Message from the Outgoing Chair

Kristen Mitchell

It has been a pleasure to serve on the PDA Board these past two years and to witness first-hand the commitment that SOT continues to make towards enhancing the professional experience of postdocs within the Society. Prior to serving on the PDA Board, I had vague notions about how a scientific society such as SOT operated and did not appreciate how important society members’ contributions are to the day-to-day activities or the long-range plans of the Society. Based on my experience over the past two years, I am confident that, as postdoctoral members of SOT, our voices are audible and our input is desired by SOT Council. The establishment of a new postdoctoral membership category, the creation of the Best Postdoctoral Publication Award, the acceptance of a PDA-sponsored symposium at the annual meeting, and the continued support of the Postdoctoral Luncheon, are all examples of outstanding ideas that were created by postdocs and made possible with the support of SOT Council and Headquarters.

I would like to acknowledge the other members of the 2007-08 PDA Board, Heather Floyd, Amy Skinner, and Heather Persson, for putting in the time and effort that was necessary to maintain the momentum of the PDA and to ensure its success over the past year. I am also grateful to Dr. Scott Burchiel, who was the 2007-08 SOT Council liaison to the PDA, and to Dr. Betty Eidemiller, who is staying on as the SOT Headquarters staff liaison to the PDA. I am confident that the incoming chair, Heather Floyd, and the new Board members will continue to lead the PDA in exciting new directions and maintain a vibrant dialogue between postdocs and SOT Council.

To all SOT postdocs, please consider getting involved with the PDA this year by serving as a postdoc liaison on a committee or by helping plan events for next year’s annual meeting. I wish you all much success and look forward to seeing you in Baltimore next year!
Biosketches for 2008-2009 PDA Board

Chair: Heather Floyd

I received my Ph.D. from Wake Forest University from the department of Cancer Biology in May 2005 where my dissertation work focused on lung cancer. I then proceeded to a postdoc at Tulane University where I briefly continued working in the lung cancer field. Unfortunately, Hurricane Katrina brought a tremendous halt to my research, where I lost all of my experiments and research animals. With New Orleans’ and Tulane’s recovery looking unstable, I relocated to North Carolina, accepting a postdoctoral position at the US EPA. My current research focus is in the field of cardiovascular disease; though this is far from my graduate training, I am quickly learning the field. I have held this position for a little over a year now and am extremely happy with this career transition. Throughout my career, I have been a member of SOT and am very familiar with the organization. I would like to see the assembly do a few things, but most important in my eyes is postdoctoral integration into SOT as a whole. This integration will not only benefit postdocs for critical networking and learning purposes, but SOT as well, since we are the future of the organization. I am a member of a few Specialty Sections, have sat on the board of the Molecular Biology Specialty Section for two years, and have helped with CE courses. I will enjoy learning and understanding more about the dynamics of SOT. My participation in the organization has always been positive.
Serving on the SOT Postdoctoral Assembly is an honor as well as a great opportunity to network with postdocs from across the country. Throughout my life, I have been extremely fortunate to experience many different cultures and academic environments. I would like to share some of this experience while serving as an officer of the PDA. In addition, I think it will be important to find new ways to stimulate postdoctoral members to participate actively in the PDA and in specialty sections at SOT. As co-chair, I am delighted with the opportunity to represent and promote the careers of all postdoctoral members of the PDA, and I look forward to a productive year ahead.

Co-Chair: Betina J. Lew

I am currently a postdoctoral research associate at the University of Rochester School of Medicine, in the Dept. of Environmental Medicine. My postdoctoral advisor is Dr. Paige Lawrence, and I am studying the physiological, morphological, and molecular mechanisms by which pollutants alter mammary gland development during pregnancy. My current focus is on the pollutant 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin, which is also known as TCDD or dioxin. Mammary gland development is a complex and tightly orchestrated process involving numerous hormones, growth factors, extra cellular matrix (ECM) components, and other molecules produced locally in the mammary gland as well as in other glands and tissues. Dioxins bind and activate the aryl hydrocarbon receptor (AhR) and AhR activation impairs mammary development during pregnancy, thereby blocking normal gland function during lactation.

