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To promote mentorship at Yale, the Graduate Student Assembly, with the enthusiastic support of the Graduate School, held the second annual Mentoring Week in early February. The organizing committee consisted of Bobbi Sutherland (Medieval Studies), Stephen Gosden (Music), Sloan Warren (Neuroscience), Eli Kim (Computer Science), Julie Button (Microbiology), and Alexandra Parfitt (Comparative Literature).

Over the course of earning a Ph.D., graduate students evolve into full-fledged scholars and scientists. They become their teachers’ colleagues, joining them as peers in professional settings.

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Full information on events above: http://research.yale.edu/cgi-bin/mcdougal/publish2.72/webevent.cgi

GCS Panel: Combining Science and the Media

Effective communication about science from the lab to the outside world is vital to securing public support.

“Alternative Careers for Ph.D.’s: Science and the Media,” a discussion panel organized by McDougal Fellow Alice Ly (Molecular, Cellular, & Developmental Biology), brought four members of the nonprofit organization TalkingScience to Yale to discuss opportunities for science outreach and how those efforts can translate into careers.

The goal of TalkingScience is “to make science cool and make it part of the culture,” said Executive Director Ann Marie Cunningham, who was one of the panelists.

TalkingScience was founded by Ira Flatow, the host and executive producer of Talk of the Nation: Science Friday on National Public Radio. “The audience of NPR’s Science Friday is mostly over the age of 50,” Cunningham pointed out. People 35 and under turn to the internet for their news instead of to traditional media outlets like newspapers and television. To make science more engaging for this younger demographic, panelist Talia Page, project director at TalkingScience, is...
“The Graduate School was extremely supportive of our efforts, and we’re lucky to have an administration that takes the responsibilities associated with mentoring so seriously,” Sloan says.

One new element this year was the distribution of coupons that entitle the bearer and her/his mentor to free coffee at a variety of locations on campus and at Atticus, Publilce Cup, Blue State Coffee, and Cappuccino’s. “We hope that these coupons will provide an impetus for students and their mentors to take a little extra time to meet and talk, and will thus strengthen the student/mentor relationship,” says Julie, who coordinated this initiative with Alexandra.

An unintended but very positive outcome of Mentoring Week was that the organizers gained professional skills in the process. Alexandra discovered that the very act of putting such an event together for the Comparative Literature Department was a learning experience and, “It made me feel like a full member of the department for the first time.”

The week kicked off with an informal happy hour at GPS CY, where students close to completing their degrees were encouraged, in effect, to mentor students who were still in the early stages of graduate education. They spoke from experience about problems that can arise in the mentor-student relationship and how to deal with them. In the course of the week, several GPA members held programs in their academic areas, one per division, and the week wrapped up with a Graduate-School-wide panel, “Advice from New to Future Faculty,” featuring Robert Harper-Mangels, assistant dean; and Professors Victor Batata, chemistry; Barry McCrea, English and comparative literature; Brian Scholl, psychology; and Brian Scassellati, computer science.

The first departmental session was a talk by Helen Tartar, organized by Alexandra Parfitt and held on a bitter cold, snowy afternoon in the Comparative Literature library. Tartar, editorial director of Fordham University Press, took a scholarly approach to the topic and pointed to literary sources to explicate the concept of “mentor.” She compared Mentor, a minor character in Homer’s Odyssey, to modern mentors. “Originally, Mentor was the older friend appointed by Odysseus to care for his household, including his son, during his absence on the expedition to Troy. From one perspective, Mentor obviously did a terrible job—in the passages singled out in the glossary to Lattimore’s translation, he is usually complaining helplessly about the excesses of the suitors as they despoil what he had agreed to protect,” Tartar said. Homer’s Mentor, like a modern mentor, devoted himself to his protegé out of “deep personal loyalty, not kinship,” and was an older person. She noted that “our present term mentoring doesn’t have much to do with the shadowy figure of Mentor in Homer. It dates rather from Francois Fénelon’s 1699 The Adventures of Telemachus... Mentor guides and instructs Telemachus” on his didactic journey.

In her professional life as a book editor, Tartar cited some of her own mentors, after whom she modeled her work. When she edits a book, she aims “to nourish the work of scholarship and, as human beings, those who do it,” and encourage authors “human singularity, fostering energy within them to blossom into deeds and words.” As a mentor, she said, “I do what was important to me... above all, regarded as a peer and colleague rather than a subordinate; supported and respected in making my own decisions about how to be true to a course mutually agreed upon; and not singled out for something special about me personally, but rather encouraged in the faith that we live in a space where the rules—the principles—will be adhered to.”

