

# CALbindin

Helen Wills Neuroscience Newsletter

[kal-'bīnd-in]

(noun) 1. A newsletter for the Neuroscience community at UC Berkeley. 2. A calcium-binding protein found in neuronal tissues.

Summer 2009

Issue Number 2

Unbelievably, the summer is coming to a close, and the Fall 2009 semester is about to begin. Which, of course, means it is time to welcome the newest HWNI members to our ranks: the entering class of 2009. This year we welcome Natalia Bilenko, Benjamin Gaub, Robert Gibboni, Stephanie Greer, Sarah Hillenbrand, Colleen Kirkhart, Asako Miyakawa, Helene Moorman, and Lucas Pinto. In the next edition of Calbindin', I hope to find out a little bit more about our newest neuroscience students - where they

come from and what brought them to Cal. But while the first years get their feet wet, we've turned our attention to a few Helen Wills alumni to see what life is like on the other side of a PhD. We've also asked our more veteran community where they best like to spend their free time in Berkeley and around the Bay Area. Once again, we hope you enjoy this edition of Calbindin' and hope to hear your feedback at [hwni.news@gmail.com](mailto:hwni.news@gmail.com)

-Sarah Munro, Editor

## Where are they now?

They came to Berkeley, seduced by promises of higher learning and 5 (ish) years of strolling into lab at 10:30 in jeans and yesterday's t-shirt. But, after course requirements, quals, GSI-ing, and many a publication later, Cal set them free, back into the wild whence they came. Where did they go from here? And what are they up to? We tracked down a few Helen Wills alumni to ask them a few questions about where they ended up.

### Annaliese Beery

PhD 2008, Irv Zucker lab:

"Friendship in the rodent brain: neuroendocrinology of same-sex affiliative behavior"

**Where are you now, and what are you working on?**

I'm currently a Robert Wood Johnson Health and Society Scholar at UCSF/UCB. The general goal of the RWJ postdoc program is to bring together people from different backgrounds to work on questions related to population health. So far I'm working on two main projects -- both deal with biological consequences of life experience that affects regulation of the stress (or HPA) axis. One project deals with epigenetic effects of early life experience on glucocorticoid receptor expression and promoter methylation in different tissue types. The other looks at mechanisms underlying telomere length decline with adult stress.

**What is a fond memory you have of your time at Berkeley?**

Since I haven't left the Bay Area, I still think I'll miss everything.

**Do you have any words of wisdom for the "young ones" still at Berkeley?**

Here's a sentiment completely stolen from my PhD advisor Irv (that I also agree with): Science is interesting and challenging



and sometimes useful, but what makes it all worthwhile as a career are the people you form relationships with along the way. Also, follow your own interests.

**What are your hopes for the future?**

I hope I like Massachusetts, since I'm moving there in summer 2010 to take a neuroscience faculty position at Smith College.



### Cathrine Dam

PhD 2008, Knight lab

**Where are you now, and what are you working on?**

After graduation, I grew up and got a job. I'm working with a company in Berkeley that brings the magic of EEG to the real world of snack foods and chewing gum.

**What is a fond memory you have of your time at Berkeley?**

I really enjoyed studying for quals. I also enjoyed every single neuroscience party that I went to. I'd tell you what happens there, but I can't really remember. And, truth be told, I enjoyed quiet, late nights in the lab, even those times when my pod-mates would find me in hysteria-induced bouts of laughter the next morning as I realized I lost all the data that I had crunched overnight.

### Do you have any words of wisdom for the “young ones” still at Berkeley?

You will have deadlines. Many deadlines. Some of them will seem impossible to meet. That's a good time to go to Triplerock on a Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday night. And, find your way to the pool on top of Barker as soon as you can. It took me a year to find it, but man-oh-man did it I wish I had found it on day one. Finally, when it all gets boring, when it all seems like it will never end, it's time to finish up your dissertation as quickly as you can. There's a lot of brain to go around, and you're not going to solve it all this time around. Drop your two cents in the bucket and move on!

### What are your hopes for the future?

I hope to become friends with more Presidents. And I would love to ride a unicorn some day.

### Aubrey Gilbert

PhD 2007, Ivory Lab:

“Lateralized effects of language on perception.”

### Where are you now, and what are you working on?

UCSF School of Medicine, 3rd year medical student. Currently working on making it out alive.



### What is a fond memory you have of your time at Berkeley?

I have SO MANY fond memories from Berkeley. I really miss blow-

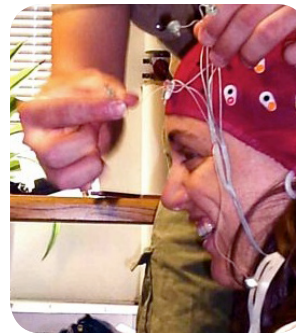
ing my entire fellowship check at the cheeseboard. Okay, you're probably talking about the actual University... I really miss the zany neuroscience crowd and their enthusiasm for wild research ideas. Things are a bit more straight-laced in med school...

### Do you have any words of wisdom for the “young ones” still at Berkeley?

Think deeply and really take advantage of the amazing, stimulating crowd around you. Have fun discussions, eat well, and, if you love it, teach as frequently as they'll let you. Also, the engineering dept. has mad student funds so make friends.

### What are your hopes for the future?

Academic medicine with a research focus in cognitive development and practice in pediatric neurology. (but really, who knows?)



### Christina Karns

PhD 2008, Knight Lab

### Where are you now, and what are you working on?

I'm currently a postdoc at the University of Oregon in the Brain Development Lab, directed by Helen Neville. My thesis work at Berkeley was in multisensory integration

and attention. I'm currently extending this interest into the world of human development and neuroplasticity.

