AN INTERVIEW WITH
NEIL R. POWE, MD, MPH, MBA
Vice Chair, Department of Medicine
Chief of Medical Services, SFGH
Constance B. Wofsy Distinguished Professor
By Kathy Judd, RSA Manager, SFGH

KJ: What particular influences led you to a career in medicine?
NRP: I grew up in Philadelphia where my father worked for the Philadelphia Department of Public Health. My father was trained in business and used his business skills to set up neighborhood health centers. Exposure to the physicians who practiced in the centers and delivered care to the underserved greatly influenced my interest in medicine and the direction of my clinical research.

I liked science and was good at it but realized that science alone was not fulfilling. The course work in medical school at Harvard didn’t meet my expectations of providing medical care to the underserved, so I took a year off to pursue a degree in Public Health. I wanted to use the science to improve patients’ health status. At that time, there were few medical schools providing comprehensive training in clinical research. My decision to get an MPH degree from Harvard School of Public Health and MD degree from Harvard Medical School allowed me to round out my training in internal medicine, epidemiology, and health services research.

I went back home to Philadelphia to complete my residency and fellowship training at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. While at the University of Pennsylvania, I received an MBA degree and was also selected as one of the Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars. The Clinical Scholars Program provided an opportunity for additional training in community health and health services research.

Later, as Professor of Medicine at Johns Hopkins, I was able to develop interdisciplinary research and training programs that integrated public health experience into the medical school curriculum. These are now programs that are supported by NIH funded training grants and career development awards.

KJ: What made you decide to come to UCSF & SFGH?
NRP: I knew about the excellent faculty and research opportunities at UCSF and had visited SFGH many times. What I didn’t realize before, but learned during the
interview process, was that the passion for ideas, the range of clinical care provided, and the scope of clinical research opportunities would provide an ideal intersection for my research interests and expertise. The ability to make a difference in lives of patients whose illnesses are affected by poverty and circumstances beyond their control is very rewarding to me. Through the Center for Vulnerable Populations led by Dean Schillinger and Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, there are many opportunities to pursue my own research in chronic kidney disease (CKD) along with the satisfaction of providing essential care to underserved patients with chronic diseases affecting the heart and kidney.

KJ: How do you balance your own research interests with the administrative duties of your position as Chief of Medical Services at SFGH?

NRP: I am able to leverage my NIH funded R01 and K24 awards, and CDC funded research in chronic kidney diseases through collaborations with faculty in the Cardiology and General Internal Medicine Divisions who are also doing clinical research related to vulnerable populations. There are many good people with the same passion to serve at SFGH. I am able to provide the opportunities and delegate the responsibilities for the day-to-day management of the research projects. I set the direction, let them run the projects, and then meet regularly to get and give feedback.

KJ: What is your impression of the research administration services at UCSF?

NRP: The automation of the approval process is great and dovetails nicely with the NIH grants.gov automated system. I find the RATS system user friendly, allowing me to review and approve applications even while travelling. I’ve noticed that the post-award administrative/financial side of grants management is the most intensive for faculty. It is really helpful when the post-award finances are managed smoothly, allowing the faculty to focus on the research side.

ARRA UPDATE FOR DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE

By Lana Tomitch, Extramural Funds ARRA Manager, Controller’s Office

For FY09-10 Quarter 3, ending March 31, 2010, UCSF reported on 17 prime awards for the Department of Medicine for a total of $6,439,896. Fifteen point fifty-five (15.55) FTEs were created/retained in the Department of Medicine, including those at subcontract sites. The Department of Medicine also received four subcontract awards totaling $441,772.

Beginning June 14th, departments began reporting for FY09-10 Quarter 4, ending June 30, 2010. The department reporting period will end Wednesday, June 23rd. Departments are asked to report on the following data elements: project activity description (like an abstract), number of jobs created/retained (total average quarterly FTE), job descriptions (research working titles), and project completion status (status 4 (fully completed) is used only when the project is complete, the funds spent, FFR prepared, and EMF has closed out the fund). If a change needs to be made once the data is saved and certified, RSAs should contact the ARRA Funds Manager, Lana Tomitch,
to unlock the file. All data is considered final on June 23rd. Exceptions to unlock the files after June 23rd will be reviewed with the final data lockdown occurring on June 29th.

For subcontract awards, complete the spreadsheet on the Controller’s Office website under Sponsored Projects Procedures and Job Aids and send the original to the prime institution http://controller.ucsf.edu/pam/procs.asp. Send an electronic copy to lana.tomitch@ucsf.edu with instructions on who will report, whether it be the prime or UCSF.

