

The G.S.A. NEWSLETTER

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What's in a name? By GSA President Dan Cohen

In the course of looking for creative design ideas for a much needed makeover of the GSA website, I decided to survey what sort of "GSA" web pages exist on the Internet. Entering "GSA" into the Google search engine, I was surprised to discover the diverse set of agencies, societies, and even psychological disorders that masquerade under this abbreviation (General Services Administration, Geological Society of America, and Genetic Sexual Attraction, to name a few). Though amused to consider its wide and varied meanings, I was struck by the realization that GSA is something of a linguistic landmine. The identity and influence of an organization lies not in its name but in the perception thereof, i.e., its name-recognition. Though the Johns Hopkins GSA may not be readily confused with the thousands of its namesakes on the Web, the generic title of "Graduate Student Association" does little to project a specific idea about our role and purpose in the university. This begs the question, what is the **Graduate Student Association?**

It is not my intention to pose this question purely as a rhetorical device, but rather a direct challenge to the readers of our newsletter. For the meaning of the GSA is not well defined in the Hopkins community and has been a concept in evolution since our relatively recent creation in 1991.

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Avoid Trouble with the INS:
How to Maintain Legal Status as an
International Student
By Raj Mukhopadhyay

The Office of International Student, Faculty and Staff Services acts as a liaison between the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the international community on the medical campus. I recently sat down with Murray Welsh-Lofts, the director of the Office of International Student, Faculty and Staff Services, to ask her about the rules and regulations international students should be aware of as they progress through graduate school.

Q: What should international students do when they first arrive on the medical campus?

A: All students must come to our office in Reed Hall (1620 McElderry Street, phone number 410-955-3371) for a check-in procedure. Bring all immigration documents with you, such as passport, 1-94 card, I-20, IAP-66, green card (if applicable). If you are transferring from another school in the USA, also bring any other forms of ID you might have (driver's license, college ID). A staff member will make copies of your documents and check your paperwork to make sure no errors were made at the port of entry and also discuss with you how to maintain your status as an international student and the work options available to you.

Q: Now that a new student has checked in, what happens next?

A: We introduce students to the International Society. This is an arm of our office that helps students new to the USA and Baltimore settle in. Staff members at the Society help people find housing, get driver's licenses and so on. The Society hosts receptions, organizes trips, and puts

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Upcoming GSA Meeting: Sept. 17th

*** 517 PCTB ***

Meeting are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 3pm.

Upcoming Events

GSA Picnic September 21st 12-4pm Location TBA

Pioneers in Science Lectureship

Paul Greengard, PhD

October 4th

Walk for the Cure
(Juvenile diabetes)
Sept. 29th at the
Baltimore Zoo
Contact
Wendy Sanders

Watch for an upcoming GSA outing to the National Aquarium (TBA)

The Fighting Quebecois: Q&A with Pierre Coulombe

By Dan Gorelick

Q: Tell us about Pierre Coulombe, the man behind the man.

I was born and grew up in Montreal. I realized very early that I wanted to pursue a PhD-type degree...I learned at a young age that PhDs were the highest form of academic distinction you could get...It took a while for me to determine which field it would be in. But then when I started to have some serious biology classes I really liked it. I did my PhD work in Montreal, came to the US in '88 for post-doctoral training, thinking I'd go back to Canada afterwards. I had jobs waiting for me there. But let's just say that Hopkins has made that impossible.

Q: You're investigating the role of keratins in alopecia. Do you have a personal interest in this line of research?

No, I don't actually.

Q: So you're comfortable.

Yeah, I'm very happy with my hair complement. There's no problem with that.

Q: Have you ever used Rogaine?

No.

Q: Not even tried it, just once?

No.

O: What is your most embarrassing moment in the lab?

I was nominated for the "screw-up of the year" award for this one. I did not win, but deserved to win. I was at a meeting in San Francisco—it was about 10pm, West coast time. I had just been to a poster, I was excited about it, and I wanted to talk to one of my students about it, Matt. I sort of did the mathematics of the three-hour time difference the wrong way. So I'm thinking it's 7 o'clock at night in Baltimore and it's really 1 o'clock in the morning. I called up the lab first. No answer. I was quite aggravated, at 7 o'clock at night, that there would be nobody in the lab. So I thought—because I always carry the personal phone numbers of the people in the lab in my wallet—I said I'm going to give Matt a call at home. So Matt answers the phone after a few rings and he seems lethargic, he's not popping up the way I'm used to. So I tell him, "Matt, what the hell's wrong with you," you know? He says, "Pierre, do you realize it's 1 o'clock in the morning?" And then I understood that I had made this mistake and to this day I still hear about it. I'll never be able to live it down. But I've mellowed out since then. I don't call people at home unless there's a very, very good reason.

Q: You study wound healing. Can you heal the wound in my heart? Are keratins involved?

Keratins cannot be involved in wound healing in your heart because there are no epithelial cells in the heart; there are no cells that express keratin.

Q: What's dynamic instability done for me?

