

The Weekly



Jon Malick

YOU SAY “POTATO,” I SAY “BATTERY”—More than 150 students from elementary schools surrounding USC’s Health Sciences campus participated in the 13th annual HSC Science Fair, held May 9, on the Harry and Celesta Pappas Quad. From left, Sheridan School fifth graders Michelle Sanchez, Desserie Velazquez and Justin Manzo demonstrate an electrical circuit powered by potatoes. Other groups of students examined topics including whether small parachutes could protect falling eggs from damage (they could) and whether smelling strong odors such as lemon or mint would influence how a person tastes a chocolate chip cookie (generally, it did).

Research team awarded \$11 million grant to fight stroke

By Josh Grossberg

USC researchers and their partners across Los Angeles County have been awarded an \$11 million grant to fund research on community-based interventions to reduce the higher rates of stroke and death from stroke among economically disadvantaged Hispanics, African-Americans and Asian-Americans.

The Los Angeles Stroke Prevention/Intervention Research Program in Health Disparities is a multi-partnered research center, funded by the National Institutes of Health. The center, led by Barbara Vickrey, professor

of neurology at UCLA, will conduct two randomized, controlled community-based trials of stroke prevention interventions.

Amytis Towfighi, assistant professor of neurology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and associate chief medical officer of Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, will co-lead the larger trial in the five-year study.

“The reason we’re targeting this population is because minorities are at high risk for stroke and are less likely to receive appropriate stroke preventive services than whites,” Towfighi said. “We plan to bridge this gap.”

Towfighi’s effort, Secondary Stroke Prevention by Uniting Community and Chronic Care Model Teams Early to End Disparities (SUCCEED), is a randomized controlled trial of an intervention that teams community health workers with physi-



Amytis Towfighi

cians and care managers at Los Angeles medical centers serving low-income populations.

“The community health workers will serve as a liaison between patients and the health care system; will target patients’ lifestyle habits, self-management skills and medication adherence; and will assess for social isolation and depression,” Towfighi said. “The overall goal is to improve risk factor control among individuals who have had a stroke or transient ischemic attack.”

Commonly known as a “mini-stroke,” a transient ischemic attack refers to the temporary disturbance of the blood supply to the brain, which often results in a sudden and brief reduction in brain function.

Nerses Sanossian, assistant professor of neurology at the Keck School, is a co-investigator on the trial.

The study is partnering

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Occupational Therapy kicks off \$6 million fundraising initiative

‘USC has an undeniable legacy of leadership to the profession of occupational therapy, and we are the founders of the occupational science discipline.’

—Florence Clark, chair of the USC Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy

By Mike McNulty

The USC Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy announced its entry into the Campaign for the University of Southern California on April 27 before a capacity crowd of over 400 Trojans gathered at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront hotel ballroom.

The kickoff celebration, scheduled to coincide with the annual conference of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), included live entertainment, a video presentation, and a toast from Associate Dean and Chair Florence Clark.

“USC has an undeniable legacy of leadership to the profession of occupational

therapy, and we are the founders of the occupational science discipline,” Clark said. “This Campaign will take USC occupational science and occupational therapy to an even higher level, and I am so excited to have the entire Trojan Family join together in this unprecedented adventure.”

The division’s \$6 million campaign goal is believed to be the largest in the history of occupational therapy higher education.

Primary giving objectives include faculty recruitment and retention, research initiatives, student scholarships and fellowships, infrastructure improvements, and patient care programming.

Clark, who completes

her term as AOTA president later this year, also recognized Board of Councilors members in the audience, commended them for their investments and offered examples of USC’s leadership to the profession. *U.S. News & World Report* currently ranks the division as the nation’s No. 1 occupational therapy graduate educational program. USC has held this top spot for more years than all other programs combined.

Clark was welcomed to the stage by occupational therapy doctoral student John Lien Margetis, who spoke about his personal experiences.

“Occupational therapy

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Buitrago named to Keck Medical Center of USC leadership team

A seasoned health care executive with decades of experience in the Los Angeles market has been tapped to lead Keck Medical Center’s managed care strategy.

Carol Buitrago joined USC April 30 and serves as executive administrator for managed care and community medical group development, leading the creation and implementation of a managed care strategy for the clinical enterprise.