My formal training has been quite diverse, beginning with my Bachelor's degree at Sao Paulo State University in Brazil. I studied for my Master's degree in Israel, at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, while my Doctoral degree was a joint project at both Sao Paulo State University and Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI. I’ve been a member of The Society of Toxicology for 2 years, and during this short period of time I’ve followed the work of the PDA with enthusiasm and admiration. I am eager to help continue the exceptional work that has been done by the previous PDA board at SOT.

Secretary/Treasurer: Valerie Mitchell

I am currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Health and the Environment at the University of California, Davis. My research focus is on sex differences in lung disease, with a specific focus on the role hormones play in environmental pollutant mediated airway epithelial cell injury. I received my Ph.D. in 2007 in Comparative Pathology from UC Davis, where my dissertation research examined the synergy of progesterone and environmental tobacco smoke in the exacerbation of allergic asthma. I became involved with the Society of Toxicology while in graduate school and won the Best Student Abstract Award from the Inhalation and Respiratory Specialty Section in 2007. I’m an immunologist by trade but my experience at the SOT annual conference opened my eyes to the wealth of toxicological research that was being conducted and helped guide me to my current research interests. While in graduate school, I was an officer in the Comparative Pathology Graduate Student Association, and was the Student Representative for the Educational Policy Committee for the graduate group. I am currently a participant in the Lab Management Institute for Postdoctoral Scholars at UC Davis. I have really enjoyed interacting with other postdocs here on campus. Through this interaction I have witnessed the great disparities that exist in postdoctoral training. I feel fortunate to be in a very supportive training environment and would like to assist others in making the most of this critical time in our career development. Serving on the SOT Postdoctoral Assembly is an honor as well as a great opportunity to network with postdocs from across the country.

Counselor: Lauren Aleksunes

I am currently a postdoctoral fellow in the toxicology laboratory of Dr. Curtis Klaassen at the University of Kansas Medical Center. For the past year, I have studied the multidrug resistance-associated protein (Mrp) class of xenobiotic transporters in kidney and placenta, and the potential for these transporters to dictate outcomes of toxicant exposure. Prior to joining KUMC, I completed both the Pharm.D. (Doctor of Pharmacy, 2002) and Ph.D. (2006) programs at the University of Connecticut. My dissertation research project in the laboratory of Dr Jose Manautou focused on the regulation of xenobiotic efflux transporters during chemical-induced hepatotoxicity. While at the University of Connecticut, I was a recipient of a Howard Hughes Predoctoral Fellowship in Biological Sciences.

I have been an active student/postdoc member of SOT, the International Society for the Study of Xenobiotics and the National Postdoctoral Association. At the last 5 national SOT meetings, I presented research posters and presentations and received student travel awards from the Women in Toxicology Special Interest Group and the Northeast Chapter of SOT. I spent that past year representing postdoc interests at KUMC (as a member of the Postdoctoral Advisory Committee) and within SOT (as the postdoctoral counselor for the Mechanisms Specialty Section). In both of these capacities, I brought attention to issues related to the postdoc experience through organization of seminars related to career opportunities for postdocs, contribution to the Fall 2007 postdoc newsletter, and development of policies regarding postdoc positions at KUMC. I look forward to serving as your SOT PDA counselor for 2008-2009.
The presence of international postdocs in the U.S. is easily noticeable. Many times I have entered the lunchroom or the postdocs’ office at the university where I work and was not sure what language was being spoken. I smile in silence and realize that this is one of the beauties of being here in the U.S. as a postdoctoral researcher! We have the chance to be involved in state-of-the-art research, and to meet people from many different countries and cultures. This enriches our understanding of science and of life.

As international postdocs, we come from different countries and bring lots of expectations with us. Some postdocs easily adapt to the American way of life and quickly become involved with their American counterparts. However, others are not so easily integrated. For the latter group, consequences include a missed opportunity to improve one’s understanding and use of English or to understand the structure and processes of daily and/or professional life in the U.S.