Dynamic instability is one of the things that excites me the most about teaching students because to me it's a remarkable example of how proteins have evolved to perform in the manner they're expected to. What dynamic instability represents for me is a complete understanding of what conformational changes in

proteins can be exploited for. In that case it's very visual, very spectacular, and it's critical to life as we know it.

Q: So it's a metaphor for life.

Could be.

Q: You want to explore that?

In the way that you're starting from a very simple principle...the role of microtubules is conceptually simple and it has this universal flavor in the context of cell biology. But then when you start digging it's very complicated, but when you've figured it out it's very simple again. So in that way, yes, it is a metaphor for life.

Q: What's your favorite cytoskeletal component?

Probably adhesion complexes.

Q: Do you have a specific favorite?

Gap junctions. I have a crush on gap junctions because they allow for metabolic coupling between cells and they enable cells to function as assemblies, as tissues—and that's what my passion is about, how cells come about to form tissues. And another reason for gap junctions being my favorite thing is I'm not studying them directly, but I've been fantasizing about working on them. It might happen one day.

Q: That's what you fantasize about?

Scientifically, yes.

Q: Are you a lover or a fighter?

Fighter.

Q: Does your wife know?

I think I have characteristics of both, actually. But initially I come across as a fighter, quite aggressive.

Q: Interesting. Most of the females I've talked to think you come across as more of a lover, not a fighter.

You're pulling my leg.

Q: I'm not pulling anything. Comment on this: many first year students think the two best-looking professors are you and Jeremy Nathans.

No comment.

Q: Who do you think is better looking: you or Jeremy Nathans?

Jeremy's taller; he's got that going for him. I think he's a nice looking man.

Q: Have you ever thought about wearing suspenders?

No. I think it fits him nicely. But it's not part of my style.

Q: You've gotten a lot of comments on how well you dress.

Not that I pay a whole lot of attention to it, but I think it's part of the message that you're sending out. I believe in that so I do pay attention to it.

Q: Would you consider giving one of your cytoskeleton lectures to the first years in suspenders?

There would have to be a reason that would be tied-in to the lecture, because it's not me.

Q: You've tied-in Ella Fitzgerald and Beethoven, so I think you'll have no problem tying in suspenders.

If I had the intention I could find a connection, and I would then do it.

Q: You're stranded on a desert island. Rita Levi-Montalcini or Barbara McClintock?

McClintock is a geneticist, Levi-Montalcini is a pharmacologist. To be honest with you, I don't know what they look like. They're both excellent, outstanding scientists. Well, I would go with the Italian one...it's about passion. She might be more likely to be passionate in a way that speaks to me.

Q: But you're a fighter, not a lover.

I told you I have characteristics of both.

Q: You just became director of CMM. Who would win in a fight: you, or BCMB director Craig Montell?

Well Craig seems to be keeping in very good shape. He looks to be fairly muscular—and his son Brandon is learning karate. I don't know—I did grow up as a hockey player.

Q: And you're a fighter, not a lover. I think he's more of a

Montell? You're confused. If I had to put a label on him, knowing what I know of him or about him, I think he's a fighter

Q: So it would be a pretty close match? Probably.

Q: Are you paid extra to lead CMM?

Q: Do you get any perks? A personal assistant? No.

Q: Any big changes in store for CMM?

No. Just the firm desire to help the program continue to grow positively as it has since it began ten years ago. If I can get that done I would be very satisfied.

O: You sound like a politician. Is that part of your training?

I'm not a politician; you can get that confirmed from many people. I think that I've learned to tame my aggressive side—maybe over the years I'm evolving more into a lover, as opposed to a fighter. It's learning to fight lovingly, how about that?

Q: Is CMM still an up-and-coming program?

No. I think it's now a force to be reckoned with.

Q: Is your goal to engulf BCMB and rule Hopkins?

No. Truth be told, the goal of the CMM program has been, since the beginning, and continues to be, to be as good as BCMB. We've made incredible strides toward that. Now we have acquired our own identity...we're finally at a point where we can pretend to be close to the caliber of BCMB.

Q: So BCMB is still a better program...

BCMB has a different scope...it's not a relevant question. Is CMM successful given its scope? I think it is. I think you measure the quality of a program by the caliber of its students...I think that both BCMB and CMM are required for Hopkins to thrive...it's a partnership, not a rivalry.

Q: You were recently promoted to the rank of professor.

I'm very proud of that...to have been made professor in such a department is a tremendous source of pride.

Q: What kind of car do you drive?

How relevant is this?

Q: It's very relevant.

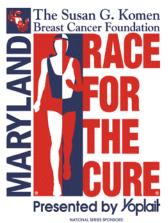
Currently I drive a BMW M3.

O: Are there any post-translational modifications?

The car is undergoing post-translational modifications and yes, the promotion was looked upon as creating an opportunity for posttranslationally modifying the car.

Q: How do you live with yourself when you drive a swanky M3 while grad students make nothing?

Well, it's very easy.



Join your fellow graduate students and participate in the Race for the Cure to support breast cancer research and prevention.

WHAT: 5K Race for the Cure, all proceeds benefit breast cancer re-

WHEN: Oct. 5th at 8:30am. Registration is due on-line by September 20th.