“Carol’s is a critical new role for our organization, as we work to develop professional relationships with other community providers and industry partners, and as we work to position the Keck Medical Center of USC as a health care leader in Southern California,” said Shawn Sheffield, the medical center’s chief strategy and system



Carol Buitrago

development officer, to whom Buitrago reports. “She will work closely with administrators and physicians, and she will play a key part in solidifying our fiscal well-being

through patient volume growth, ensuring rewarding reimbursements and maximizing our hold on the region’s health care market.”

Buitrago will be responsible for cultivating

new relationships with external providers and payors, and for negotiating new contracts with outside organizations to best meet the medical center’s goals for growth and expansion. She will lead the development of a robust managed care strategy to ensure long-range financial goals. Buitrago will also be responsible for developing a new reimbursement structure for the medical enterprise,

See **BUITRAGO**, page 4

New research elucidates a complex gene regulatory circuit

By Candace Pearson

Piece by missing piece, scientists at the Keck School of Medicine of USC are deciphering the powerful gene regulatory circuit that maintains and controls the potential of embryonic stem cells (ESCs) to form any type of cell in the body.

Recent findings by Andrew McMahon, director and Provost Professor, and Qilong Ying, associate professor of cell and neurobiology, at the Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC, underscore the essential role of basic science in paving the way for future medical breakthroughs.

McMahon and Ying are in pursuit of the ways in which the intricate regulatory circuit balances two qualities of stem cells: pluripotency

(the capacity to develop into any type of cell) and differentiation (the process of becoming different types of cells).

The scientists are particularly interested in signaling pathways, important routes for intracellular communication.

Left to their own devices, ESCs rapidly progress to the next step and become specific types of cells.

“We want to freeze the cells at that normally transient stage, so they are more compatible for use in any clinical situation,” said McMahon, who holds the W. M. Keck Professorship in Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine at the Keck School.

In a study published in the March 15 issue of *Stem Cells*, McMahon’s team focused on the Wnt

signaling pathway, one of the first pathways activated in human development. This network of proteins helps determine what a cell will become; it also is over-stimulated in colon cancer and other tumors.

Intriguingly, the Wnt pathway is linked to maintenance and differentiation of ESCs—to both stalling their evolution and encouraging it—what McMahon calls “paradoxical actions.” His team’s findings zeroed in on one component in that process: transcription factor T-cell factor-3, or Tcf-3. Transcription factors are proteins that bind to DNA and control the flow of genetic information.

Working in the lab with mouse ESCs and complex bioinformatics, investigators found Tcf-3 was instrumental in destabilizing

the stem cells. Equally important, beta-catenin—a multifunctional protein that activates Wnt target genes in the cell nucleus—can block Tcf-3’s ability to short-circuit the stem cells.

McMahon’s experiments rely on groundbreaking research by Ying, published in *Nature* in 2008. That research showed that ESCs could be cultured in the lab indefinitely and kept from differentiating, provided that two molecules were added to the cocktail in which the cells were kept.

Ying also has built on his 2008 study.

In research published in the March 1 issue of *Journal of Cell Science*, Ying and his team analyzed another signaling pathway—LIF/STAT3 (leukemia inhibitory factor)—in the maintenance of stem cells.

The researchers screened 19 genes and identified an important downstream target, a protein called Gbx2, which shows capabilities of supporting stem cell self-renewal.

What remains is a sort of genetic jigsaw puzzle. “We have another missing piece, but we know there are many more to come,” Ying said.

The clinical applications of such investigations may not be far behind. At the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, a clinical trial is now underway to study the first drug designed to specifically target and inhibit the Wnt signaling pathway. The goal—to impede the growth of cancer cells.

“This is a strong example of how basic work in stem cell biology can lead to new thinking in how to treat patients,” McMahon said.

OT: Division’s fundraising drive is most ambitious yet

Continued from Page 1

helped me learn how to talk about my disability in a way that made sense to me, as a child back then,” said Margetis, who was born without hands or feet and had been a consumer of occupational therapy services throughout his early life. “It helped me seamlessly integrate my disability into my identity as a person, and now, as a clinician.”

The campaign announcement comes as the division concludes a year of celebrating the 70th anniversary of USC occupational therapy education, which was



Occupational Therapy Chair Florence Clark announces the initiative at an April 27 kickoff event in San Diego.

founded in 1942 in response to the nation’s demand for clinicians to rehabilitate active and veteran military personnel injured during World War II.

“USC has always been about creating leaders, shaping the profession and building better lives,” said Board of Councilors Chairperson Linda Florey. “It’s amazing to think that now is perhaps the most exciting time in our distinguished history.”