Like the U.S. citizen, the foreigner has to deal with all of the difficulties that are inherent in being a postdoc, but with the added challenges of visa issues, language barriers, and of course, the distance from family and friends. Moreover, there is evidence showing that, even though international postdocs working in the U.S. make greater contributions to patent creation, their stipends are generally 10% less than postdocs who are U.S. citizens. Postdocs working in the U.S. on visas have limited flexibility to change labs when they are not content with their current positions. Furthermore, when international postdocs consider academic career advancement, the majority of grants are available exclusively to U.S. citizens or permanent residents. The same rules often apply for jobs in government, and these factors can be discouraging or may even prevent career development.

In my opinion, international postdocs can work toward overcoming these obstacles by being involved through associations such as the PDA, and by having a voice in Specialty Sections at SOT. It is important to participate, to be informed and to inform others. A “toolkit” for international postdocs has been established by the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) and is available on the NPA website: http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/site/c.eotIMISOBlH/b.1423457/

**2009 Session Proposals**

*Heather Floyd and Lauren Aleksunes*

The PDA has submitted two proposals for research symposia at the 2009 Annual Meeting in Baltimore, MD.

For the first proposal, the PDA has joined with the Student Activity Council to create a research symposium entitled “Gene-Environment Interactions: Epigenetic Pathways in Chronic Disease Promotion and Progression.” It will feature presentations from postdocs and students and will be a wonderful opportunity for junior researchers to display their scientific achievements at the annual meeting. If accepted, this will be the first symposium of its kind for the society, further aiding the integration of postdocs and students in SOT.

The second proposal is entitled “Careers in Toxicology: Beyond Academia.” The idea for this session originated from you and other postdocs. The PDA used feedback from the 2007 SOT postdoctoral survey as well as suggestions from the postdoc luncheon to develop this program. Since a large majority of postdocs in SOT are completing their fellowships at academic institutions, the PDA wanted to highlight alternate career paths that are available for toxicologists. For our proposal, we invited accomplished toxicologists from a variety of specialties including pharmaceutical industry, food safety, contract research laboratories, consulting, government agencies, chemical industry and a non-profit agency to speak to us. A number of the speakers have worked in different sectors and will provide interesting stories on how they jumped from one position to another.

Over the next couple of months, the Program Committee will be reviewing and selecting proposals for the 2009 meeting. We are optimistic that our proposals will be chosen since they align with SOT’s Long-Range Plan by “providing information indispensable to the scientific and professional development of toxicologists.” The PDA will keep you informed of the status of the proposals as we learn more. If you have ideas for informational sessions at future meetings, please E-mail your ideas to laleksunes@kumc.edu.
Join SOT as a Postdoctoral Member

Valerie Mitchell

As the National Postdoctoral Association states, postdocs are unique in that they are not students and not yet independent professionals. SOT has acted on the recommendation of that group and created a special member category effective January 2008. Postdoctoral researchers holding a Ph.D. or equivalent doctorate (e.g., M.D., D.V.M.) with an interest in toxicology and under the direction of a research mentor are now eligible for Postdoctoral membership. Not only does this new membership category recognize the uniqueness of postdocs, but it also reinforces the formation of a community of postdoc members. Moreover, having this membership category will allow SOT to communicate relevant information to postdocs and better capture data in support of postdocs.

Postdoc members of SOT pay lower membership dues than Full and Associate members, and can join one Special Interest Group and one Specialty Section at no charge. Reduced registration fees for the Annual Meeting is yet another advantage. In addition, postdocs can serve as a Postdoctoral Representative for one of these groups or for an SOT committee. All SOT members have access to the members-only resources on the SOT web page (such as the electronic Membership Directory) and are able to submit unsponsored abstracts for the SOT Annual Meeting, the largest of its kind in the world.

You may apply in advance of any of the review dates—May 1, September 1, and January 1. The application is online and takes about 10 minutes to complete. Your postdoctoral mentor submits a letter of reference. More information about SOT membership is available at . If you are near the end of your time as a postdoc, you might consider applying for Associate or Full membership.

Join other practicing toxicologists and scientists from allied disciplines who are dedicated to advancing the science of toxicology to enhance human, animal, and environmental health as a member of SOT.

