the lives of individuals and communities.”

GNC: Campaign has raised $14 million to date

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Campaign has raised $14 million to date

Given the growing concern among high school students about medical school costs, the USC Good Neighbors Campaign, a fundraising initiative of the University of Southern California’s Health Sciences campus, has raised over $14 million to date, according to University funding officials. "This is an extraordinary program,” Began in 1994, the USC Good Neighbors Campaign encourages USC faculty and staff to contribute a portion of their paychecks to support programs that help strengthen local communities through USC Neighborhood Outreach and United Way. Students, alumni and friends can also participate. "To date, the campaign has raised more than $14 million to support more than 500 community partnership programs."

The Weekly

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Executive Director of Communications: Ina Fried
Assistant Director of Publications: Sara Reeve
Editor: Jon Nalick
Contributors: Ryan Ball, Eva Blaauw, Tania Chatila, Imelda Valenzuela, Fowler, Amy E. Hamaker, Hope Hamashige, Carol Matthieu, Carole Omoumi, Leslie Ridgeway, Alison Trinidad and Valerie Zapanta
Senior Vice President, University Relations: Tom Sayles
Vice President, Public Relations and Marketing: Brenda Maceo

Phone: (323) 442-8282 Fax: (323) 442-3832 Email: hscweekly@usc.edu Web: theweekly.usc.edu

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Pictured above, at the announcement are (from left to right) Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito; Kenneth Kleinberg, founder of UKRO; singer/songwriter Natalie Cole; and Vito M. Campese, professor of medicine and chair of the Keck School’s division of nephrology, and chair of UKRO’s Medical Scientific Advisory Board.
Bridging the Gaps minority students program set to expand in 2013

By Amy E. Hamaker

An ongoing program to attract top minority students to the Keck School of Medicine of USC recently completed its seventh successful year and, with the help of sponsors, is hoping to double participation next year.

The program recently received notice that the American Diabetes Association will fund for next year’s program two students who are engaged in diabetes and/or obesity-related research. These students will also be invited to present their research findings at the association’s annual scientific session in Chicago in June 2013.

The Bridging the Gaps: Bench to Redside Summer Research Program allows outstanding minority students to gain exposure to the Keck School’s research and clinical programs and encourages them to pursue their graduate studies at the Keck School.

Last year, 12 undergraduate students participated in the inaugural program. This year, 13 students worked with 14 Keck School faculty mentors for eight weeks in their laboratories to produce abstracts and formal research posters.

This year’s students hailed from Columbia University, Rutgers University, Cornell University, Harvard University, Oberlin College, Occidental College, Spelman College, Morehouse College, Missouri State University, University of Hawaii, Manoa, and Florida State University.

During the eight-week program, students heard lectures in physiology, biophysics and other topics including cultural competency in medicine and minority health issues. They were invited to special lectures from visiting faculty, clinicians and researchers. Students also had small group and individual meetings with deans, faculty and staff in admissions offices to learn about resource specialists, financial aid, global medicine and various specialties.

Once research was completed, the program culminated in several poster sessions, where students explained their research and conclusions to Keck School faculty, students and researchers.

Visiting students were also given a peek into what life as a Keck School student might be like. Graduate students and postdocs in mentor laboratories acted as informal mentors. The program students were able to meet with a medical student panel and individual medical students for questions or one-on-one meetings.

“We were excited to have a modest increase in the number of students participating in the program this summer,” said Joyce Riehcy, assistant dean of medical education at the Keck School and the program’s director. “Over the next few years, our goal is to ultimately increase the class size to 24 students.

Ideally, we hope that more organizations and individuals will help financially support our important initiative to enrich the candidate pool of underrepresented minorities pursuing careers as physician scientists and biomedical scientists,” she added.

Body Computing 6.0 conference explores advances in mobile health care

By Leslie Ridgeway

The annual USC Body Computing Conference, which brings together digital health leaders to discuss the myriad of issues in wireless health, will be on Friday, Oct. 5 at the USC Town and Gown ballroom. A networking dinner—featuring a discussion of the collaborative work between the USC Body Computing Center and the USC School of Cinematic Arts—will take place on the evening of Oct. 4.

For the sixth year, Leslie Saxson, chief, division of cardiovascular medicine at the Keck School of Medicine, and founder of the USC Center for Body Computing, will lead the discussion about wireless health and how it is changing the delivery of health care.

Body Computing Conference attendees will see a variety of new technology, such as apps and commercial tablet technology for programming heart devices, which could fundamentally change the device industry.

The USC Center for Body Computing, which runs the conference, studies, incubates, and creates wireless health products with other USC Schools and corporate partners. It creates health games, social networking sites, devices, and other digital healthcare solutions.

Conference topics include mobile health and sports, a question and answer session with a senior level Food and Drug Administration representative, and how the entertainment industry influences mobile health.