CHLA speakers stress STEM subjects for girls

By Josh Grossberg

The message to the dozens of school-aged girls was simple—with hard work and diligence, they can achieve meaningful and successful careers in science, technology, engineering and math—the so-called STEM subjects.

And to prove the point, the message was delivered by some of the top female professionals in those fields during a recent symposium at The Saban Research Institute of Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. Among the presenters were several from Keck School of Medicine of USC who perform research at the institute.

The April 24 event, “Women in STEM:

Designing, Discovering and Delivering Change,” was in part a response to First Lady Michelle Obama’s call last year to encourage more girls and women to study STEM subjects.

The statistics show why it is so important—while women make up 48 percent of the workforce, they hold only 24 percent of STEM jobs. And there is a growing need for skilled workers in STEM fields.

Speakers included Michele D. Kipke, professor of pediatrics and preventive medicine at the Keck School; Roberta Diaz Brinton, USC School of Pharmacy professor of pharmacology and pharmaceutical sciences, biomedical engineering and neurology; Heather Volk, associate professor of research in the division of environmental health in the Department of Preventive Medicine and the Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute; and Maja Mataric, professor of computer science and vice dean for research at the USC Viterbi School of Engineering.

There was also a panel discussion led by Cheryl Saban. She and her husband, Haim, gave a transformational gift a decade ago that resulted in The Saban Research Institute being named to honor them.

Diaz Brinton shared with the audience a personal story about her own challenging childhood environment. “I took on problems bigger than I was,” she said. “What

I learned served me well as a scientist. I can’t give up. That’s not an option.”

Volk advised the audience to develop relationships with others—to become part of a team.

“That support, those groups really mean a lot to me in my research,” she said. “I couldn’t do it by myself.”

She said that she found support when she was working on someone else’s team. And now that she’s forming her own research team, she finds the same solace.

“The great part of this collaboration is the people I’m working with are my peers,” she said. “And I think for women in STEM fields, myself especially, working with girls has been really incredible for me.”

Mataric told the group that it was OK to make mistakes along the way.

“Nobody is perfect,” she said. “Women are just more open and worry more about it than men. Since you’re not perfect, embrace the imperfections you can live with.” She told the group that it’s normal to feel insecure, but to push ahead anyway.

Mataric left the audience with a question to ask oneself in challenging situations, “What would you do if you weren’t scared?”

The event ended with an energizing and inspiring panel discussion on topics such as subconscious biases, mentoring, letting go of perfection and embracing failure.

The Weekly

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Director of global health sees cause for optimism on climate change

By Ina Fried

Images of shrinking glaciers and stranded polar bears give powerful evidence of the need for people to work together on the common problem of protecting the planet. Adding art and the voices of community leaders to the data scientists are compiling may help convince decision makers to take action to deal with climate change, said Jonathan Samet, director of the USC Institute for Global Health.

Samet spoke on challenges and opportunities in arts and health care and the need for stewardship of the planet at an Earth Day Forum on April 22 at Los Angeles City Hall.

The forum, "Aging People/Aging Planet: The Face of Climate



Richard Fukuhara

Jonathan Samet, director of the USC Institute for Global Health, spoke of the need for stewardship of the planet at an Earth Day Forum at Los Angeles City Hall.

Change—Local and Global Perspectives," was the USC Institute for Genetic Medicine Art Gallery's seventh annual Global Environment Forum. It was organized by a steering

committee chaired by Muriel Wood and BK Rao in collaboration with Sister Cities of Los Angeles Inc. and the gallery's public, private, nonprofit/faith-based, academic and media partners.

Pointing to examples of air pollution from traffic in Beijing and from indoor cooking fuels and diesel vehicles in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Samet said, "Now, the air pollution of Beijing and Addis is everyone's problem—in our global world. At 7 billion, we have exceeded the absorptive capacity of the planet, polluting one of our global commons—the atmosphere."

Yet Samet, the Flora L. Thornton Chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine in the Keck School of Medicine of USC, said he

remains optimistic.

"The move to green energy technology will make a difference," he said. "Already, the market is responding to the climate crisis with carbon-free strategies for energy production and for saving energy. New fuel efficiency standards and public preferences have already begun to shift the vehicle industry—from SUVs to hybrid and electric vehicles. People will continue to make the right choice, if they have that option."

"I have confidence that people will unite around a common goal of saving our planet," he said. "They know that we may be able to procrastinate for a while, but inherently, we all want a better world for our children and grandchildren."