For subcontracts out, work closely with the subcontractor. Train them how to calculate the number of FTEs and have them complete the spreadsheet found on the Controller’s Office website under Sponsored Projects Procedures and Job Aids http://controller.ucsf.edu/pam/procs.asp. Please make sure ALL fields in the spreadsheet are complete, including DUNS#, 9 digit zip code, address, highly compensated officers, as applicable, and quarterly average FTE. Send the electronic original to lana.tomitch@ucsf.edu. UCSF will always report to the OMB. Websites to verify DUNS number and zip codes are http://era.nih.gov/userreports/ipf_com_oe_list.cf m#B and http://zip4.usps.com/zip4/welcome.jsp respectively. As a reminder, it is best to get this information directly from the sub-recipient because the DUNS number and the zip code must match for UCSF to report the sub-recipient information to the OMB.

As faculty enter the second year of ARRA funding, or receive new supplements to non-ARRA funds, it is important to keep in mind some rules for grants management of ARRA awards.

For an ARRA supplement with a non-ARRA parent grant, the following rules apply:

- No “co-mingling” of awards (separate funds) between the ARRA supplement and the non-ARRA parent.
- No re-budgeting between non-ARRA parent and ARRA supplement.
- No carry forward of ARRA supplement balance to parent non-ARRA.
- Separate annual progress reports must be submitted.
- Separate financial reports required.

For multiple supplements to the same prime parent grant, only one Federal Financial Status Report (FFR) will be submitted at the time of the project period of the last ARRA supplement or revision ends. When any one of the ARRA supplements is extended, then the FFR due date for all the ARRA supplements/revisions is also extended.

For awards that are split funded by non-ARRA and ARRA funds, carry forward rules are very specific. Please see the example below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant Number</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R01 AI123456-04</td>
<td>Non-ARRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R01 AI123456-05</td>
<td>ARRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R01 AI123456-06</td>
<td>ARRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R01 AI123456-07</td>
<td>Non-ARRA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FY 04 CANNOT be carried forward into FY05 because you cannot carry forward non-ARRA into ARRA funds. The non-ARRA fund year must be closed out before the ARRA portion begins.
FY05 CAN be carried forward into FY06 because you can carry forward between ARRA fund years.

FY06 CANNOT be carried forward into FY07 because you cannot carry forward ARRA into non-ARRA fund year.

FY04 CANNOT be carried forward into FY07 even though they are both non-ARRA fund years because fund year 04 (non-ARRA) needed to be closed out before the ARRA portion of the grant began.

For any questions regarding ARRA, please contact Lana Tomitch, ARRA Funds Manager, at (415) 476-0834 or lana.tomitch@ucsf.edu.

**POLICY/PROGRAM UPDATES**

By Joseph Wilson, Assistant Director

**Important Notice on NIH Non-SNAP Awards: Progress Reports, Carryover Requests, and new EMF Procedure Change on Federal Financial Reporting Closeout**

**Introduction:** With tighter budgets and increased monitoring of awards by NIH agencies, it is important that both progress reports and carryover requests for non-SNAP (non-Streamlined Noncompeting Award Process) awards are submitted in a timely and accurate manner in order to avoid loss of funds available for ongoing projects. This notice clarifies procedures on preparation of progress reports, submittal of carryover requests, and new processes at EMF related to federal financial reporting and closeout, and should be shared with faculty.

**Progress Reports:** Annual progress reports for NIH non-SNAP proposals should be submitted by the date listed in the federal Electronic Research Administration (eRA) system (normally 60 days before the end date of the budget period). Contracts & Grants (C&G) must receive the continuation proposal prior to the OSR Proposal Deadline in order to review, approve, and submit the documents to NIH prior to the NIH deadline. Timely submission of NIH progress reports is required in order to ensure 1) on-time issuance of the continuation award notice from NIH and 2) approval of requests by the NIH for carryover of unobligated funds.

**Carryover Requests:** If you anticipate that a carryover of unobligated funds to a future year will be required for an NIH non-SNAP award, the carryover request should be described within the NIH continuation progress report. As the exact amount of unobligated funds requested for carryover may not be known until the Federal Financial Status Report (FFR) [previously called the Financial Status Report (FSR)] is prepared, the carryover request described in the progress report should include a best estimate of the amount of carryover that will be required.