In addition to Saxson, David Aguas, professor of medicine and engineering at the Keck School of Medicine and USC Viterbi, will give opening remarks.

Other USC leadership and faculty participating in the conference include Thomas E. Jackiewicz, senior vice president and chief business officer for USC Health, and Joshua Lee, chief information officer, USC Health.

Tickets to the conference are $500. To register for the 2012 Body Computing 6.0, go to http://www.uscbodycomputing.org.

T-shirt fundraiser to aid breast cancer fight

To raise breast cancer awareness, USC Norris Cancer Hospital is offering a “We Fight to Play On” T-shirt for purchase through the end of October.

Purchase of the Trojan T-shirt will promote breast cancer awareness while supporting breast cancer research at USC Norris Cancer Hospital. Visit any USC Bookstore or hospital gift shop—or buy one at uscbstore.com/breast-cancer.

As part of a new tradition to celebrate breast cancer awareness at a USC Trojan football game, Trojans are invited to visit the Keck Medical Center of USC booth at the Coliseum, located near the Olympic Torch, before the game against Colorado on Oct. 20. Visit KeckMed.org for their support for USC Norris Cancer Hospital researchers, physicians, clinical staff and patients, who fight against breast cancer every day.

At the game, Norris physicians, staff members and breast cancer patients will make a special halftime appearance on the field, where they will be recognized as leaders in the fight against breast cancer.

The Weekly NEWSMAKERS

A Sept. 24 article in Becker’s Hospital Review profiles Scott Evans, CEO of Keck Hospital of USC and USC Norris Cancer Hospital.

A Sept. 24 public forum hosted by KPCC-FM’s Crawford Family Forum featured Brian Prestwich, clinical assistant professor of family medicine at the Keck School, as a panelist in a discussion about workforce demand and health care.

A Sept. 24 report by the Daily Mail (U.K.) featured research by Rob McConnell, professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School, and colleagues finding that at least 8 percent of more than 300,000 cases of childhood asthma in Los Angeles County can be attributed to traffic-related pollution. In those cases, the children were living in homes within 75 meters of a busy roadway.

McConnell said other diseases may be caused or exacerbated by urban air pollution, including atherosclerosis, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and neurological disorders.

“Thus, policies to combat climate change may have near-term health benefits beyond reducing the burden of disease due to asthma,” he said.

A Sept. 24 article in Povrda (Russia) covered research by Mariana Stern, associate professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School, finding that pan-fried meats may increase the risk of prostate cancer.

A Sept. 22 report on the Business Journals featured the creation of the USC/JAKRO Kidney Research Center at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. The new research center, a partnership of USC and the University kidney Research Organization, will conduct both basic and applied research at USC. The center will be run by the Keck School’s nephrology division, chaired by Vito Campese, professor of medicine at the Keck School.
Nobel Laureate delivers lecture to remember

By Ryan Ball

There are things we forget, for instance where we put our keys or the name of that guy who's waving to us from across the room. Other things are burned into our brains and we couldn't forget them if we wanted to. So what are the mechanisms that dictate what gets stored permanently on our internal hard drives and what gets kicked to the recycle bin? Nobel laureate Eric Kandel looked to snails to find answers.

"How do you remember your first love experience for the rest of your life?" Kandel asked, speaking to a packed house at Mayer Auditorium on Sept. 20. In his Irene McCulloch Distinguished Lecture in Neuroscience "A New Class of Functional Prions and the Perpetuation of Memory Storage," he examined the two major forms of long-term memory—explicit, which requires conscious attention and implicit, which is based on learned fear and sensitization.

He found that both require repetition to convert experience from short-term to long-term memory, and that transition requires new protein synthesis and altered gene expression.

For his test subjects, Kandel chose a type of snail known as aplysia, which have very simple brains. By administering a series of shocks to their tails, he was able to study the simple neural circuit and how the repetition of sensitization training leads to altered gene expression and the growth of new synaptic connections necessary for the formation of implicit long-term memory. While the snails may not have brains as complex as us humans, our genetic makeup is not as different as we would like to believe.

Kandel's findings in our slimy cousins offer new understanding of the processes by which our own memories are formed and stored, and may one day help us to gain better control over what we keep and what we throw out, like where we put those keys.

PHARMACY: Changes designed to spur efficiency and reduce costs

Continued from page 1

because they were mixed in an environment that was less contained. "Now, if we don't use something, we will be able to recycle it and so there will be less waste," she said.

They also changed the process for mixing the solutions that is less time-consuming and involves fewer people moving in and out of the sterile area, where they are required to wear gowns, masks and shoe covers.

"This is going to help improve efficiency and it is going to drive down costs," said Melanie Joe, director of pharmacy services.

A good start, to be sure, but the administrators of the pharmacy have several more changes they plan to implement in upcoming months—both changes to the physical space and to their own procedures—that they hope will bring yet another level of efficiency to the pharmacy operations.

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.