Summary from NPA Annual Meeting

Heather Floyd

The 2008 Annual Meeting of the National Postdoc Association (NPA) was held April 25-27th in Boston, MA. The meeting began with a workshop for leaders of postdoctoral associations. This workshop was designed to allow postdoctoral association leaders to share do’s and don’ts about creating and sustaining a successful group. Current issues facing postdoctoral associations are membership, participation, funding, and leadership. We discussed these issues in small groups and found the topics of sustaining membership, leadership, and participation to be the most relevant to SOT PDA. While our participation in the annual meetings and membership are good, the idea of reaching out to members throughout the year seemed to be the most applicable. Although the PDA has sponsored a “Best Postdoctoral Publication Award” for over the past two years, additional activities would be conducive to increase the participation of postdocs in SOT. The PDA Board is attempting to address this issue by proposing a career development Web-based seminar in 2009. Web-based seminar-type activities would allow postdocs who are unable to attend the annual meeting to still actively participate in SOT. Such activities would benefit the Society because postdocs will be likely to remember this outreach program, which may help to solidify future participation in SOT.

The afternoon session was specifically about postdoc issues, as defined by the Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy (COSEPUP), and how they have been addressed. In 2000, COSEPUP published a report identifying 10 action items for the improvement of postdoc training:

* Award institutional recognition, status and compensation commensurate with the postdocs' contributions to the research enterprise.
* Develop distinct policies and standards for postdocs modeled on those available for graduate students and faculty.
* Develop mechanisms for frequent and regular communication between postdocs and their advisors, institutions, funding organizations and disciplinary societies. (continued on pg.7)
When I was asked to write about my experiences as a toxicologist and a parent, my first thought was “which am I more of an expert in?” Having been employed as a toxicologist for nearly three years and being a mother of twins for almost six months now, I’m leaning towards claiming my scientist role as the more “expert” of the two. Both are jobs that I’ve jumped into head-first and somehow managed to stay afloat with some success. My sons Connor and Matthew are both healthy and thriving, and I actually received a promotion at work while out on maternity leave. However, it is the balancing act of filling both roles to the best of my ability that truly is the challenge.

When I was in graduate school, I had planned to start a family after well establishing my career. And even then, I never had the desire to take any longer than the allotted maternity leave to be a stay-at-home mom. I did not want to feel as though I’d labored through all those painful hours in the lab and studying Casarett and Doull’s to wind up at home singing “The Itsy Bitsy Spider” or watching Baby Einstein videos. However life has a funny way of changing on you when you’re not looking. Not only would I love to stay at home all day with my children, I would love to be able to forego sleep just to be with them all the time! It is unbelievable how strong the bond is between a mother and her children, and you really can’t explain it unless someone has been there also.

As a Ph.D., it’s in my nature to strive for perfection and not settle for much less. However there are not enough hours in the day for this type of thinking to persist and to keep my sanity. So, I’ve had to take the advice that I’ve been receiving my whole life and just “chill out” in some areas of my life. Of course I keep on top of the important things, but I don’t spend ten hours a week at the gym anymore, my house is not spotless, and the cabinets do run bare now and then before I go food shopping. It’s all in finding the balance that I’m comfortable with. Truthfully I have had to “let go” of my work drive somewhat, but this was a decision I consciously made in order for me to be the parent I want to be. Instead of going to every meeting or volunteering to edit a regulatory document over the weekend, I try to keep my free time available for my family. I still work very hard at my job, but I’ve eased up on my career advancement activities for the time being.

The great part of this whole balancing act is that things will constantly be moving from one side of the scale to the other. Things that are important today may not be important tomorrow, which means something else can go back to being a priority. Another great thing is that I’m neither the first nor the last woman to have to balance my career and family. There are plenty of good role models for me to emulate. At the end of the day, I would have to say that being a parent of twins and a toxicologist takes a lot of dedication, hard work, patience, time-management skills, and ingenuity. But the rewards are worth every bit of effort!

Matthew and Connor Persson (born 12/21/07)
Summary from NPA Annual Meeting (continued)

* Monitor and at least annually provide formal evaluations of postdoc performance.
* Ensure that all postdocs have access to health insurance and to institutional services, regardless of funding source.
* Set limits for total time as a postdoc, with clearly described exceptions as appropriate.
* Invite the participation of postdocs when creating standards, definitions and conditions for appointments.
* Provide substantive career guidance to improve the postdoc's ability to prepare for regular employment.
* Improve the quality of data on both postdoctoral working conditions and employment prospects in research.
* Take steps to improve the transition of postdocs to regular career positions.

