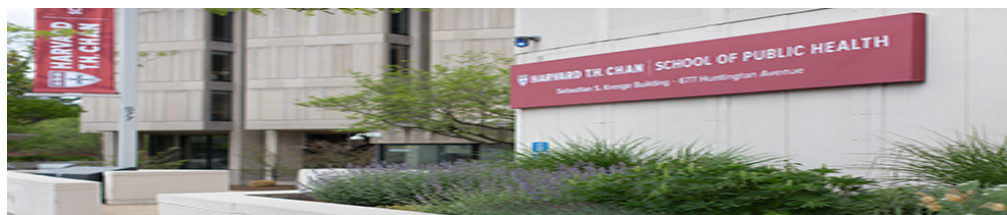


# HARVARD T.H. CHAN

## SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Postdoctoral Association



# THE CRIMSON CHRONICLE

Spring-Summer 2016

Welcome to the Spring-Summer 2016 edition of *The Crimson Chronicle*, the Newsletter of the Harvard Chan Postdoctoral Fellow and Research Associates (PDA)! A very special welcome to the Postdocs and Research Associates who recently joined our community! We hope you all had an enjoyable vacation break and we are looking forward to seeing you again during the New Academic Year!

*With the Warmest Wishes,*  
*The 2015-2016 PDA Council*



### Remarks from the PDA President

*Dear colleagues,*

As you might have heard, the recently announced change in labor laws will make salaried workers who make under \$47,476 eligible for overtime pay starting in December.

In 2014, the US National Academy of Sciences recommended that postdoc compensation:

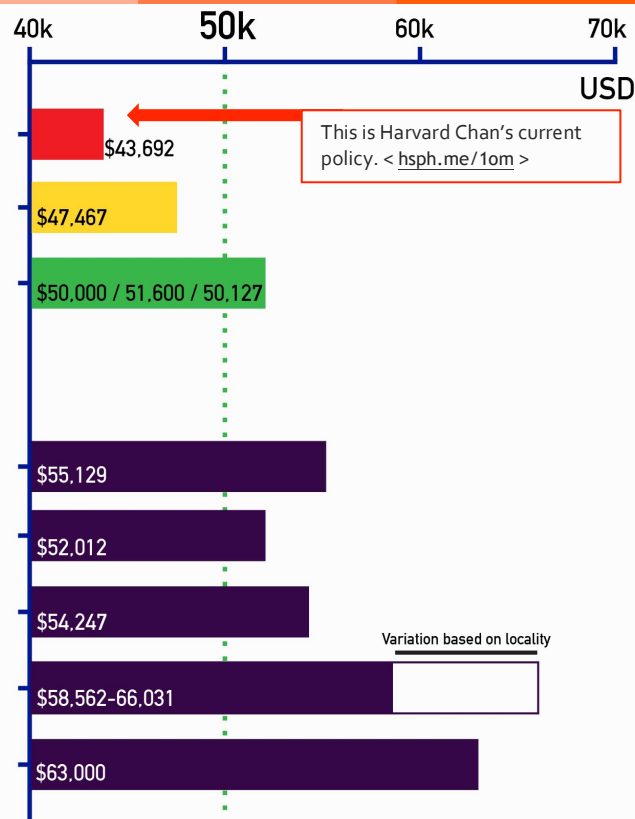
- 1 increase to \$50,000 USD (minimum)
- 2 be adjusted annually for inflation
- 3 be adjusted for regional cost of living

## POSTDOC SALARIES (YR1):

Current NRSA minimum  
FLSA cutoff for overtime pay requirements (Dec 2016)  
Dana-Farber / Stanford University / Whitehead Institute minimum salary

## COMPARED TO:

National Research Council recommendation from 2000  
College educated contemporaries without graduate degrees  
The cost of a graduate student to a lab (salary + tuition)  
Equivalent researchers on the govt. General Schedule scale  
Boston Postdoctoral Association recommendation



Courtesy of [futureofresearch.org](http://futureofresearch.org), made with alterations by Harvard Chan PDA from a FoR infographic available at [hsph.me/o](http://hsph.me/o)  
\* NRSA: National Research Service Awards (NIH national guideline, not adjusted by regional cost of living)  
\*\* FLSA: Fair Labor Standards Act (new change in labor laws effective December 1, 2016)

This new law ensures protection to 4.2 million workers in the US making below the threshold, including about 30% of the postdoc population at the School. We can reasonably expect that implementation will result in

overtime pay or a salary raise above the threshold.

