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Scientific Excellence through Diversity  
Seminar Series

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2007-2008 Schedule

October 22, 2007

**Dr. Mina Bissell, Ph.D.**

Distinguished Scientist, Life Sciences Division  
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

**“From 3D models to therapy: Putting the  
mammary gland and breast cancer in context”**

January 31, 2008

**Dr. Esteban González Burchard , M.D.,  
M.P.H.**

Assistant Professor of Biopharmaceutical Sciences  
and Medicine, UCSF

**“Importance of Race/Ethnicity in  
Biomedical Research and Clinical Practice”**

CHS 53-105 12:30pm

**\*\*\*Special Joint Seminar\*\*\***

**Immunology Forum**

February 13, 2008

**Dr. Olivera Finn, Ph.D.**

Professor, Chair Dept. of Immunology, University  
of Pittsburgh, School of Medicine

President, American Association of Immunologists

**“Human tumor antigens and cancer  
immunosurveillance: a minority opinion”**

CHS 63-105 3:30pm

May 1st, 2008

**Dr. Rick Kittles, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor, Section of Genetic Medicine  
University of Chicago, Cancer Research Center

**“Genetics of prostate cancer: placing  
susceptibility into context”**

NRB Auditorium 3:30pm

For info on the 2008-2009 seminar series visit:

[www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/pledge/](http://www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/pledge/)

**Science  
Technology  
Engineering  
Mathematics**



**Providing  
Leadership &  
Enhancing  
Diversity in  
Graduate  
Education**




**Our Mission:**

The primary goal of STEM-LEDGE is to identify and address the barriers that prevent the full participation of groups underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics graduate programs at the University of California, Los Angeles. This group is open to any student who shares a common concern about equal access to education and in the broadening of opportunities for academic leadership and participation. In order to accomplish this goal we have designed an executive infrastructure aimed at accomplishing four major areas of interest:

- (1) Peer Mentorship
- (2) Career Development
- (3) Informal Networking and Support
- (4) Recruitment

This is an open, fluid, fun, volunteer student group that is committed to diversity & excellence in higher education.

**Active Member Benefits:**

-  Networking Opportunities
-  Attend National Conference to Recruit New Grad Students
-  Travel Funds to Attend Career Development Conferences

**For more information:**

Website: [www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/pledge/](http://www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/pledge/)

Email: [pledge@ucla.edu](mailto:pledge@ucla.edu)

Scientific Excellence through Diversity Seminar Series

funded by UCLA Graduate Division

Questions about seminar?

Email [dmontoya@mednet.ucla.edu](mailto:dmontoya@mednet.ucla.edu)

**STEM-LEDGE**  
Graduate Student Diversity Group

*Presents:*

**Scientific Excellence  
through Diversity  
Seminar Series**

*A new paradigm for diversity in the sciences*

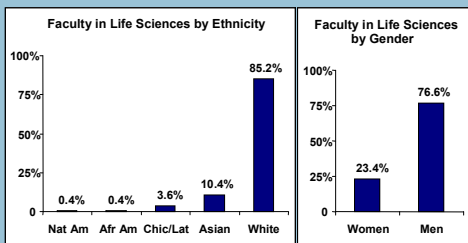
**2007-2008**



## Scientific Excellence through Diversity Seminar Series

### Summary:

UCLA's first-ever "Scientific Excellence through Diversity" seminar series presents a new paradigm for how diversity can be an asset to academic science. This seminar highlights researchers from genders and ethnicities that are underrepresented in science, who have utilized their diverse perspectives and interests to make scientific discoveries beneficial to their diverse community. Their accomplishments offer a more complete science that better encompass the needs of a diverse nation. Diverse perspectives are critical as public health statistics show that racial/ethnic minorities suffer disproportionately from diseases. However, despite significant efforts in recent years to increase diversity in science and academia, African-Americans, Native Americans, Chicano/Latinos, and women remain underrepresented.



**Faculty Diversity in the Life Sciences in the UC System.**  
(Statistics from UC President's task force on Faculty Diversity Report May 2005)

### Goals of this series:

1. Change the culture of academia to value diverse researchers by demonstrating how they contribute to a broader perspective to addressing scientific questions.
2. Encourage current graduate students and researchers from diverse backgrounds to take advantage of their diversity to excel in research and contribute back to their community.
3. Present successful scientists from diverse backgrounds as role models for undergraduates to promote recruitment into scientific research and by demonstrating how research can bring benefits to their communities.