When the FFR is later submitted to NIH via EMF in the Controller’s Office, the exact carryover amount requested should be included in Item 12 “Remarks” of the FFR. Simultaneously, a separate written request must be submitted to NIH (via C&G) as detailed in the NIH Grants Policy Statement, Part II Terms and Conditions. We strongly recommend that all carryover requests provide a well-detailed justification of the
need for the carryover funds, and how they will be used for the benefit of the project. As NIH agencies may vary on the amount of documentation they require in support of a carryover request, it is recommended that departments contact the NIH Grants Management Officer (GMO) in advance to clarify the exact supporting material that will be required by the agency, and thereby avoid substantial delays in the carryover review process. A sample carryover letter for non-SNAP projects is attached for department use.

NIH’s decision about the disposition of a reported unobligated balance will be reflected in the Notice of Award (NoA) for non-SNAP awards that require formal NIH Grants Management Specialist approval. Upon receipt, departments and the PI/PD must review the award notice to ensure that the carryover request has been approved, and if questions arise concerning the carryover amount approved or not-approved, the NIH GMS should be contacted immediately for clarification.

For further information, please refer to additional details at:
http://listsrv.ucsf.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=CGANNOUNCE (January 2010)

**NIH NRSA Stipend, Tuition/Fees, and Other Budgetary Levels Effective for Federal FY 10**

NIH has published updated information regarding Federal Fiscal Year 10 stipend, tuition/fees, and other budgetary levels for NIH National Research Service Awards (NRSAs) under NIH Notice NOT-OD-10-047. Please review this guidance notice in detail in order to properly apply the new levels in use for undergraduate, pre-doctoral, and postdoctoral trainees on NIH NRSA instruction awards. Questions concerning the new stipend, tuition/fees and budgetary levels can be addressed to the CG Proposal Team at cgproposalteam@ucsf.edu.

**NIH Salary Cap Limitation Update**

NIH has published updated information regarding the Fiscal Year 10 salary limitation under NIH Notice NOT-OD-10-041 and NOT-HS-10-012. Effective January 1, 2010, the Executive Level I salary level increased to $199,700. Please utilize the new salary cap rate effective immediately when preparing new, renewal, or resubmission proposals. **Note:** The salary cap limitation applies only to awards from NIH, AHRQ, and SAMHSA. The salary cap should not be applied when preparing proposals for other federal or non-federal agencies.

**Update in Procedure: Electronic Submission of Proposals to Contracts and Grants**

On March 9, 2009, Contracts & Grants (C&G) began accepting electronic submission of Proposals to C&G by email. In our continuing effort to improve this process, we have amended the submission protocol as described below.

Effective immediately, when submitting a Proposal to C&G for review, upload the Proposal into Proposal Express and then notify C&G by email at CGProposalTeam@ucsf.edu that a
Proposal is being submitted for review as described below.

Please assemble the proposal packet in the following order:
1. OSR Approval Form with electronic or handwritten signatures
2. COI Documents (if applicable)
3. Human and Animal Subject Approvals, or other compliance documents
4. Funding agency instructions, program announcement, Request for Proposals, or other special agency instructions
5. Proposal

Assistance Provided for Campus Researchers on Regulatory Requirements

This is a service open to all UCSF faculty, post-doctoral fellows, and staff preparing research proposals, FDA, CHR and other UCSF regulatory submissions. The initial consultation is free of charge. To request a consultation: http://ctsi.ucsf.edu/consult. For more information, email Marlene Berro at Marlene.Berro@ucsf.edu or call 415-514-8059

Updated Deadline for the Submission of Proposals to the Office of Sponsored Research

This is a reminder that for all proposals with an agency deadline of February 1, 2010 or later, the 4-day OSR deadline will be extended to five (5) days. Accordingly, all proposal for extramural support with an agency deadline of February 1, 2010 or later must be submitted to the appropriate division of the OSR (Contracts & Grants or Industry Contracts) by 9:00 AM five (5) working days prior to the agency deadline.

Additional information on the Proposal Submission Deadline: Revised Policy may be accessed at http://or.ucsf.edu/cg/7831-DSY.html.

OSR Announces the Release of the OSR Pre-Award Certification and Training Courses (PACT)

The Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) is pleased to announce the new Pre-Award Certification and Training (PACT) Courses for research administrators and managers (RSAs and MSOs) responsible for pre-award activities. OSR PACT is a comprehensive, self-paced, pre-award training program that is divided into two separate courses based on level of expertise. Completion of these courses is optional.

• The Basic Course is comprised of 7 modules that address the following subjects:
  • Conflict of Interest
  • Regulatory Committees (such as Committee on Human Research)
  • Cost Accounting Standards
  • Proposal Budgets
  • Cost Sharing
  • Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions

• The Advanced Course is comprised of 3 modules and explores more complex matters including: clinical trials, NIH Training Grants, and NIH Career Development Awards.