The PDA has continuously advocated for an increase in the School's salary and benefits policy. In September,

the PDA council petitioned the Department of Labor, resulting in this change in labor laws (the proposed threshold then was \$50,440).

In October, we co-constructed the Boston Postdoctoral Association (BPDA) advocacy document, which arrived at a recommended starting salary of \$63,000 – after taking into account other nationwide salary recommendations, adjusting for inflation and the regional cost of living in the Boston area (*see Figure*).

In the past, we worked together with the administration to provide \$2,500 health insurance reimbursement for

external postdocs. In February, we established a discussion on diversity issues, parental leave benefits, and minimum salary policies with OFA and Deans Rosenthal and Hunter.

In response to the new labor laws, although NIH plans to raise their NRSA pay scale, it is still unclear how institutions will cover postdocs paid by other sources. The Harvard Chan PDA will continue to monitor this implementation and remain in close coordination with the stakeholders.

The research science workforce market has been in disequilibrium for far too long. The new laws are a

positive step forward, but we still have much work. Join us in creating a better experience for Postdocs and Research Associates at the School.

*In Community,*



**Christian Suharlim, MD, MPH**

*The PDA council would like to acknowledge Mahy, Isin, and Christina from the Office of Faculty Affairs, Dean Grusby, Dean Rosenthal, Acting Dean Hunter, Dean Williams, Dr. Anne Lusk (Nutrition), and members of the Postdoc Advisory Committee for their tremendous support on our advocacy efforts.*

## Focus on the LGBTQA Pride Week celebration

*Event organized with the generous collaboration of*

**Jim Smith**, Assistant Dean for Alumni Affairs and Career Advancement, and **Mudit Chaand**, PDA Social Co-chair

About 125 members of the Harvard Chan community gathered in the Kresge café on Wednesday, June 8 in the first school-wide LGBTQA Pride Week celebration. Welcoming the crowd, **Jim Smith**, Assistant Dean for Alumni Affairs and Career Advancement and event co-host, said that the event was conceived as “a catalyst for us to all get to know each other and to build a community that is even stronger than the one we already have.” PDA Social Co-chair, **Mudit Chaand** co-hosted and organized the event with Dean Smith.

**“As privileged we are to live and work in such a great place, we are reminded that our brothers and sisters in other places have a different situation and many live in places where they cannot live an open and safe life the way we do, and while we are here to celebrate, we still have a lot of work to do.”**  
~Dean Smith

It is sadly ironic that Dean Smith made these comments just three days before forty-nine members of

the LGBTQA community were murdered in the horrific attack on the Pulse nightclub in Orlando.

In concluding his remarks, Dean Smith thanked the many co-sponsoring departments noting that, “it was so heartwarming to pick up the phone and call so many departments all across the school who all said an unequivocal “Yes” when we asked them to co-sponsor the event.”

The Pride Week celebration was sponsored by Offices of the Dean, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Office for Student Affairs, Queer Student Alliance, Office for Alumni Affairs and Career Advancement, Office for Education, Office for External Relations, Office of Faculty Affairs, Committee on the Advancement of Women Faculty, and Harvard Chan PDA.



*Reception of the LGBTQA Pride Week Celebration*

# Social Events and Travel Awards

by **Mudit Chaand**, PDA Social Co-chair and  
**Fred Tabung**, PDA Vice-President

The Harvard Chan PDA takes pride in organizing diverse social events throughout the year to encourage interaction amongst the Postdoc and Research Associate community at the Harvard Chan School and the greater Boston research community.

During the Spring of 2016, the Chan PDA co-sponsored two major Boston Postdoctoral Association (BPDA) events: **St. Patrick's Day Bowling night** in March, which was attended by over 80 Postdocs from the greater Boston Area and the **BPDA Website Launch Party at Royale**, the biggest postdoc party in the history of Boston! Postdocs and Research Associates from 14 Greater Boston Area institutions attended the event.

For the Harvard Chan School specifically, the PDA organized a **Happy Hour** in February at the Mission Bar and Grill, a local favorite. In March, a **Spring Luncheon** was held at the FXB atrium where the winners of the Kocaeli Travel Awards were announced.

In April, a **Postdoc/Research Associate Faculty Mixer** was organized, which was attended by over 12 Faculty Members and 50 Postdocs from different departments across the school. The event was



*Postdoc/Research Associate Faculty Mixer*

very well received and the Harvard Chan PDA is excited to host a similar event in the fall.

In June, we co-sponsored the school wide **LGBTQA reception** to celebrate the Pride week in Boston, we celebrated the **International Potluck Night** in the Minot Room at the Countway Library, where best savory and sweet dishes were awarded!