At the Psychology Department’s program, Professors Teresa Treat, Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, and Marvin Chun shared their insights. "There are lots of ways to mentor effectively, but it can be helpful for students to bear in mind that we typically don’t get training in how to mentor before becoming faculty," said Treat. "As a result, mentoring skills can vary quite a bit across faculty members, and it is important for students to be proactive about articulating their training needs, so that we are in a better position to meet them.”

[See sidebar for how one department is trying to solve that problem.]

Chun opened his comments by saying, “Mentoring is one of the most rewarding aspects of being on the faculty.” He and the other speakers stressed the importance of honest communication, even when the issues are sensitive. He mentors the students “I noticed that certain issues came up again and again, regardless of field: the students’ need for accessibility, feedback, intellectual independence, encouragement, and reassurance from the mentor; the importance of open and honest communication, and the value of having multiple mentors,” said Chun.

In his lab by setting clear expectations and negotiating with them what seems reasonable for them to accomplish each semester. Nolen-Hoeksema compared the mentoring relationship to dating and added that it’s even trickier than that: “If you don’t like a person on the first date, you can dump him. It’s a lot harder as a graduate student to dump an advisor.” She noted that it’s important for a student to let the faculty member know if you need more of his or her time,
Senior Faculty Mentor Junior Faculty in Genetcis

In the biological sciences, laboratory research in academia is carried out by groups headed by a principal investigator, usually a professor, and other researchers at various stages of development: Research Associates, post-doctoral fellows, technicians, graduate and undergraduate students. Newly minted Assistant Professors must develop research projects, get funding from various sources, gradually assemble the laboratory group; and all of that must be initiated with the increase in size of laboratories engaged in business schools and industry. Indeed, certainly there is room for more formal, brief discussions in an informal setting.

Two years ago, Dean Jon Butler declared a fall week as “Mentoring Week,” and the Department enthusiastically supported, the initiation of a training program. With advice from other members of the Medical School and the Yale School of Management, a training program, commonly called a “Buddy Program,” was initiated. It is modeled after similar programs that exist in other departments at Yale, at other Universities, and in industry. The Buddy Program in Genetics matches each new faculty member or junior faculty member with a senior member of the Department for counsel and advice. In existence for only about a year, an initial evaluation of the program remains to be done, but early responses seem positive. Certainly prior experience is room for more formal, brief and targeted management training, such as exists in business schools and industry. Indeed, with the increase in size of laboratories engaged in biological research, the increasing requirement for diverse skills including quantitative ones, and the increasing importance of this research for clinical medicine, the need for management training for all new principal investigators may grow.
Job Market Worries

Students approaching graduation are understandably concerned about how the current economic recession will impact their search for teaching positions.

A recent article in the Yale Daily News said, “Although hiring conditions vary by discipline, job prospects in academia are suffering as universities across the country freeze hiring... Students at Yale’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences are bracing themselves for a harsh economic reality.” On the positive side, the article noted that “Hiring in the hard sciences and certain social sciences seems to be holding up under market pressures,” according to the eight toes who spoke to the reporter.

Asked to look into the situation, Graduation School Career Services Director Victoria Blodgett reports that she was not able to find clear statistics that show a significant drop in job offerings. Based on official statements from Brown, Cornell, and Connecticut, and informal communications like blogs and e-mails, it is evident that new budgetary strategies are being implemented at campuses across the country in response to the economic downturn, but that doesn’t necessarily translate into faculty decreases. “At some schools there is talk of a reduction or temporary hiring freeze, especially for administrative positions. But at many of these schools, it sounds as if the intention is to fill open faculty positions and to continue on-going discussions,” she says. “I think that students are engaged in an intense and on-going discussion of the job market, but I am not sure that they are actually experiencing the difficulties suggested by the level of discussion.”

Blodgett points out that the hiring season is still very much in progress. “In conversations with students, I know that they are still getting interviews and offers—it is hard to get a real sense of things at the moment. We will know more in later spring.”

Blodgett’s advice to students on the job market, and it is good advice in any economy:

1. Complete applications “with the greatest care. Make sure to include everything that has been requested and avoid mistakes.”
2. Carefully research the institutions or organizations to which you are applying so that you can speak specifically about how your expertise and experience will help them reach their goals.
3. Be prepared to explain why you want to work in a particular job, school or organization. Know ahead of time the reasons why they would or should hire you.
4. Give your references plenty of time to write a comprehensive evaluation.