The Basic Course is a prerequisite for the Advanced Course.
Department personnel have the option of completing the entire Basic or Advanced Course to receive the Basic or Advanced certification, respectively, or registering for the Basic or Advanced Course and taking only those modules most relevant to the individual’s role and skill level. This approach will not result in certification.

The course materials will continue to be available as reference tools for individuals who have completed the courses.

The courses are available online at a cost of $250 for the BASIC and $150 for the ADVANCED. Each module is estimated to require between 45 minutes and 2 hours and includes content, tips, scenarios, resources, quizzes and a final test. To access the OSR Pre-Award Certification and Training Basic and Advanced Courses, please visit: https://learningcenter.ucsfmedicalcenter.org/.

Update of CIRM Grant Administration Policies

The California Institute of Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) recently announced updates to several of their Grants Administrative Policies (GAP). Please utilize the following policy links when managing currently active CIRM awards:

- Grants Policy for Facilities and Equipment Grants: Go to http://www.cirm.ca.gov/cirm-operations/Regulations and scroll down to Chapter 7 (see policy link at end of first item).
- Grants Policy for Major Facilities Grants: Go to http://www.cirm.ca.gov/cirm-operations/Regulations and scroll down to Chapter 7 (see policy link at end of second item).

Research - Limited Submissions

The Limited Submission Program (LSP) of the Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) facilitates access to extramural funding opportunities for which UCSF is limited in the number of applications it can submit to a funding agency. The LSP is responsible for notifying the campus of these opportunities and coordinating the internal selection process. The LSP also manages particular aspects of extramural funding opportunities that are not necessarily limited in the number of applications UCSF can put forward, but require centralized coordination.

The purpose of this notification is to inform you that notification of Limited Submission Opportunities (LSOs) will now be distributed via a new listserv (LIMITED_SUBS@LISTSERV.UCSF.EDU). This listserv is maintained by Gail Fisher, OSR Program Coordinator. To join or be removed from the listserv, please contact Gail by email at limitedsubmissions@ucsf.edu.

For more information about Limited Submissions at UCSF, please visit http://or.ucsf.edu/cg/cg/faculty/funding/ltdsubmit.html.

Appropriate Charges to NIH Awards during Periods of Noncompliance for Activities Involving Animals
Guidance on confirming appropriate charges to NIH Awards during periods of noncompliance for activities involving animals has been published in the NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts on April 15, 2010, NOT-OD-10-081. This Notice provides additional clarification in reference to Notice NOT-OD-07-044 regarding the grantee’s responsibilities when animal activities have been conducted which do not meet the terms and conditions of grant award.

**UC Retirement Benefit Contributions in Proposals**

This is intended to provide updated budget planning information regarding the restart of contributions to the University of California Retirement Plan (UCRP), and its effect on employee benefits rates used in contract and grant proposals.

At its February 2009 meeting, The Regents approved a plan to resume employee and employer contributions to the UCRP effective April 15, 2010. The University contribution rate is 4%. On the member side, the current Defined Contribution Plan (DCP) member contribution is being redirected into UCRP. These initial rates will remain in effect through FY 2010-11. For FY 2011-12 and beyond, current planning assumptions regarding all UC-paid employee benefits costs increases, including UCRP, have been incorporated into the overall rates listed below.

Effective immediately, these updated employee benefits rates should be reflected in all sponsored project applications for academic and staff personnel. Please note that these are escalating rates; therefore, if a budget proposal covers two UC fiscal years (i.e. 10/1/10 -9/30/12), a combination of the two benefit rates should be used in the proposal (i.e. for academic personnel–9 months at 21%, and 3 months at 24%).

It is important that all proposals being submitted to Contracts and Grants reflect the appropriate new rates. UCRP expenses will be a direct charge to all sponsored project contracts and grants as of April 15, 2010.

**Period** | **Academic** | **Staff**
--- | --- | ---
7/1/08-4/14/10 | 17% | 25%
4/15/10-6/30/11 | 21% | 29%
7/1/11-6/30/12 | 24% | 32%
7/1/12-6/30/13 | 27% | 35%
7/1/13-6/30/14 | 29% | 37%

For proposals prepared using Cayuse software, the manual override function will need to be used to include these escalating fringe rates for academic personnel and staff. The OSR is working directly with Cayuse, Inc. to determine a comprehensive work-around for this issue.