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

We will celebrate the **Postdoc Appreciation Day** on **Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>** at **4:00 pm!**

## Travel Awards

The PDA administered two travel awards this spring: The Kocaeli International Travel Award and the Spring Travel Award.

The **Kocaeli Travel Award** is sponsored by Kocaeli University Medical School in Turkey to cover all travel expenses for three Postdocs and Research associates to spend one week in Turkey engaged in academic opportunities including consulting, teaching, organization of seminars and/or workshop and presentations and mentoring.

The **Harvard Chan PDA Spring Travel Award** is designed to provide financial support to three Postdocs and one Research Associate who have limited opportunities to attend a scientific conference. The travel award is primarily aimed at fellows/associates who have not yet attended



*International Potluck Night*

a conference during their time at Harvard Chan School, however, having previously attended a conference does not disqualify any applicant. Four awards of up to \$1500 were awarded.

Applications submitted for the Kocaeli Travel Award were evaluated and three applicants were awarded travel grants:

1. **Steven Chiou**
2. **Hector Castro**
3. **Christian Suharlim**

For the spring travel award, we received 11 applications and four were awarded travel grants to attend various conferences nationally and internationally. The winners were:

1. **Igna Bonfrer**
2. **Nadia Abuelezzam**
3. **Brian Arnold**
4. **Cara Boutte**

For both the Kocaeli and Spring Travel Awards competitions, each application was assigned to two faculty judges from departments other than the applicant's. The average score was based on the quality of the abstract, mentor support letter, personal statement and research statement. We are grateful to all the faculty judges who supported the PDA in scoring these applications and...

**Congratulations to all the winners!**



# The 2016 Kocaeli Travel Award Winners talk about their experience in Turkey!

*"The Kocaeli Travel Award was a unique opportunity to liaise with a remarkable group of academics and faculty members with a broad range of academic interests.*

*Through the lectures, workshops and meetings I had the chance to strengthen my communication skills but also disseminate our work here at Harvard Chan School.*

*I am looking forward to further opportunities of collaboration among institutions in topics regarding Health Technology Assessment, Health Sector Reform and Sustainable Universal Coverage in the near future."*

**Hector Castro**  
Department of  
Global Health  
and  
Population



*"The Kocaeli Travel Award was a fantastic experience that granted me the privilege to travel to a country I have never been to before and introduced me to new ideas, culture and people I would probably not have encountered anytime soon.*

*Kocaeli University, located in the industry heartland of Turkey, offers ample opportunities for collaboration. While at Kocaeli University, we met faculty and students who share similar research interests. I presented my research in survival analysis, identifying overlooked common assumptions and proposed solutions illustrated via an increasingly popular statistical software, R. Having this exposure made me realize my added value in an environment other than the Harvard Chan School.*

*Outside of these academic activities, we also had the chance to explore different lifestyles in Turkey; we*

*experienced the crowded and busy cities like Istanbul and Izmit, and also small, self-sufficient historical and ancient villages like Iznik. In a short time, I made many friends and remained in touch with them.*

*Despite my seemingly perpetual jetlag, I woke up at sunrise filled with excitement. I already miss taking the ferry along the Golden horn, walking across the Galata Bridge in dusk, having dinner by the lakeshore of Lake Iznik, and much more. It is impossible to pick a favorite moment, but one thing for sure, I wish to go back for more Turkish delights, learn to play Tavla (a popular board game in Turkey) and watch sunset from the top of the Galata tower!"*

**Steven Chiou**  
Department of  
Biostatistics



*Survival Analysis workshop participants, Kocaeli University*



*Enjoying lahmacun, a Turkish delicacy, with Kocaeli peers*



*Winners of the Kocaeli Travel Award: Hector Castro, Christian Suharlim, and Steven Chiou pose with Kocaeli Medical School student Zehra Ozturk in front of Hagia Sophia*



## Research Associate Corner

# Results of the surveys

by **Elisa Ghelfi**, PDA Research Associates Representative  
**Fred Tabung**, PDA Vice-President

Early this year, we participated in the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) survey, led by Dr. Sam Museus of Indiana University. He presented the preliminary results for the Harvard TH. Chan Harvard School of Public Health on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016, and a final report was announced by Dean Meredith Rosenthal on July 28<sup>th</sup>.

The Harvard Chan population was divided in three groups: Academic Appointees (which includes Postdocs and Research Associates), Staff, and Students; the participation to the survey was 23%, 46% and 43%, respectively.