HOW TO REGISTER: go to www.komenmd.org and register on-line. Click on the Race Logo and then click on the register on-line icon. From there, you can register as part of the JHMI Grad Student Team. Use the password grad1. The registration fee is \$25, \$30 if you want to be officially timed. Alternatively, stop by Biophysics Rm 100 and pick up a registration form from Kara Cerveny. In addition, you can collect pledges to raise more money.

WHERE: Register on-line (or through Kara in Biophysics Rm 100) for the race at Ravens' Stadium

Name.from page 1....

Consider that unlike most other parts of Johns Hopkins, there is little physical structure to our organization; we have no official work space, no paid staff, and no standing agenda or crusade. The current incarnation of the GSA is in every way an idea, or more appropriately, an ideal, embodied by those students who choose active participation. In this sense the relevant question is not "what is the GSA" but "who is the GSA?"

It is fair game to wonder what kind of student would volunteer to become involved in a body associated with administration, the dreaded "darkside" of academia. There is a perverse notion, oft-repeated by some faculty (at least within the confines of my department) that students involved in the GSA have misplaced/misdirected values, and fall somewhere between undisciplined party animals and downright rabble-rousers, who would subvert the entire mentor-mentee dynamic. The dismissal of the GSA as a disaffected population of students, seeking compensation for lack of successes in the research arena, is both repugnant and uninformed, and is a prejudice that I vigorously repudiate.

I was drawn to serve in the GSA by a simple and compelling credo: that graduate student education requires not just input and achievement of students towards the product (the PhD) but towards the process. Perhaps this is just the vision of a zealot, but I think not. I am proud and inspired to serve with a board of officers and program representatives who not only endorse this idea but also exemplify it. If a student senses a hole in the educational curriculum, she starts a journal club to fill the gap (thus Developmental Biology Journal Club was born). Find that limiting resources preclude vital research and training opportunities for students beyond Hopkins' borders, and we establish a fund to sponsor them (GSA Travel Awards). Observe the need for careers outside of academia, and we lobby (successfully) for the creation of the Professional Development Office.

I could continue listing GSA accomplishments and initiatives, but none of these would encapsulate the purpose or significance of the GSA. Fundamentally, the GSA's identity is a reflection of one personal question: "how would you improve the graduate student experience at Hopkins?" Or for those reductionists out there, "are you GSA?"

The Deadline for submission to the next GSA Newsletter will be October 18th. Contact a GSAN editor:

> Emily Overholser - eoverhol Soo Hee Lee - shlee Jaime Cheah - jcheah Karen Pinco - kpinco

INS from page 1...

out a regular newsletter for international students.

Q: What should students keep in mind while they go through their program of study?

A: It is extremely important that our office and the INS have current addresses of all students. You should call our office every time your address changes so we can update our records. You must also fill out the AR-11 form (available on our website and on the INS website) and mail it to the INS to notify them of your change in address. In order to maintain legal status, you must, at all times, maintain full enrollment in your program of study. If you think there may be any reason why you might fall below full time enrollment, make an appointment to discuss your situation with one of our advisors. When traveling abroad, you should come by our office with your passport and I-20 or IAP-66 to be checked and signed by a staff member. When returning to the USA, you will probably fill out a new I-94 card at your port of entry (except when coming back from Canada—normally at those ports, INS allows you to retain and then re-enter on your current I-94.). Another thing to keep in mind is that a student on a F-1 visa can remain outside the USA up to five months and still re-enter on the current I-20 as long as they intend to engage full time in the program for which the I-20 was issued and as long as the I-20 has been signed. However, if you remain abroad for longer than that, we will need to issue you a new I-20 to allow you to return.

Q: What changes will be in effect post-September 11th?

A: Well, at the moment INS is developing a new electronic data tracking system called the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System or SEVIS. As required by federal law, our office will begin interacting with this system sometime in the fall. Once implemented, it will be very important to ensure there aren't any lapses in your records. Since the new electronic system can closely and quickly track records, gaps in information will become more obvious. For example, if you forget to tell us you switched from a masters to a Ph.D. program, the time that lapsed between your switching programs and us updating your status in our system will be more noticeable to the INS. Another regulatory change that has been proposed may prevent international students from applying for certain benefits during their F-1 grace period. There has always been a 60-day grace period for F1 students once they complete their degree programs. That grace period will still be there but students may no longer be able to apply for certain employment options during this period.

Q: Which means if you're close to graduation...

A: If you are close to graduation, you need to make an appointment with one of our staff members five months before your anticipated date of graduation. During this appointment we can discuss your options and decide which course of action will be most suitable for you. Since students may no longer be able to file with the INS during the F1 grace period, students will need to start application procedures well ahead of graduation.

Q: What resources would you recommend international students use to find out the rules and regulations?

A: I highly recommend our listserv. This immediately announces any information pertinent to the international community here at Hopkins and keeps people updated with changes in the rules and regulations. You can sign up for this list-serve on our website: http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/intlsvcs. The INS website and the U.S. Department of State websites are also useful sites for forms and information: http://www.ins.usdoj.gov and <a href="h