“Candidates need to work harder and smarter and look more broadly for opportunities. Additionally, it is important that students—or anyone on the job market—engage in strategies to increase the reach of their job search and develop the strongest possible job search skills.”

- Wesleyan University and St. Louis University.

Students are finalists, but haven’t had firm offers yet... I think one of the shocks for job seekers this year is that not only were there relatively few jobs to begin with, but many of those that were advertised got cancelled, and in some fields there were virtually no research university jobs left.”

“In my opinion, there are four significant differences between this downturn and others,” Blodgett says. “The first is its breadth. In years past, the market was more field-specific, and candidates would try hard to position their applications in a variety of fields or might wait out the downturn for a year or two until the market improved. This year it seems that the market downturn is not tied to any particular field, or even the ‘pipeline’ issues of faculty hiring, but to the overall health of the institution and the state and national economic health. Secondly, I think that there is more chatter about market woes in general, which spreads both news and worry. A third element compounding the situation is that the secondary market is closing. A student whose ‘Plan B’ was to enter a parallel job outside of academia is finding that market starting to close. Lastly, the challenges are global, which affects both the academic and industry employment market.”

“That said, falling prey to the negative news will not improve an applicant’s ability to be successful in the job search process. Candidates need to work harder and smarter and look more broadly for opportunities. Additionally, it is important that students—or anyone on the job market—engage in strategies to increase the reach of their job search and develop the strongest possible job search skills.”

The fourth panelist, Alexis Gambis, a Ph.D. student at Rockefeller University, is a filmmaker and the founder of Imagine Film Festival, which showcases fiction films about science in hopes of bringing new appreciation of science to a wide audience. The panelists urged graduate students to share their research with the public, both locally and through the internet. Writing articles, blogging, or taking an internship can jumpstart a career in science communication.

Maria Lebedeva (Genetics) helped organize this panel, which was a program of Graduate Career Services.

On February 10, the GCS held a program titled “Leadership and Teamwork Skills for the Real World.”

“Employers constantly look for evidence of leadership and teamwork in job candidates and employees,” says Blodgett. “To help students looking for nonacademic jobs, Brooks, a Yale expert in leadership development, introduced students to essential leadership and teamwork skills. Prior to coming to Yale, Heidi was an executive coach for leaders in Fortune 500 companies, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations.”

Cunningham underscored the usefulness of having an “elevator pitch.” Being able to deliver an idea concisely can be life-changing, because, like Quezada, you never know whom you are going to meet and how important a brief conversation may be.
The Graduate School is deeply committed to attracting, retaining, supporting, and mentoring a highly talented and diverse student body. To further this goal, Yale established the Graduate School's Office for Diversity and Equal Opportunity (ODEO), whose staff and 10 student Fellows organize programs that promote diversity.

The first Bouchet Seminar of the spring semester featured Rana Asali Hogarth (History of Medicine and Science), speaking on “Comparing Anatomies, Constructing Races: Medicine and Slavery in the Atlantic World, 1787–1838.” Her research looks at the medical theories that guided slavery system of the Americas by providing a window in which to view and construct slave bodies as ‘others.’

For Rana, the Bouchet Seminar is “a valuable forum for the development and exchange of ideas. I am really grateful to have shared my work with other students in a nurturing and supportive environment.”

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Rana Hogarth
The U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command’s mission is to provide solutions to medical problems of importance to the American armed forces at home and abroad. The scope of this effort and the priorities attached to specific projects are influenced by changes in military and civilian medical science and technology, operational requirements, military threat assessments, and national defense strategies.

Jerrica earned her B.S. from Clark University in biology and mathematics. She is now a graduate student in the lab of David Stern in the Pathology Department. She studies neuregulin, a gene that is involved in normal breast development and breast cancer.

Jennifer’s research involves determining the role that the tyrosine kinase receptor Met plays in the nucleus of cancer cells. She graduated from Boston College with a B.S. in biochemistry in 2006.

Alley’s research focuses on the role of a non-nuclear estrogen receptor in breast cancer and developing its use as a prognostic and predictive marker in the clinical setting. Her B.S. in biology was earned at Dartmouth College.

Kathy studies genes involved in signaling pathways that protect cells from DNA damage. Her research concentrates on three related genes that are mutations in BRCA1 and associated with hereditary breast cancer. She earned her B.A. in biology from Cornell University in 2004.