Students, Academic Appointees and Staff recognized the positive commitment of the Harvard Chan School to Diversity, Inclusion and Equity, although the Academic Appointees and the Staff population were slightly more critical of the response toward diversity related problems and the lack of availability for reporting mechanisms.

***A large number of faculty members wished to have additional professional development on cross-cultural communication, while only few of them thought to have the skills to address diversity and inclusion issues.***

The Academic Appointee perspective about the representation of women among administrators, scored similar for men and women responders. Fewer women than men responders considered women well represented among Faculty and Tenured Faculty. Furthermore, slightly less Academic Appointees than Students, considered Faculty of color and Tenured faculty of color well represented. Finally, the largest numbers of responders in the Academic Appointee and Staff categories, replied that women and people of color were part of a targeted identity group, while Students identified people of color as the largest targeted identity group.

Less than one third of Academic Appointee and Staff, witnessed micro aggression on the campus; the fraction was slightly higher for students. The three groups were in agreement about feeling comfortable to report any micro aggression on campus.

The student population expressed a general sense of belonging, strong connection, and being part of the community; the sentiment being slightly higher in men than women, slightly higher among white students than students of color and slightly higher among the LGBTQA+ group than the heterosexual group. Finally, the sentiments of belonging, strong connection and being part of a community were almost two folds higher among students without

## ***Have you ever felt invisible?***

We invite the participation of the Harvard Chan community to the 2016 National Postdoc Survey, conducted by the University of Chicago. The survey aimed to assess the Postdocs and Research Associate experience, and to inform advocacy efforts. For additional information, visit [postdocsurvey.org](http://postdocsurvey.org)

disabilities that among students with disabilities.

An interesting result came from the assessment of campus climate among Academic Appointees:

***A large number of Postdocs and Research Associates (both at 32%) claimed to often choose not to express their own opinion, for fear of backlash.***

***About 23% of Postdocs and 27% of Research Associates often felt devalued on campus.***

Among the Academic Appointees, the number of people expressing fear of backlash if expressing their own opinion and feeling devaluated, was higher in women than men and between appointees of color than white appointees. More Academic Appointees of color than white Appointees thought that their own opportunities were limited by race.

# Writers Lounge

by *Traci Brown, PDA General Council Member*

The PDA currently has several offerings to help Postdoctoral Fellows and Research Associates improve their writing skills. Don't miss it!

## Workshops and Course Offerings

The Office of Faculty Affairs will be working with Donald Halstead, the Director of Writing Programs at Harvard Chan School, to provide workshops and mini-courses next fall to improve your writing.

*Be on the lookout in your inbox for more information and to sign up!*

## Writing Group

The Writing Group is the PDA's newest writing initiative intended to provide peer-support in writing grants and papers. The Writing Group will meet intermittently this summer and is intended to be a space for you to



work on your papers and grants in a supportive group atmosphere. Individuals will also be available to help review, edit and provide feedback on your writing.

The writing group also includes time for peer discussion on your specific writing goals. Individuals at any stage of the writing process are welcome and prior attendance is not required.

*To be added to the mailing list to receive updates about the writing group, please contact Traci Brown: [tbrown@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:tbrown@hsph.harvard.edu)*

## Peer Grant Network

The Peer Grant Network (PGN) is a PDA program that connects current

post-doctoral grant applicants with recently successful grant awardees. The peer network will simplify the grant application process for grants managers, administrators, and applicants alike. This program is intended to benefit both postdocs and research associates in obtaining external funding and advancing their careers.

The Spring 2016 semester PGN successfully matched several grant writers to successful grant awardees!

*We always welcome more mentors for the Peer Grant Network. If you are a grant recipient, please consider giving back by signing up with Sandra Pirela: [svp097@mail.harvard.edu](mailto:svp097@mail.harvard.edu)*



## Nanocourses by Christian Suharlim, PDA President

This first half of 2016, the PDA successfully delivered three nanocourses: **Decision Analysis**, **Flagship Public Health 101 special undergraduate program**, and **Social & Behavioral Sciences missing data analysis**. So far the Public Health 101 program has delivered 22 nanocourses in the fields and subfields of public health and have reached over 1300 students from various backgrounds.

Courses slated in the fall include nutrition, metabolomics, and the Flagship Public Health 101 high school symposium program in Shanghai, China. As this experience has benefited many Postdocs and Research Associates in gaining teaching and course development experience, you too can be a public health 101 nanocourse instructor. Please visit [hsph.harvard.edu/publichealth101](http://hsph.harvard.edu/publichealth101) for more info.