None of the 10 points has received nation-wide resolution, but progress has been made by many institutions. For example, postdoc compensation and benefits have improved slightly, but until the NIH postdoc-training pay scale is increased, compensation remains an issue. Health benefits have improved dramatically within many institutions, but have not been extended nationwide, which remains an area still needing improvement. Currently, the majority of postdocs are not offered any form of retirement since they are categorized as temporary employees. It was discussed that issues with health benefits and retirement could be overcome through the development of a national postdoctoral job description, providing standard benefits for postdocs.

The points addressing mentoring and communication were also lacking among postdocs. Again, these issues have been overcome by some institutions but not nationally. Institutions have addressed these issues by requiring postdocs to complete Individual Development Plans to inform postdocs of expectations from PIs and vice versa. Many institutions review these annually to track progress and to address issues as they arise. In many cases, the Individual Development Plan is considered an official document, requiring yearly review by an institutional official.

Finally, career development was discussed with regard to facilitating career choices, as well as transitions into new careers. Many postdocs felt that PIs were not interested in career development but in productivity and publications. Many felt that stress placed upon PIs for funding and publication records detracted from career mentoring. Many institutions overcome these issues through special seminars geared towards resume writing, cover letter writing, career searching, and career alternatives to research. Many institutions also advise postdocs to search for career mentors, specifically in their intended career path.

Overall, it appears that many institutions are making progress in the fulfillment of the 10 action points by COSEPUP. Unfortunately this is not a nationwide occurrence. However, as institutions continue to develop postdoctoral offices and adopt practices used in successful institutions, these issues will eventually be resolved.

The remainder of the meeting was spent addressing postdoc issues by professionals with relevant experience. We were asked to choose 3 sessions that were most relevant. I chose mentoring, since SOT has been pursuing mentorship programs; family matters since I have heard concern about balancing family and career; and personal conflict maintenance and negotiation, which seems highly relevant to most postdocs.

The mentoring session was extremely useful and was led by Dr. Shine Chang and Dr. Janis Apted from the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. MD Anderson has developed a comprehensive mentoring program for postdocs, requiring IDPs and suggesting multiple mentors in different interest levels for every postdoc. The key to being successfully mentored is to be proactive! This could not be stressed enough. Find as many mentors as you need to aid in your success based on your personal needs. Everyone is not great at everything; therefore, multiple mentors will serve to support your areas of interest. These people will have the life experiences to provide guidance on an intended path, whether it be career, family, communication, etc. Again, postdocs must be proactive – a mentor will not find you! We also discussed how to be courteous and considerate when asking for help. Realize that these individuals are doing this as a service, so don’t wait until the last minute to ask for assistance. As your career progresses, encourage the mentoring relationship to become collaborative and find a way to give something back to your mentor. Again, it could not be stressed enough: take control of your postdoc career to be successful. I think this session addressed some of the issues that the Career Resource and Development (CRAD) committee at SOT faced while developing the mentoring pilot program last year: there were many more mentors than mentees, and mentors were not being contacted by mentees. A similar informational session about mentoring would be great for the both students and postdocs of SOT, addressing the importance of mentoring for success. (continued on pg. 8)
The second session that I attended was about family and career management. I felt that this would be a great topic for individuals with children, spouses, an elderly family member, etc. Unfortunately this was a poorly organized session. The session was divided among four small-group leaders. Unfortunately, the leaders were not diverse enough to cover multiple family topics, and instead focused primarily on maintaining a balance between children and a career. All 4 speakers were women with children: two were postdocs and two with established careers. One of the speakers was about to begin her fourth postdoc, describing how children hinder career success. I think the session would have been more useful if it had included speakers who had success balancing children, elderly parents, spouses, pets, or life outside of work and career. A session similar to this would also serve as a great informational session at an SOT annual meeting, appealing to many people.