## Outdoor Bay Area Fun

10. Enjoy a panoramic view of the Bay at **Angel Island**.
9. Stock up on local produce at one of the Bay Area's many **Farmers' Markets** (Berkeley, Temescal, Jack London Square, Lake Merritt, etc).
8. Take a trip north of the Bay and explore the views, beaches, hiking, and biking at the **Marin Headlands**.
7. Cool off by taking a dip in the **Strawberry Canyon Pool**.
6. Hang out and people watch at **Dolores Park** in San Francisco.
5. Heat up the coals for a BBQ at **Golden Gate Park**.
4. Pack a picnic and take a hike up **Mt. Tamalpais**.
3. Grab a driftwood walking stick and take a hike along the shore at **Point Reyes**.
2. Visit the **Berkeley Marina** for a leisurely stroll, excellent kite-flying conditions, and sailing/windsurfing with the Cal sailing club.
1. Explore the surprisingly close **Tilden Regional Park** for hiking, biking, running, dog walking, and picnicking. Be sure to check out Lake Anza (where canines and humans alike can find places to take a dip) and the Petting Zoo!

### What is a fond memory you have of your time at Berkeley?

One of my favorite memories was the year Eric Kandel came to visit. What an amazing opportunity to be able to talk with someone who has had such a long career and made so many contributions to neuroscience. All the students were so excited (and I think Dr. Kandel had a good time as well).

### Do you have any words of wisdom for the “young ones” still at Berkeley?

At HWNI we have an abundance of resources and amazing faculty. We also have an embarrassment of riches when it comes to the caliber of researchers that come to give talks and colloquia. I would encourage students to take advantage of this opportunity to the fullest by attending talks and meeting with faculty as much as their schedule allows.

### What are your hopes for the future?

I hope that in our scientific explorations we keep in mind the bigger picture. I hope that the more we learn about the brain the more we are able to see each other's humanity. A set of genes may predispose you to certain cognitive or emotional traits or disorders -- your experiences have shaped your brain through enrichment or trauma -- or a stroke may have changed your personality. My hope is that a scientific understanding of these phenomena improves our human perspective and leads to compassion and careful action in our society. Neuroscience has a unique view to our common human experience.

## Re-Caffeinate Yourself

10. Caffe Trieste - 2500 San Pablo Ave
9. Brewed Awakenings - 1807 Euclid Ave
8. People's Cafe - 2015 Shattuck Ave
7. Guerilla Cafe - 1620 Shattuck Ave
6. Village Grounds - 1797-A Shattuck Ave
5. Peet's Coffee - 2124 Vine St, 2501 Telegraph Ave
4. Fertile Grounds - 1796 Shattuck Ave
3. Berkeley Espresso - 1900 Shattuck Ave
2. Caffe Strada - 2300 College Ave
1. Nefeli Caffe - 1854 Euclid Ave

## Indoor Bay Area Fun

10. Sip away a rainy day with sake tasting at **Takara** or vodka tasting at **Hanger One**.
9. Take a bite out of your stipend with a day shopping in San Francisco at **Westfield Center**.
8. Ditch gravity for awhile in the trampoline paradise that is **Sky High Sports** in Santa Clara.
7. Enjoy the exhibits and dig through old film at the **Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive**.
6. Head west to San Francisco for a taste of Eastern art at the **Asian Art Museum**.
5. Catch a flick and relax on one of the couches at **Shattuck Cinema** - it's like watching a movie at home, only with a larger screen and without your roommate's shirtless boyfriend.
4. It's like battling the great outdoors (only indoors) at **Iron Works** or **Touchstone** rock climbing gyms.
3. Explore the indoor exhibits and the outdoor sculpture garden at the **de Young Museum** in San Francisco.
2. Get modern at the **San Francisco Museum of Modern Art**.
1. Satisfy your inner child/geek at the **California Academy of Sciences**

### Chung-Liang (Peter) Pan

PhD 2008, Garriga Lab

#### Where are you now, and what are you working on?

I am now at Ernest Gallo Clinic and Research Center of UCSF, working on the aging of the nervous system using a tiny worm named "C. elegans" as a model.

#### What is a fond memory you have of your time at Berkeley?

What I will remember most is the beautiful campus of Berkeley, the nice neighborhood studded with good restaurants, and diversified people with one common personality: friendliness.

#### Do you have any words of wisdom for the “young ones” still at Berkeley?

While it is good to explore many possibilities along the way of your research career, keep in mind that staying focused is also very important.

#### What are your hopes for the future?

I hope to continue doing interesting research and practice medicine at the same time. I also hope that the economy will come back soon so that the nation can look happier!

## Ask the Perfesser:



**Q** : Do you have any advice on how to narrow down and develop a research topic?

**A** : Ask yourself these questions about a potential topic:

- Can it be enthusiastically pursued?
- Can interest be sustained by it?
- Is the problem solvable?
- Is it worth doing?
- Will it lead to other research problems?
- Is it manageable in size?
- What is the potential for making an original contribution to the literature in the field?
- If the problem is solved, will the results be reviewed well by scholars in your field?
- Are you, or will you become, competent to solve it?
- By solving it, will you have demonstrated independent skills in your discipline?
- Will the necessary research prepare you in an area of demand or promise for the future?

- by Robert Smith, chemistry professor and author of "Graduate Research: A Guide for Students in the Sciences" (ISI Press, 1984)



**Do you have a question for the Perfesser?**

Email us at [hwni.news@gmail.com](mailto:hwni.news@gmail.com)

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