



2017 Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Postdoctoral Scholar Mentoring, Outstanding Postdoctoral Scholar and Annual Postdoc Research Symposium Award recipients gather for a group photo following a ceremony held in their honor. Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

Campus Recognizes Impact of Mentorship at Annual Postdoctoral Scholar Awards

Each year since 2012, the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Postdoctoral Scholar Mentoring and for Outstanding Postdoctoral Scholar are given in recognition of the scholars and mentors who contribute to making UC San Diego one of the top research institutions in the nation.

The award was developed by the Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs to encourage the campus community to recognize and appreciate postdocs and their contribution to UC San Diego's research and education missions and to acknowledge the faculty mentors who support the success of

postdoctoral scholars. This year's award recipients were honored during an appreciation luncheon event Nov. 29.

"Postdoctoral scholars are at the tip of the arrow when it comes to science and research," said Vice Chancellor of Research Sandra A. Brown, whose Office of Postdoctoral and Visiting Scholar Affairs is responsible for the professional development training and other activities of postdoctoral and visiting scholars on campus. "In every research discipline, postdocs are engaged in activities that are at the forefront of new knowledge that benefits us—not just at UC San Diego, but globally."

Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla offered his remarks, emphasizing the importance of support within the postdoctoral scholar community.

"The greatest strength of any university is its people and we have the best at UC San Diego, especially our postdoctoral scholars," said Khosla. "You are invaluable members to the research community, contributing to our advancement of knowledge, spurring discoveries that benefit campus and society. We're committed to supporting you and your goals."

Among those recognized during the luncheon were faculty mentors celebrated for serving as effective advisors, advocates, role models and colleagues to their postdoctoral trainees. Christina Chambers, a professor of pediatrics at UC San Diego's School of Medicine, said that she realized the importance of mentorship in the early stages of her professional and academic career.

"I was really lucky to have a tremendous mentor and that set the stage for how important it was to have someone who was not only looking out for my future, but also gave me the freedom to have creativity and to pursue my interests—and encouraged me to do so," she said. "It's been really important to me to make sure that I am able to recognize creative, smart people who can take the ball and run with it and to encourage them to do so. It has been my great honor."

Gene Yeo, professor of cellular and molecular medicine, offered encouraging words to the more than 200 postdoctoral scholars in the audience as well as and mentor and postdoctoral scholar awardees in his keynote address.

"As principal investigators, it is our role to provide opportunity," Yeo said. "We're providing opportunity and mentorship for students to mature and for ideas to transition to commercial ventures. For postdocs, this phase of your life is more about personal growth than technical knowledge. Take the



Gene Yeo, professor of cellular and molecular medicine, keynotes the Annual Postdoc Appreciation Luncheon and Awards Ceremony.

advice of your mentors because while we may think that we're the exception to the rule, we know that that is not always necessarily the case."



Brian León (left) receiving the Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Postdoctoral Scholar from Mark Lawson, Director for the UC President Postdoctoral Program and Faculty Director for Postdoctoral Education and Training at UC San Diego.

Brian León, of the Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry, was one of the awardees of the Postdoctoral Scholar Award. León's research is focused on the use of natural products in therapeutics. He credits his mentors to playing an integral role at every stage of his academic journey, starting with his undergraduate experience at UC Irvine, graduate education at UC Santa Cruz and with his postdoctoral experience at UC San Diego, securing his role as a UC Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellow.

"I'm a product of the UC system," said León. "I've enjoyed the benefit of the opportunities available at each campus and I've had impactful mentorship at each university—especially because of the advisors I've had along the way."

"This award is encouragement to all postdocs," he added. "The role we play with our undergraduate community is much like the role that our advisors have played in our development. Hopefully, we'll be able to be able to make the same impact our advisors have had on us when we become the advisors ourselves."

The Postdoc Appreciation Luncheon and Awards Ceremony marked the conclusion of the daylong Annual Postdoc Research Symposium, organized by the Postdoctoral Association. It featured sampled research projects from 25 different departments, earning several participants recognition following the Chancellor's Awards.

The faculty members and postdoctoral scholars who earned awards:

Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Postdoctoral Scholar Mentoring

- Professor David Barner, Ph.D. – Psychology
- Professor Christina D. Chambers, Ph.D., M.P.H. – Pediatrics

Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Postdoctoral Scholar

- Brian León, Ph.D. – Chemistry and Biochemistry
- Emily L. Petty, Ph.D. – Biological Sciences, Section of Molecular Biology

Research Award for Best Oral Presentation

- Till Wagner, Ph.D. - Climate, Atmospheric Sciences, and Physical Oceanography
- Daniel Petras, Ph.D. - Skaggs School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
- Tony Davis, Ph.D. - Chemistry and Biochemistry

Research Award for Best Poster Slam Presentation

- Manon Ragonnet-Cronin, Ph.D. - Medicine
- Marieke Toffolo, Ph.D. - Psychiatry

Research Award for Best Poster Presentation

- Allison Songstad, Ph.D. - Cellular and Molecular Medicine
- Wen-An Pan, Ph.D. – Pharmacology
- Yan Liang, Ph.D. - Medicine

Research Award for People's Choice Poster Presentation

- Saeed Jerban, Ph.D. - Radiology

Mark Lawson, the Director for the UC President Postdoctoral Program and Faculty Director for Postdoctoral Education and Training at UC San Diego, gave his congratulatory remarks to the awardees.

“You contribute to the leadership of this great institution, nationally and internationally,” said Lawson, a Professor In Residence of Reproductive Medicine at UC San Diego. “It is our commitment to you to support you beyond the lab while ensuring that you have the best postdoctoral research experience. We appreciate the great work you do in the name of science and knowledge here at UC San Diego and within the community.”

To learn more about the Office Of Postdoctoral & Visiting Scholar Affairs, visit: postdoc.ucsd.edu.

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