**NIH Expands Provisions of the Streamlined Noncompeting Award Process (eSNAP) and Required Electronic Submission of eSNAPS Beginning August 1, 2010**

Effective September 2005, the University of California, San Francisco delegated to its Principal Investigators the authority to submit NIH Type 5, non-competing progress reports through the eRA Commons using the Streamlined Non-competing Award Process (eSNAP).
In general this streamlined process applies to most R series grant activity codes and Career award activity codes (K series). To determine whether SNAP provisions apply to a particular award, refer to the Notice of Award under Section II Terms and Conditions.

Activity codes routinely excluded from SNAP are generally those that do not have the authority to automatically carry over unobligated balances (centers, cooperative agreements, institutional training including Kirschstein-NRSA grants, non-Fast Track Phase I SBIR and STTR awards), clinical trials (regardless of activity codes), and Program Project Grants (P01). Also excluded are Outstanding Investigator Grants (R35), Phase I Small Business Innovation Research Grants (R43) and Phase I Small Business Technology Transfer Grants (R41). For Phase I SBIR/STTR awards that exceed one year and Phase II SBIR/STTR awards, grantees should review the Notice of Award to determine if their project is subject to or excluded from the SNAP provisions.

NIH Notice on Proper Management of ARRA Funds, and Limit on Second No-Cost Extensions

Guidance on proper management of ARRA funding has been published in the NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts on March 17, 2010, NOT-OD-10-067.

- The notice reaffirms that the primary goals of all Recovery Act awards are to create U.S. jobs and increase the tempo of biomedical research.
- Principal Investigators are reminded that they are expected to expend funds in a timely and expeditious manner in accordance with the expected pace of research, and that unexpected delays should be addressed promptly to ensure timely completion of all grant activities.
- Grantees are reminded that Recovery Act expenditures remain subject to all terms and conditions on the Notice of Award, including the NIH-HHS Standard Terms and Conditions for ARRA Awards.
- While the NIH Terms of Awards provide for extending the final budget period of a project period for up to twelve months for completion of a planned project when specific extension criteria are met, prior approval requests for additional (second no-cost extensions) for ARRA awards will only be considered by NIH in very limited circumstances as described within this notice.

Reminder: NIH/AHRQ/NIOSH/FDA Return to a Two-Day “Error Correction Window” for Grant Applications Effective May 8, 2010

Effective May 8, 2010, NIH, AHRQ, NIOSH, and FDA will return to a two (2) business day “error correction window” (i.e., the time allowed after the submission deadline for an applicant to address NIH system-identified errors/warnings) for electronic and competing paper-based PHS 398 grant applications.

Errors on electronically submitted applications must be corrected within the two business days following the submission deadline; paper applications
must be corrected and postmarked/e-mail date stamped within two business days of the date that NIH staff contacts the Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) and Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) via e-mail to alert them to an issue with the use of correct forms and instructions (whether or not receipt of the e-mail is acknowledged).

Please see [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not-od-10-088.html](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not-od-10-088.html) for more information regarding the two-day “error correction window”.

**Updated CAYUSE424 Support Options**

This communication provides updated detailed information on customer support options for the electronic routing and submission of Federal electronic proposals using Cayuse424. Effective immediately, the following support options are available to you for problems during the proposal upload, routing, and submission process. Please share this memo widely with anyone who will be submitting proposals to Grants.gov through Cayuse424.

**Primary Support – Tier 1:** Please contact [UCSF Contracts & Grants](mailto:CGProposalTeam@ucsf.edu) using one of the following options between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday: CGProposalTeam@ucsf.edu, or (415) 476-2977. NOTE: C&G does not offer after hours support.

**Account Set-up and Password Reset Support:** For (i) initial Account Set-up and/or (ii) Resetting Passwords for existing accounts, please contact OAAIS Customer Support using one of the following:

1. Submit a request to Online Customer Support at: [http://help.ucsf.edu](http://help.ucsf.edu). From this page you will also be able to view the status of your open request.
2. Email [CAYUSEINFORMATION@ucsf.edu](mailto:CAYUSEINFORMATION@ucsf.edu)
3. Call (415) 514-4100, Option #2

**MEET KATHLEEN LIU, MD, PHD, MCR**

Assistant Professor, Division of Nephrology

By Michele Carter, RSA, Nephrology

**MC:** What inspired you to pursue an MD, PhD? When did you know that you wanted to be a doctor / medical researcher?

**KL:** I knew that I wanted to be a medical researcher even from a young age. I have an aunt who is a medical researcher, and she was a really inspiring force for me early on. She told me when I was in high school that I should pursue a MD, PhD, so I set my sights on that. I was a basic scientist for a long time, and transitioned to clinical/translational research because it was a better match to my interests in nephrology and critical care. I chose nephrology because not only did I enjoy the clinical practice of nephrology, it was a field where there are relatively few researchers and where I hoped I could make a real scientific contribution.