Samet spoke on one of

three panels presenting health, international and private sector perspectives. The international panelists came from the consulates of Bhutan, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Israel, Mexico and New Zealand.

As they entered the forum, participants viewed works from the exhibition "Aging People/Aging Planet" by artists Mary Lou Dauray and Orna Makleff. Basso Profundo KB Solomon, artist-in-residence at the USC Dornsife School's Office of Religious Studies, performed the national anthem and "Dream the Impossible Dream." The exhibition runs through June 26 in the second floor art gallery at the USC Institute for Genetic Medicine, 2250 Alcazar St., on the USC Health Sciences campus.

CHLA names Levitt inaugural director of Developmental Neurogenetics

By Ellin Kavanagh

Pat Levitt, USC Provost Professor of Neuroscience, Pharmacy, Psychiatry, Pediatrics and Psychology, has been named inaugural director of the Developmental Neurogenetics Program of the newly created Institute for the Developing Mind within The Saban Research Institute of Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

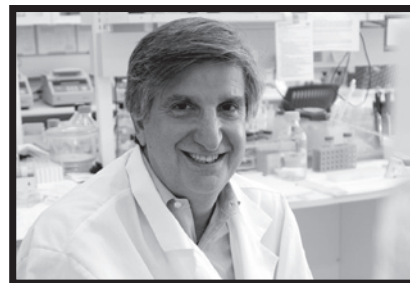
The Institute for the Developing Mind, envisioned to become an internationally recognized center for innovative research, diagnosis and treatment of neurodevelopmental and behavioral disorders, will provide comprehensive, interdisciplinary research and clinical services at CHLA and the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

"With Dr. Levitt's recruitment to the Institute for the Developing Mind, we begin a new chapter in our commitment to improving the lives of children with neurodevelopmental disorders," said Brent Polk, director of The Saban Research Institute at

CHLA and chair of the Department of Pediatrics and professor of pediatrics and biochemistry and molecular biology at the Keck School. "One in three families is affected by behavioral or neurodevelopmental disorders in children. As this story unfolds, we expect the program to provide a better understanding of the relationship between genetics and environmental influences on the development of behavior and cognitive function."

As a leader within the institute, Levitt will establish a new program in developmental neurogenetics, initiating innovative basic and clinical research focused on understanding the role of genes and the environment in brain development. His work is concentrated on identifying how these factors come together to influence brain architecture, and how alterations in this process can cause brain disorders in children.

"In this leadership role, Dr. Levitt will collaborate with colleagues in brain imaging and behavioral neuro-



Greg Mancuso

Pat Levitt will direct the Developmental Neurogenetics Program at the Institute for the Developing Mind within The Saban Research Institute of Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

science to discover new strategies to identify children who are at risk for neurodevelopmental disorders and deliver individualized treatment and preventive care that creates immediate impact and long-lasting positive outcomes," said Michele Kipke, division chief, Research on Children, Youth and Families, and vice chair of research in the Department of Pediatrics.

Levitt will continue to direct the Neuroscience Graduate Program at USC and will also spearhead an

initiative to develop and lead an interdisciplinary autism center, bringing together experts from across the three campuses of Children's Hospital Los Angeles and USC.

"Pat Levitt's dedication to students and education has made him an invaluable resource for our students," said Carmen A. Puliafito, dean of the Keck School of Medicine. "Autism is one of the most compelling study areas in neuroscience, and in his new position Dr. Levitt will serve as an important guide to numerous young researchers searching for solutions to this complex disorder."

Throughout his career, Levitt's research has focused on the role of genes and the environment on the developing circuitry of the brain, the molecular and developmental basis of neuropsychiatric and neurodevelopmental disorders, schizophrenia and autism spectrum disorders. His research has been continuously funded by the National Institutes of Health since 1983.

The Weekly NEWSMAKERS

A May 12 article in the *Imperial Valley News* highlighted clinical trials led by **Agustin Garcia**, associate professor of clinical medicine at the Keck School of Medicine; **Huyen Pham**, assistant professor of clinical obstetrics and gynecology at the Keck School; and **Yvonne Lin**, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the Keck School, studying breast, ovarian and cervical cancer immunotherapies. Health Canal also covered the trials.

A May 11 article in the *Economist* featured research by **Michael Habib**, assistant professor of research in cell and neurobiology at the Keck School of Medicine, and a colleague studying how a flying pterosaur caught its dinner. They studied 36 birds and 20

bats, assessing bone densities and other measurements with that of the pterosaur's fossils. The study found the prehistoric creature probably sat in wait for prey, then swooped after it.