Finally, the session, “Zen and the Art of Personal Conflict Maintenance” was exceptional. This session was chaired by Don Greenstein, J.D., and Doug Thompson from The Keystone Center, both serving as Senior Mediators. They spoke about negotiation and resolving conflicts where both parties agree to the same terms. The speakers provided approach strategies, such as separating the people from the problem, focus on issues rather than personal positions, collaboration for mutual gain, using objective criteria, and knowing both your and the other party’s best alternative to a negotiated agreement. This session was extremely informative, especially to those with fear of confrontation. It provided suggestions on how to approach people, how to effectively relay our points, and how to negotiate. These topics are not generally taught, but are learned as we progress in our careers. Therefore, it would likely serve as a great informational session at the annual meeting.

Overall, the meeting was extremely informative. It covered many subjects, all relevant to the postdoc experience. I was provided information that will benefit the SOT PDA as far as organizational issues, as well as ideas for future topics at annual meetings or Web-based seminars. This meeting focused on hot topics for postdocs. I would recommend other postdocs in SOT to consider attending next year’s annual NPA meeting.

Year in Review:
Highlights of PDA Activities 2007-2008

PDA Sponsored Symposium: The PDA proposed, organized and chaired an informational seminar at the 2008 Annual Meeting in Seattle. This symposium was entitled “Putting Your Best Foot Forward: Job Interviewing Session for Early Career Scientists” and was designed to provide participants with insight and tips on job interviewing. Speakers from government (Dr. Linda Birnbaum), industry (Dr. Leigh Ann Burns-Naas) and academia (Dr. Kristen Mitchell) presented personal perspectives on hiring and being hired. This symposium was chaired by Drs. Kristen Mitchell and Nick Radio.

Best Postdoctoral Publication Awards: The PDA was pleased to once again offer the “Best Postdoctoral Publication Awards” to postdocs who published exceptional manuscripts during the 2007-08 year. This year, the PDA Board received numerous excellent applications for this award. The applications were evaluated and ranked by the PDA Board and a panel of external reviewers. The three winners were honored at the Postdoc Luncheon at the 2008 Annual Meeting, where each winner was presented with a $100 award and a plaque. (continued on pg. 9)
Postdoctoral Assembly Luncheon: The PDA Board once again organized a luncheon for postdocs at the 2008 Annual Meeting. The luncheon was initially slotted to accommodate 150 postdocs; however, the 150-person limit was rapidly reached during the “Early-Bird” registration period. Hence, SOT Council graciously allotted additional funds to increase the number of attendees to 185. During the luncheon, postdoc attendees were welcomed by Dr. Scott Burchiel (Council Liaison) and Dr. George Corcoran (Council President). Current PDA Board members spoke about PDA activities over the past year and encouraged audience members to help identify topics for future symposium proposals at the annual meeting. The winners of the Best Postdoctoral Publication Awards were announced and a drawing was held for door prizes. Based on comments received after the luncheon, this event seemed to hold wide appeal for postdocs attending the annual meeting. The PDA Board will strive to make the postdoctoral luncheon become an annual event at future meetings.

Implementation of the Postdoctoral Membership Category: This year SOT welcomed the inaugural members of the new Postdoctoral Membership category, which was established during 2006-07 by the joint efforts of the PDA and the SOT Membership Committee. During the first two rounds of membership reviews, 97 postdocs were accepted into this new category.

Online Survey of the Postdoctoral Experience: The PDA Board once again offered an online survey to SOT postdocs to garner feedback regarding the success of the 2007 Annual Meeting and to gather suggestions for postdoc-specific programs and events for the 2008 Annual Meeting. Over 120 postdocs responded to this survey. Comments and suggestions from the May 2007 survey will also serve as the basis for symposium proposals created by the PDA for the 2009 Annual Meeting in Baltimore.

Postdoc Lapel Pins: This was the second year that the PDA Board designed and purchased lapel pins for postdocs to wear at the Annual Meeting. Lapel pins were distributed at the Student/Postdoc Mixer held Sunday evening at the annual meeting. The rationale for distributing lapel pins is to increase the visibility of postdocs within the Society. It is quite common for postdocs to “fall between the cracks,” as they are no longer graduate students and are not yet independent investigators. The lapel pins are a token with which to identify postdocs and distinguish them from other groups of attendees at the Annual Meeting.