## The Eco-Corner

# Excessive Packaging of Everything

by *Elisa Ghelfi*, PDA Research Associates Representative

Lab supplies come in many kinds of packaging formats. Often the packaging seems to be disproportionate to the size and the fragility of the material packed. Plastic bottles of stable reagents are packed with extra plastic cushioning that seems unnecessary given the robustness of the material. Small objects are packed in very large cardboard boxes, filled with plastic bubble sheets and large amount of wrapping papers. Large Styrofoam boxes are often used for very tiny vials. It is a common lab problem and a lot of the packing material is not compostable or biodegradable.

When it comes to accumulation of plastic, my thoughts go to the large floating plastic-garbage patches that congregate to various degrees in numerous parts of the Pacific, entangling sea turtles and suffocating marine wild life. I cringe at the possibility that the packaging from lab supplies may contribute, ultimately, to the ecological impact to marine life.

Packaging manufacturers, retailers, and consumers are aware of the problem, and guidelines are available to resolve the over-packaging issue. Improvements can be made in several ways: by implementing reusable or carton-less packaging, by modifying packaging design or by developing degradable packages so that no packaging remains.

An innovative and inexpensive idea comes from London-based design students, who invented a new kind of packaging made from seaweed that proposes an alternative to plastic bottles. The innovation is called "Ooho" and uses alginate spherification to shape any kind of bottle sizes. Hopefully this new and inexpensive packaging made from biodegradable material, may become an alternative to the use of plastic bottles and other packaging stuff.

## Energy Reduction

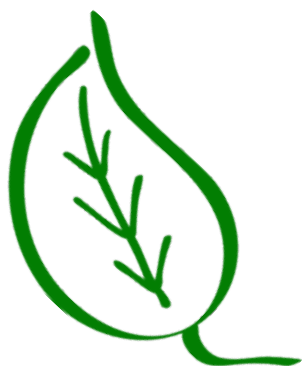
Please keep in mind the recommendations of The Harvard Medical School Facilities Group to help reduce energy use over holiday breaks:

- Turn off and unplug lights and computers
- Turn off any nonessential kitchen and office equipment (coffeemakers, printers, copiers, etc.)
- Turn off nonessential lab equipment (autoclaves, water baths, refrigerated shakers, centrifuges, etc.)

- Close fume hood sashes
- Keep vents, diffusers and radiators free of obstruction
- Close windows, shades and doors (we have a history of open window freezes — please help)
- Tightly close sink faucets
- Report any leaks, missing ceiling tiles or unusual noises to Facilities at 432-1901
- After break, do not double up on washing and sterilization loads

We have the ability to make an impact on sustainability at Harvard Chan School by each doing what we can to make our labs and offices more environmentally friendly. In order to help you accomplish this goal, Harvard has a green office program that is aligned with the Harvard University Sustainability Plan. This certificate program is a point-based system designed to help you easily reach goals of greater sustainability. The application to be certified as a green office space is downloadable and very user friendly.

**For more information contact Adam Meier:** [adam\\_meier@harvard.edu](mailto:adam_meier@harvard.edu)  
**or visit the website at:**  
<http://green.harvard.edu/programs/green-offices>.



**HARVARD  
T.H. CHAN****SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

Postdoctoral Association



## Editor's Note

*The Crimson Chronicle's* aim is to inform the Postdoctoral Fellows and Research Associates about activities organized by our community that are intended to enhance our professional development and enrich our experience at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. We hope that you have found the enclosed information of your interest. Your feedback is much appreciated and essential for the improvement of *The Crimson Chronicle* and the work of the PDA Council. Please feel free to keep sharing your comments and ideas, and join us at the monthly PDA meetings.

On behalf of the PDA Council, I would like to express our gratitude to Dean Jim Smith for his commentary and assistance in the organization of the successful LGBTQA Pride Week celebration, and to Hector Castro and Steven Chiou for sharing their Kocaeli experiences with us. As a Postdoctoral Fellow and the Editor of *The Crimson Chronicle* Spring-Summer 2016 issue, I would like to thank all the PDA Council members for their constant efforts to optimize our daily personal and professional experiences at the Harvard Chan School, and Christian, Elisa, Jacqueline, Mudit and Traci for their extra effort during the preparation of this issue.

Happy vacations and an inspirational and creative New Academic Year to all!

Very best wishes,

*Dania Valvi, MD, MPH, PhD, PDA International Chair*

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Email: [pda@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:pda@hsph.harvard.edu)

Web page: [www.hsph.harvard.edu/pda](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/pda)



Harvard Chan PDA

# THE CRIMSON CHRONICLE

## Spring-Summer 2016