On May 10, the *Los Angeles Times* reported the recruitment of professors **Arthur Toga**, **Paul Thompson** and more than 100 faculty, researchers and staff, including graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and others from the UCLA Laboratory of Neuro Imaging to the Keck School of Medicine.

USC President **C.L. Max Nikias** said it was part of a hiring initiative that has brought two-dozen esteemed academics to the university in the past three years. "They are people who are well established, they are the kings and queens of where they are," Nikias said.

The story mentioned the Campaign for USC, which aims to raise \$6 billion by 2018.

Toga said the ability to expand at USC "seemed far greater than the opportunities" at UCLA. "USC has stepped up to the plate to do this," Thompson said. The *Los Angeles Times* ran a second story and a live chat about the acquisition.

A May 10 article in *Futurity* highlighted research by **Cheng-Ming Chung**, professor of pathology at the Keck School of Medicine, and colleagues, finding that stem cells appear to create the patterns in feathers. The researchers found that variations in the timing of cell development and positioning of the progenitor cells create the feathers' distinct designs.

On May 9, CNN ran an op-ed by **Ismael Nuno**, assistant professor of clinical cardiothoracic surgery at the Keck School of Medicine, about his daughter's eating disorder.

As a result of the disorder, she developed cardiac arrhythmia, which eventually killed her. "As a parent of one of these young girls, I can warn other parents of some possible red flags. ... If they see them, parents should seek help for their child," Nuno wrote.

A May 9 story in the *San Marino Tribune* covered a tribute dinner for **Michael John Patzakis**, who served as chairman of the Department of Orthopaedics at the Keck School of Medicine for 21 years.

Calendar of Events

Saturday, May 18

3 p.m. Keck School of Medicine – M.D./Ph.D., M.D. Commencement Ceremony. Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. Keynote speaker: Robert K. Ross, president and CEO of The California Endowment. A reception will immediately follow on the McCarthy Quad at the University Park campus. No tickets are required. More info: (323) 442-2553

Monday, May 20

8 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. USC Minisymposium. “Musculoskeletal Development and Repair,” Various speakers. BCC 101. Info: (323) 442-8084

Tuesday, May 21

10:30 a.m. Keck Hospital of USC Guild Speaker Series. “Die Once Live Twice,” Lawrence Dorr, USC. Private Club in Pasadena. \$50. Info: (626) 440-0679

Noon. “Supporting Each Other in Times of Crisis: Providing Psychological First Aid,” Jeff Harris, USC. NOR 1315. Info: (213) 821-0800

Noon. Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC Seminar. “Starting from the Basics to Make Something New: Stem Cell-derived Choroid Plexus Epithelial Cells,” Edwin Monuki, UC Irvine. BCC 1st Floor Conference Room. Info: (323) 442-8084

Wednesday, May 22

8:30 a.m. “The Golden Hour: Perioperative Care in the Cardiothoracic ICU,” Richard Fogel, USC. IRD 732-734. Info: (323) 226-7923

9 a.m. – 3 p.m. USC Center for Excellence in Research Workshop. “Preclinical Imaging Workshop,” Peter Conti, Grant Dagliyan, USC. CSC 250. Info: (213) 740-6709

Noon. Southern California Clinical and Translational Science Institute Research Ethics Forum. “Drawing on Willowbrook,” Alexander Capron and Donna Spruijt-Metz, USC. NRT LG503/504. Info: (323) 442-8281

Friday, May 24

8:30 a.m. “Mechanisms of Severe Pulmonary Fibrosis,” Paul Noble, Cedar Sinai Medical Center. IRD 732-734. Info: (323) 226-7923

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) 442-2832, or email to eblaauw@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.

