

Postdoctoral Association Events Newsletter

USC and CHLA Events Calendar

For information and updates on the impact of COVID-19 on USC research and the postdoc community, you can visit two websites:

Research.usc.edu/coronavirus
Postdocs.usc.edu/covid-19-info

Work from Home Stipends

USC is implementing a \$53/month COVID-19 technology stipend for postdocs who are working from home. It is to cover a reasonable percentage of the cell phone, internet and other technology expenses that may be generated by working from home during the pandemic.

Please contact your department administrator –OR--

Please contact Dan Carino, Director of Postdoc Affairs, dcarino@usc.edu

Dining option for Postdocs performing essential functions

UPC:

[Rosso Oro's](#) on Figueroa Street.

Lunch (11:00 am to 4:00 pm) and Dinner (4:00 pm to 8:00 pm). The meal costs \$7 and will be served in compliance with the CDC's social distancing guidelines by providing packaged meals to-go. Guests have a choice of walk-up or drive-thru service. Orders can be placed by telephone at 213-743-2077 or online with [Grubhub](#) – please search for Rosso Oro's Pizzeria.

HSC:

Panda Express and Starbucks (1969 Zonal Avenue): Order online via Grubhub or contact (323) 442-1943

Qwench Juice Bar (1501 San Pablo St): Order online via Grubhub or contact (323) 442-4333

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Information for International Postdocs

Q&A with USC Office of International Studies

If a postdoc temporarily loses their job during this time do they lose their visa too?

OIS will not shorten SEVIS records (read: visa status) during this time, even for J-1 postdocs who are temporarily not able to engage in their appointments at this time, whether they are abroad or in the U.S. during this global public health crisis.

Are visa holders eligible for the stimulus package and other benefits offered during COVID-19?

As part of the CARES Act, some J-1 postdocs received the 2020 Recovery Rebates in the amount of \$1,200. To qualify, exchange visitors must have met the IRS definition of "resident alien", which grossly simplified would be those who have been in the U.S. for at least two years. J-1 postdocs here for less time are not considered resident aliens and should not receive the Recovery Rebate.

The IRS provides a number of interactive tax tools that can assist interested individuals in determining eligibility to file taxes and on what form; we have updated our webpage to include these links. Generally speaking, OIS is limited in the guidance we can provide on tax and benefit information. OIS does not make the determination of who does or does not qualify for government benefits. (Note: OIS recommends consulting with an attorney to ascertain if there are risks involved in accepting the Recovery Rebate, as it may be classified as a "public charge", which—in accepting—could potentially complicate future immigration statuses or benefits; this is outside our professional purview).

What recommendations do you have for postdocs whose visas are expected to expire over the next couple of months (April/May/June)? Will an extension be possible?

First, there is a critical distinction between the expiration of a visa *stamp* and visa *status*. The J-1 visa *stamp* (the physical sticker in the passport issued by a consular officer) is only required for admission to the U.S.; it may expire at any time during a J-1 appointment. J-1 visa *status*, on the other hand, must be maintained at all times; visa *status* is maintained by ensuring the DS-2019 is valid at all times.

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As noted in the OIS memo sent on 04/10/2020, all J-1 postdocs whose appointments were set to end between 04/01/2020 and 05/31/2020, DHS has automatically extended their programs by 60 days in SEVIS; no additional action is required to extend these records. In other words, there are no J-1 exchange visitors with program end dates in April and May 2020, regardless of what is reflected on the DS-2019. If a program end date was originally 05/15/2020, it has been automatically updated in SEVIS to 07/15/2020; if a program was set to end on 04/10/2020, it has been automatically updated in SEVIS to 06/10/2020.) Those whose program end dates fall within that period are in valid J-1 visa status for an additional 60 days beyond the date listed on their respective DS-2019s.

For J-1 postdocs ending on or after 06/01/2020, the OIS can and will extend these programs; however, we are awaiting for U.S. State Department guidance, which will probably be issued as this crisis evolves. DHS may, once again, automatically extend the visa status of J-1 exchange visitors whose programs are nearing their end; it is too early to know at this time. OIS will monitor all J-1 programs ending in the month of June.

What are the expected wait times to renew a DS-2019? To obtain a J-1 waiver?

OIS processing time for DS-2019 Extension Requests is 10 business days. Again, any J-1 exchange visitor whose program end date originally fell in the months of April and May 2020, a DS-2019 Extension Request is not required, as DHS automatically extended these records by 60 days in SEVIS. OIS can print the extended DS-2019s if desired; we have already communicated this information out by a memo on 04/10/2020. Please send us an email at j1exchg@usc.edu to request this, again, if desired.