**MC:** You went to medical school at UCSF and returned here to pursue a fellowship in Nephrology / Critical Care Medicine and a Master’s of Clinical Research after
completing your residency at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston. What drew you back to UCSF?

KL: I came to UCSF for medical school because there were great opportunities here, and I received scholarship funding through the Medical Scientist Training Program. I did a nephrology elective during my fourth year of medical school; Glenn Chertow was the attending and was a really inspirational person to work with. His informal mentorship during this period truly contributed to my impression of UCSF as a nurturing environment, and he ended up providing mentorship for me in a more formal way during my fellowship. Glenn’s mentorship has been absolutely critical to my research success, along with the support of many others. I also realized during residency that I wanted to pursue an interest in Critical Care Medicine, and UCSF offered the opportunity for me to do a one-year Critical Care fellowship in addition to my Nephrology training.

MC: How important is formal or informal mentorship to you? Do you think that the mentorship you have received has been a critical component to your success?

KL: I think that mentorship has been critical to getting me where I am today. I feel that I have been incredibly lucky to have a number of really great mentors here at UCSF in both a formal and informal capacity.

MC: Your primary research interests are in Critical Care medicine and Nephrology, which may not seem to be all that congruous to the casual observer. How do you feel these areas are linked?

KL: I definitely think that there is a strong link between Critical Care Medicine and Acute Kidney Injury (AKI), which is my major area of Nephrology research. One of my mentors, Dr. Michael Matthay, is interested in Acute Lung Injury, and I’ve tried to draw parallels between his research on the lung and my own investigations of AKI; biologically, this makes sense since the lung and kidney are both epithelial organs and have a number of similarities. Many of the patients I see as a Critical Care clinician suffer from AKI. One of my main pursuits as a clinical researcher is determining whether or not we can improve the outcomes of patients with AKI by improving treatments, and working as a Nephrologist in a Critical Care environment allows me a unique insight into these questions.

MC: Optimal kidney function is essential to overall health, yet the kidney as an organ is often overlooked culturally. Why is the kidney so fascinating and why do you think it doesn’t always get the attention that it deserves?

KL: Part of the reason that the kidney is often underrepresented as a public health concern is because patients often don’t have
symptoms from Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) until they are near End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD). Unlike the heart or lungs where serious organ dysfunction will often leads to visible symptoms like chest pain and shortness of breath, the kidney doesn’t hurt. Personally, I am fascinated by the kidney because it is such a complex organ – in addition to filtering toxins, there is so much more that it does in terms of regulation of sodium, bone and mineral metabolism and neurohormonal balance that we don’t completely understand. I like to joke that “the world’s dumbest kidney is smarter than the world’s smartest nephrologist”, which is very telling about our relationship to the kidney as medical researchers and clinicians.

MC: You have been a part of UCSF in a variety of positions over a number of years. What has changed since you began your training here and what has remained the same?
KL: It’s a little hard for me to say, since my role and the way that I fit into the campus has evolved substantially from the time I began medical school to the present day. Obviously, the campus itself has changed a lot with the movement of many of the basic scientists to Mission Bay and the growth of the Cancer Center at Mt Zion over the past few years. However, I don’t think that the geographic separation of the research on campus has had an impact on the academic excellence at UCSF; it has allowed the University to grow and accommodate more researchers.

MC: From a Clinician perspective, what are your thoughts on the recent government Health Reform Law?
KL: As a clinician, I believe that we have an obligation to provide health care to the participating members of our society, and I think that the Health Reform Law is a brave step in the right direction. There are a lot of details to work out, but I believe that everyone deserves to live without the anxiety of not having medical coverage, and it’s a shame to me that there are so many working Americans without health insurance.

MC: What are the qualities that you look for in an RSA? How do you think that the Department can improve the support of your research?
KL: My experience with Research Administration has improved since I started as a fellow, and I think that a lot of that has to do with better organization and continuity of support. One of the most overwhelming aspects of being a junior investigator is not knowing what exactly you need to submit or how to handle complicated projects or scenarios. I think that explicit expectations and organization are important aspects of a successful application and administration process.

MC: How important do you think research is to the work that you do as a clinician?
KL: I think that anyone who believes in evidence-based medicine feels that medical research has a significant impact and truly does inform how we practice clinical medicine. One of my goals as a clinical researcher is to use important clinical questions to drive my research; my goal is to identify gaps in our knowledge when I am working with patients in the clinical setting
and to then translate these gaps into appropriate research questions.