Maria studies microtubule-associated proteins as prognostic and predictive markers for determining response to taxane therapeutics—tumor-destroying agents used in breast cancer. She earned her MPH in environmental health and epidemiology from the University of Florida and served as a Homeland Security fellow at the Oakridge National Laboratory before coming to Yale.

attended by about 2,500 astronomers. Shanil, however, was in Hawaii at the time, having left the conference early for an observing run at the Keck Observatory. According to the AAS awards website, “The Astronomy Achievement Student Awards are given to recognize exemplary research by undergraduate and graduate students who present at one of the poster sessions at the meetings of the AAS.” His conference poster was titled “A Complete Group of Local AGN: The 5 Mega-second INTEGRAL Survey of the XMM-LSS Field.” Shanil is working on a dissertation, advised by Meg Urry, that studies supermassive black holes at the centers of galaxies. His research is funded by an external Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada postgraduate scholarship.

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We hope that graduate students will continue to speak with us about problems as they arise, so that we can work towards finding solutions. Members of the GSA meet with the Dean, Provost Salovey, and other University administrators to update them on graduate student affairs and address issues, so if there is an issue that you think needs to be brought to their attention, please let us know by speaking with your department’s representative, emailing gsa@yale.edu, or stopping by a meeting.

GSA meetings are open to the public (recent guests have included residents of the Whitehall apartment complex, for example) and are held at the Hall of Graduate Studies, room 119 at 7 p.m. every other Wednesday. Please visit http://gsa.yale.edu for more information or to read minutes from recent meetings. The website also lists some of the ongoing projects and initiatives of the GSA and gives details on how you can get involved and help out.

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Winter Ball!
February 7, New Haven Lawn Club
Getting Married? Taking a job?

The Graduate School News will begin publishing significant personal and professional news submitted by students. If you have accepted a job, published a paper, gotten married, had a baby, or experienced some other significant event, let us know! Include your name, department and other relevant information.

--- Job: Yale and hiring institution or organization, location of job
--- Publication: title, journal or book name, date
--- Marriage: spouse’s name (and Yale affiliation, if any), date and venue of the wedding
--- Birth or adoption: baby’s name, gender, and date of birth, names of both parents and their Yale affiliation

History of Art Reunion Conference

Alumni and current students in the History of Art Department will gather for a three-day reunion conference on April 3, 4 and 5. The conference: “Art’s Histories at Yale,” will feature talks, panels, social events, and tours of the department’s new home in the Jeffrey Loria Center for the History of Art and the newly restored Paul Rudolph Building. Special to this conference will be breakout sessions at which attendees will be invited to discuss an object of art from Yale’s collections. Each session will be led by an art historian who is an alumnus of Yale, as well as a session led by Yale University Art Gallery Director Josh Reynolds. Speakers include current faculty of Yale; Harvard, Columbia, Stanford, CUNY Graduate Center, and other institutions, along with museum directors and curators.

Keynote speaker on Friday will be Robert L. Herbert (Ph.D. 1981, History of Art), the Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Humanities, Emeritus, Mount Holyoke College.

Outstanding Alumni

Jonathan Holloway

Erik M. Lee (Ph.D. 1997, History of Art) became director of the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, in March. He previously served as director of the Tafel Museum of Art in Cincinnati and, before that, at the University of Oklahoma’s Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art. An alumnus of Yale College as well as the Graduate School, Lee spent two of his student years in London at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and the Courtauld Institute of Art. While writing his doctoral dissertation on Titian’s reception in late 18th-century Britain, he worked at the Yale Center for British Art. The Kimbell Art Museum, opened in 1972 and has collections that range from antiquity to the 20th century, including European masterpieces from Pia Angelo and Caravaggio to Cézanne and Matisse, and important collections of Egyptian, Near Eastern, Greek, and Roman antiquities, as well as Asian, Mesopotamian, and African arts.

The Kimbell’s internationally-renowned building was designed by Louis Kahn, architect for both the Yale Center for British Art and the Yale University Art Gallery. In November 2008, the Kimbell Art Museum unveiled preliminary designs for British Art and the Yale University Art Gallery. In November 2008, the Kimbell Art Museum unveiled preliminary designs for a major addition designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Renzo Piano that will double the existing gallery space and provide expanded educational facilities. Construction is expected to be in 2010.

Jon Butler, Chieko Tani, editor; Bjorn Akselsen, design/production; Yale University Art Gallery, production supervision; Michael Marland, Harold Shapiro, photography.

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