11 a.m. Hematology Grand Rounds, Siamak Saadat, USC. IPT Conference Room D. Info: (323) 865-3950

Noon. Center for Applied Molecular Medicine Seminar. “Tracking Immune Biomarkers and the Human Gut Microbiome: Inflammation, Crohn’s Disease, and Colon Cancer,” Larry Smarr, UC San Diego. HMR 100. Info: (323) 442-3849

Wednesday, May 29

8:30 a.m. “Photopheresis After Lung Transplant,” Mark Barr, USC. IRD 732-734. Info: (323) 226-7923

7 p.m. USC Alumni Distinguished Speaker Series. “The How, What and Why of Regenerative Medicine,” Andrew McMahon, USC. USC Orange County Center, 2300 Michelson Drive, Irvine, CA. Info: (626) 457-4265

Friday, May 31

8 a.m. Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Grand Rounds. “NexGen Pathology: Diagnostics and Theranostics,” Pamela Ward, USC. NOR 7409. Info: (323) 442-1180

8:30 a.m. KSOM Surgical Department Educational Lectureship. “Teaching Psychomotor Skills: Best Practices and Rules of Engagement,” Craig Baker and Maura Sullivan, USC. DOH 100. Info: (323) 442-9064

8:30 a.m. “Structural and Functional Characterization of ABCA3 in Health and Disease,” Surafel Mulugeta, University of Pennsylvania. IRD 732-734. Info: (323) 226-7923

11 a.m. Hematology Grand Rounds, Eddie Thara, USC. IPT Conference Room D. Info: (323) 865-3950

Saturday, June 1

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. LAC + USC Neurosurgery and Trauma Symposium. “Neurotrauma L.A. 2013: Outcome Optimization,” Various speakers. LAC + USC IPT Conference Rooms A & B. Info: (323) 409-6899

Monday, June 3

Noon. KSOM Research Seminar. “Adipocytes are Active Participants in Leukemia Progression and Drug Resistance,” Steven Mittelman, USC. NRT Aresty Auditorium. Info: (323) 442-7732

Psychiatry resident wins two key awards

By Josh Grossberg

Beating out hundreds of entrants, a third-year psychiatry resident at the Keck School of Medicine of USC has recently been named the winner of two separate prestigious awards.

Sean Sassano-Higgins was one of only 13 people in the country chosen for a GAP Fellowship, awarded by the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry.

During the two-year program, Sassano-Higgins will attend four semi-annual meetings and work on a project with a GAP committee. The fellowship allows participants to meet and collaborate with some of the leading psychiatrists in North America and build relationships with other fellows.

Marcia Goin, a clinical professor at the Keck School and GAP’s president-elect, said Sassano-Higgins is the first GAP fellow from USC

STROKE: USC study examines community-based interventions

Continued from Page 1 with multiple local community organizations, including Healthy African American Families, Watts Labor Community Action Committee, Esperanza Community Housing Corporation, the Worker Education & Resource Center, and the American Heart Association, among others. A central component of the entire center will be the creation of a Community Action Panel made up of individuals encompassing much of the racial and ethnic diversity of Los Angeles.

This panel will formally and regularly review and advise on the work in progress and products of the center overall, promote ways to effectively disseminate the work in the targeted communities and provide feedback to investigators at every stage of the research. An annual symposium also will be held to engage and foster the sharing of knowledge between community members and academic investigators in Los Angeles.

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.



Sean Sassano-Higgins

in 30 years.

“To have achieved this is a very important step for him,” she said. “People across the country look very carefully at the suggestions that come from GAP.”

For the second honor, Sassano-Higgins was one

of only 13 winners selected from 450 entrants in the Beck Institute Student Scholarship Competition. He will attend a four-day workshop in August, when he will meet with Aaron T. Beck, the founder of cognitive behavior therapy.

Sassano-Higgins, who plans to pursue a career in adult psychiatry, credits his success to his professors.

“I feel incredibly fortunate to have had such wonderful supervisors. They have taught me very well,” he said. “I would like to remain in academics after graduation, hopefully at USC, as I consider it to be my home.”

BUITRAGO: USC surges in health care

Continued from Page 1

and will help navigate the changing landscape of the industry as health care reform and new payment models emerge.

“As a Los Angeles native, I’m thrilled to be working for an organization where I can leverage my unique knowledge and expertise of this health care market,” said Buitrago. “The Keck Medical Center is poised to be a nationally recognized leader in the industry, and I look forward to the opportunity I can play in helping us get there.”

Buitrago brings with her more than two decades of leadership experience across health care settings

in the Los Angeles area, as well as a rich knowledge of contracting and managed care strategy in the current health care market. She most recently served as chief executive officer of the Pasadena-based Foothill Cardiology/California Medical Group Inc. for more than 11 years. Prior to that, she spent six years in business development and managed care leadership positions at the Daniel Freeman Hospitals in Inglewood before taking on the position of chief executive officer of Culver City-based Integrated Physician Services. She holds a master’s degree in public health from UCLA.

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