MC: Your husband is also in Academic Medicine and you welcomed a daughter, Ellie, into your family a few years ago. How do you balance your demanding schedules with the challenge of raising a family?
KL: I think that it’s always somewhat of a struggle to maintain a work-life balance. I think we are lucky in that we are both in Academic Medicine, so we have a little more flexibility than we would if we worked in a purely clinical environment and we each understand that the challenges that the other one faces. We do our best to be vigilant about planning our time in advance and try to compartmentalize as much as we can so we can really focus on family when we’re not at work.

MC: How do you spend your time when you are not busy seeing patients, analyzing data, or writing grants and papers?
KL: Most of my free time is spent with my family; my husband and I enjoy maximizing our time with Ellie on the weekends. Right now, we are trying to cultivate her interest in food, so we spend a lot of time taking trips to the Farmer’s Market and making sure we visit her favorite restaurants whenever we can.

MEET AMY AKBARIAN
Division Administrator,
Gastroenterology, SFGH
By Sue Ngo, RSA, Rice Liver Center, SFGH

Amy Akbarian (R) and Sue Ngo (L)

SN: How long have you been at UCSF? Can you tell me the various positions you held at UCSF?
AA: I’ve been at UCSF for about 12 years now. I started as an AA I temp at the Cancer Center in 1997. I had just returned from working abroad in Japan and was looking for something while I prepared for the GREs and applied to graduate school. The Cancer Research Building had just opened and different research groups were in the process of moving into the building. I was the administrative assistant for the Cancer Genetics group. I liked being back in the academic environment and working with people from all over the world. The Cancer Center was an exciting and dynamic place to be at that time because it was really just starting to take off.

After temping for a few months, I took the career AAI position, which led to an AAII
I helped put together the application for the initial Cancer Center Support Grant application. I went to graduate school in the Fall of 1998, with plans to pursue a PhD in European History. But I kept in touch with a number of colleagues I worked with, which made it easy for me to come back to work as a temp during my school breaks and after I finished my Master’s program. After graduate school, I worked on a couple of projects at the Cancer Center before taking a position on the grant team in Contracts and Grants.

I spent a year working in Contracts and Grants, reviewing proposals for about 20 different departments. I learned a lot about sponsored project management from this experience and made a lot of contacts throughout the University. After a year, I was offered a position back at the Cancer Center managing the Breast Oncology and Breast SPORE Programs. I went to work in Contracts and Grants with the hope of learning enough about grants to get a program management position, so I jumped at this opportunity.

I worked with the Breast Program for 7.5 years. It was the position that I had before I became a Division Administrator. My position and responsibilities evolved over the years, and I was very fortunate to have a boss who supported my professional development and advancement.

SN: What are some of your responsibilities as a Division Administrator? What do you enjoy the most?

AA: As a Division Administrator, I do a little of everything—HR, staff supervision, pre and post-award funds management, space management, clinical operations, safety coordination, etc. Overall, I really enjoy working with faculty and staff to help them navigate the University in order to achieve their goals.

SN: What advice can you offer RSAs who wish to pursue a similar career path?

AA: I would recommend getting involved in campus activities and organizations and trying to learn as much as possible about how things work at the University. Because we are so busy with our day-to-day work, I realize that it can be hard to look outside of your division or department. But the University is an interesting and exciting place, and there are a lot of different opportunities out there. Yet it is much harder to take advantage of these opportunities if you don’t put yourself out there.

I participated in the ABOG mentorship program several years ago, and it was really one of the most rewarding experiences that I’ve had in my career thus far at UCSF.

SN: During this challenging time, how do you keep the staff motivated?

AA: I try to be available to my staff and supportive of their endeavors to broaden their skill set and knowledge base to help them succeed at the University. I encourage them to be active in campus events, so that they feel like they are a part of a larger campus community. I also work with the staff to have various social events throughout the year, which I think creates a
sense of camaraderie and community within our division.

SN: How do you balance work and personal life?
AA: This can be a challenge because I definitely feel as if there is always something more to be done. I work out every morning before work, which is a great stress relief for me, and really helps me to start my day. And when I’m not at work, I try to make the most of my non-work time spent with my husband, family, and friends.

**BEST IN RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION OF GRANTS (BRAG) AWARD**

The Research Administration Unit is proud to announce that **Joanne Dang** is the July 2010 BRAG Awardee. Joanne joined the Division of Geriatrics in June 2009 as an RSA and was quickly promoted in February 2010 to assume greater financial management of the division’s funds, including professional fee revenue and gifts. She was new to UCSF when she joined Geriatrics and has achieved a steep learning curve while becoming an invaluable asset to the division.