### Dr. Mina Bissell, Ph.D.

*Distinguished Scientist, Life Sciences Division  
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory*

Cell Biologist Mina Bissell left Iran at age eighteen and embarked on a career in American science. Her fearless approach and unconventional thinking have helped shape ideas about how breast tumors develop. Dr. Bissell is the recipient of the 2007 Pezcoller Foundation-AACR International Award for Cancer Research for her pioneering work on the relationship between cancer genetics and the three-dimensional structure of cells and tissues. She has also been selected to be the recipient of 2008 Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology Excellence in Science award for her paradigm shifting conceptualization of "dynamic reciprocity." Her seminal papers in *Science*, *Nature*, and *Journal of Cell Biology* have been referred to as "milestones in cancer." Her long-term goal is to develop a more realistic three-dimensional model of breast cancer that mimics its normal situation, and can be used to study cancer pathogenesis and test anticancer drugs.



**"Diversity and different points of view are good for science. It's not just because 50 percent of this society is made up of women—I think that women do bring different insights to science"**

### Dr. Esteban González Burchard, M.D., M.P.H.

*Assistant Professor of Biopharmaceutical Sciences and Medicine, University of California, San Francisco*

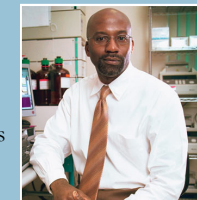
Dr. Esteban Burchard grew up in the Latino section of San Francisco, the Mission District, with his mother a former migrant worker who later became a teacher. When Burchard was a medical resident, he conceived the idea for the Genetics of Asthma in Latino Americans (GALA) Study, which compares genetic, environmental, and clinical characteristics between Puerto Rican and Mexican asthmatics. Puerto Rican children have the highest asthma prevalence, morbidity and mortality, yet they do not achieve the same benefit from asthma medications as other populations. From this study, Dr. Burchard has discovered that Puerto Rican children have lower drug response to albuterol, the most commonly prescribed bronchodilator asthma medication, than Mexican children. Dr. Burchard's findings help explain why subjects of Mexican or Puerto Rican ancestry differ in their response to bronchodilators and raises questions about the efficacy of medications for minority populations.



**"What we saw was a pretty clear ethnic response to a commercially prescribed medicine. To my mind, that is a travesty."**

### Dr. Rick Kittles, Ph.D.

*Associate Professor, Section of Genetic Medicine  
University of Chicago, Cancer Research Center*



Dr. Kittles' research focus is to formally evaluate genetic mechanisms involved in complex diseases. His work entails understanding how genetic variation is structured across human populations and how that variation contributes to inter-individual variation in disease susceptibility and other phenotypes such as drug response and skin color. Currently his work explores sequence variation within candidate genes in well-characterized populations for prostate and breast cancer, cardiovascular disease, and human pigmentation. His interests also include biological and socio-cultural issues related to "Race" and health disparities and the utility of admixture mapping for genes for common traits and disease in African Americans and Hispanic Americans. Dr. Kittles also is currently scientific director of the African Ancestry Inc., a genetic testing service for determining individuals' African ancestry.

**"[Our] finding emphasizes the importance of ancestry in studying genetics...prevalence of prostate cancer is almost two-fold higher among African Americans compared to European Americans" Dr. Rick Kittles**

**\*\*\*Special Joint Seminar with the Immunology Forum\*\*\***

### Dr. Olivera Finn, Ph. D.

*Professor & Chair, Dept. of Immunology, University of Pittsburgh, School of Medicine, President, American Association of Immunologists*

Dr. Olivera Finn, Professor and Chair of the University of Pittsburgh Department of Immunology, has been leader of the UPCI Immunology Program since 1991, the year that she became a faculty member at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Dr. Finn received her PhD in 1980 from Stanford University and completed her postdoctoral training at Stanford in the Department of Medicine, Division of Oncology in 1982. Dr. Finn is actively involved in a number of professional societies such as AAI, AACR, and Women in Cancer Research. She is also a member of the AACR Task Force on Immunology and is an active participant in NCI activities. Her research is focused on tumor antigen discovery and cancer vaccines. She has received the University of Pittsburgh Chancellor's Distinguished Research Award, UPCI Scientific Leadership Award, and University of Pittsburgh Mentor of the Year Award.