Participation in the National Postdoctoral Association: In April 2007, Kristen Mitchell represented the PDA at the Annual Meeting of the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA), which was held in Berkeley, CA. The NPA strives to improve the quality of postdoctoral training across all disciplines by increasing awareness of postdoc concerns and drafting new legislation designed to minimize inequities among postdoc trainees. The continued participation of a PDA Board member at the annual NPA meeting is made possible by financial support from SOT Council and is a testament to the Society’s ongoing commitment to its postdoctoral members.

Postdoctoral Representatives: The PDA increased the number of postdoctoral representatives on Regional Chapters, Specialty Sections, and Special Interest Groups. Notable examples include the appointment of Chrissy Palermo as postdoctoral liaison to CRAD, and Jeff Moffitt as postdoctoral liaison to the Education Committee. Increasing postdoctoral representation will continue to be a goal for the 2008-09 PDA Board.

PDA Board Elections: The PDA held an online election for the 2008-09 PDA Board members. The PDA called for nominations for Vice-Chair, Secretary/Treasurer and Councilor at the end of 2007. Nominees prepared a biosketch and were contacted personally by current members of the Board. The electronic ballot was made available in February, and the new 2008-09 PDA Board members were introduced at the annual meeting.

The Post-Y: The PDA continued to publish its biannual newsletter, with new issues distributed in May and November 2007. Topics addressed in these newsletters included a summary of the annual meeting, highlights of the National Postdoctoral Association annual meeting, gender-based salary differences, and topics relevant to outreach and education in toxicology. All SOT postdocs are encouraged to submit short articles for the newsletter.

Communiqué Articles: The PDA Board submitted various articles for the Communiqué, including an article that summarized highlights from the annual meeting of the NPA, as well as periodic updates regarding PDA activities.
Recap of Postdoc Events at the 2008 Annual Meeting

Kristen Mitchell

This year, over 400 postdocs attended the Annual Meeting, with 64 of them having the distinction of being inaugural members of the newly established “Postdoctoral” membership category. The Postdoctoral Assembly (PDA) was pleased to offer numerous events geared towards postdocs at the 2008 Annual Meeting:

Monday afternoon symposium: This year, the PDA organized an informational seminar entitled “Putting Your Best Foot Forward: Job Interviewing Workshop for Early-Career Scientists.” Linda Birnbaum provided valuable insights and tips into interviewing for a scientific position in government, while Leigh Ann Burns-Naas educated the audience on how to succeed during a behavioral interview, and Kristen Mitchell described her recent experience interviewing for an academic research position. We are thrilled to have had a great turnout for this event and enthusiastic participation from the audience. Power Point slides from this seminar are available on the PDA website.

Tuesday afternoon Postdoctoral Luncheon: Around 150 postdocs gathered Tuesday afternoon for the PDA-sponsored Postdoctoral Luncheon. Attendees were given a warm welcome from Council liaison Scott Burchiel and SOT President George Corcoran. Highlights of this event included the recognition of postdoc award winners from Specialty Sections, Regional Chapters and Special Interest Groups, and the recipients of the 2nd Annual Best Postdoctoral Publication Awards: Joshua Gray of University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Christie Sayes Texas A&M, and Khristy Thompson, Elizabethtown College. The luncheon concluded with a discussion of possible events at the 2009 Annual Meeting in Baltimore, as well as a drawing for numerous door prizes. The PDA hopes to sponsor another successful luncheon in Baltimore next year!

Sunday evening Student/Postdoc Mixer: Students and postdocs gathered Sunday evening to kick off the Annual Meeting. While eating, drinking and mingling, attendees also had the chance to view posters set up by SOT Specialty Sections, Regional Chapters and Special Interest Groups. PDA Board members were on hand to meet postdocs and distribute collectable “Postdoc” lapel pins. The PDA would like to thank the Student Advisory Council for once again spearheading the organization of such a lively mixer this year!

THANKS TO EVERYONE FOR MAKING THIS PAST YEAR A SUCCESS FOR THE PDA. LET’S KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK!

“You don’t need anybody to tell you who you are or what you are. You are what you are!”

John Lennon

Thank you to the following individuals who contributed to the goals and efforts of the Postdoctoral Assembly this year:

Outgoing Board Members: Kristen Mitchell, Heather Floyd, Amy Skinner and Heather Persson

Council Liaison Scott Burchiel and Headquarters Staff Member Betty Eidemiller