“I have been absolutely floored by her professionalism, efficiency, grace under pressure, and ability to keep many balls in the air without dropping any. She is laser-focused on making sure that the submission meets and exceeds the grantor’s requirements and has made many critical suggestions for improvement to my submissions. She has gone beyond my expectations in making sure things are submitted on time.”

“She goes out of her way to be helpful, taking on new work when she is already incredibly busy. For example, we recently submitted a foundation grant, in which we were given a very short turn around. It seemed impossible, but Joanne made it happen.”

“It is amazing how quickly Joanne has learned all the ins and outs of grants management. She is incredibly friendly and helpful, and goes out of her way to problem solve with us. She helps us think about how we can use our resources to accomplish our objectives, yet stay within the rules of the funder.”

“She has been an absolute joy to work with and I cannot imagine how I managed to function before. I started working with Joanne about a year ago and I was impressed at how quickly she got up to speed. Now she’s made the transition from “putting out fires” that started before she arrived to preventing problems from occurring. The most impressive thing about her is her grace under pressure. As you know, when deadlines approach and pressures mount, even normally gracious people can become
short. Joanne has always maintained her gentle demeanor while getting things done on time, staying focused on the many critical details."

“She is amazing – always anticipates my needs before I think of them, is flexible, trustworthy, kind and efficient. She has a great ability to pay attention to the details and, perhaps most importantly, she is a joy to work with.”

“Not only is Joanne supremely talented, she is a pleasure work with. Even at times of high stress she never appears outwardly frustrated and always takes whatever comes her way in stride.”

“She is an ideal RSA.”

Congratulations, Joanne!

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN RSA
By Michele Benjamin, Financial Administrator, Women’s Health Clinical Research Center (WHCRC)

I came to UCSF in June 2008 and was completely baffled the first few months. My colleagues spoke in acronyms and I had trouble understanding their conversations. I thought my multifaceted employment background would serve me well at UCSF, but soon realized I was in a whole new world and would have to learn the language.

Luckily, the Department of Medicine provides great support with its monthly RSA meetings, notification emails and opportunities for interaction with our peers. The Department helps to keep us updated on the myriad of UCSF and sponsor agency updates and policy changes, and helps dissect the dry and often difficult language of OMB circulars and NIH updates.

The WHCRC is made up of PIs from various departments, adding to the already complicated nature of grant management. The director of the WHCRC is with MED/VAMC, the co-director is with OB/GYN, and other PIs represent DGIM. Each division has not only policies and procedures specific to the division, but also its own departmental contacts, so even minute changes require layers of acknowledgments and approvals.

Working as the financial administrator for the Center requires an ability to manage a variety of tasks. I perform pre- and post-award research administrative duties; recharge management for rent, IT and copying; and deal with building maintenance and space management issues. I have been able to integrate the financial components of each PI’s awards on one representative spreadsheet and participate in active communication across departments and divisions.

As in any business, working with people with contrasting personalities, styles and modes of communication is challenging. And whenever you are dealing with money, there is an intrinsic level of stress. Most of the PIs are incredibly busy and have no idle time. They require succinct and specific answers to their questions and count on you to research options in advance of prompting from them. From my days on the trading floor of Montgomery Securities (now Bank
of America), I learned the value of quick and concise dissemination of information. An incorrectly placed or inappropriate word choice could mean the difference between an order to buy or sell, an error you could never afford to make when trading large institutional blocks of stock.

I like the academic atmosphere at UCSF and the abundance of bright people who excel at their jobs. I enjoy the constant state of learning and the daily challenges that come across my desk and appreciate the contacts I have made throughout the University.

**STAFF UPDATES**

**Elizabeth Flora** joined the Division of Geriatrics as a RSA Analyst II on April 8, 2010. She is responsible for providing pre- and post-award management services to 10 faculty with grants administered through UCSF, NCIRE and the SFVA. She has 3 years of post-award experience working with the Center for Health Research in the Institute of Business and Economic Research at UC Berkeley. Elizabeth received her B.A. in English Literature from the University of Colorado in 2001.

**Lynn Ha** joined the Divisions of Occupational Medicine & Endocrinology in June 2009 as an RSA. She supports more than 9 principal investigators in two divisions with their pre- and post-award needs. Prior to joining UCSF, Lynn worked at an educational research organization conducting data analysis and at the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco as a project analyst. She completed her bachelor’s and master’s degrees at San Francisco State University.