OIS cannot advise on the J-1 waiver process; moreover, all waiver requests are adjudicated by the *Department of State Waiver Review Division* and in no way involve the OIS.

What there be any extensions offered to postdoc visa holders whose PI had to let them go during COVID-19 but are unable to currently travel due to restrictions?

Please see Question 3. OIS will not be shortening J-1 programs at this time, regardless of employment status.

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Furthermore, for J-1 postdocs whose programs were originally ending in April or May 2020, their programs have automatically been extended 60 days in SEVIS. Whether working or not, these J-1 exchange visitors are in valid status for 60 days beyond their original end date. It is important to note that once travel restrictions are lifted and if no additional postdoc appointment can be secured, the individual must leave the US on or before the 60th day of the grace period.

Has access to health benefits for dependents of J1 and H1B visa holders changed as a result of COVID-19?

OIS cannot answer this, though perhaps the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs has more information on this subject. That said, U.S. Department of State still requires that all J-1 exchange visitors and their J-2 dependents have medical insurance for the duration of their stay. More information on these criteria can be found [here](#).

What is the best way to organize a one-on-one consultation with OIS in regards to visa queries?

At this time, to schedule an appointment with a J-1 Advisor, please email j1exchg@usc.edu with your name, date of birth, and campus identification (UPC, HSC), then we will identify a time to chat by phone or Zoom, depending on your preference.

Is it possible for postdocs on a visa to return to their home country and work from home there?

From a Human Resources perspective, OIS cannot speak to this; however, our office is not shortening programs of those who have departed the U.S. with the intention of returning to the U.S. There may be tax and labor law implications that require consultation with an attorney, too; this is outside the purview of the OIS.

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What possibilities are available for postdocs to renew their visa to mitigate the long waiting times? Is it possible to travel to nearby countries, such as Canada or Mexico, and go to their consulates for visa renewals?

Processing of all nonimmigrant (F-1 student and J-1 exchange visitor) visas has been temporarily suspended, which includes the U.S. embassies and consulates in Canada and Mexico, respectively. There is no way to expedite the process. If you are presently in the U.S. with an expired or soon-to-expire J-1 *visastamp*, you do not need to depart the U.S. to continue your J-1 appointment. Again, the visa *stamp* is for admission to the country; visa *status* is maintained with a valid SEVIS record.

For postdocs whose visas are expiring, and are expecting a new visa, what should they do if their current visa expires but their new visa does not arrive in time due to slowdowns resulting from COVID?

See Question 9. If J-1 postdocs are outside the U.S. at this time, they will unfortunately need to wait for the U.S. State Department to resume nonimmigrant visa processing.

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Online Course Offerings

QBIO401 – Introduction to Computational Analysis of Biological Data

The Quantitative and Computational Biology (QCB) section is offering a 4-unit course ([QBIO 401](#)) titled Introduction to Computational Analysis of Biological Data. This course goes over six weeks starting May 20, 2020 and meets daily M-Th from 2:00pm-4:05pm. This project-based course is intended for students who are interested in computational biology. The course will integrate the biology, computer science, and statistics training in the QBIO major. We will do this by analyzing genomic datasets. Students will be introduced to:

- The general programming language Python
- The statistical programming language R (No prior knowledge of either language is required.)

Students will use these languages when doing one to two computing assignments per week and an end-of-the-semester project. There will be an emphasis on writing original code and not just using off-the-shelf programs. In both the weekly assignments and the end-of-the-semester project, students will “get their hands dirty” by analyzing genomic datasets. The assignments and project will be based on topics covered in lecture. Topics will include: gene prediction, sequence alignment, phylogenetic trees, next generation sequencing, meta-genomics, population genetics, structural biology, systems biology, and machine learning.

This course is eligible for the Postdoc Tuition Remission program (<https://postdocs.usc.edu/scholars/career-development/tuition-remission/>).

Postdocs and grad students welcome! For more information, please contact:

Postdocs - Dan Carino, dcarino@usc.edu

Cellular, Molecular, and Computational Tools for Insights and Analysis for Stem Cell Research

Summary: A discussion-based group that focuses on relevant topics to the research and interests of the center with an applied learning component (programming lab) so that individuals can broaden their understanding and knowledge of intellectual and applied aspects of work discussed. The programming aspect will cover specific tools & analyses every other week. During the “off weeks” (odd numbered weeks) a general introductory to programming series will be held to teach members of the center who desire to gain or strengthen computational skills.

Register at <https://tinyurl.com/USCStemCell-journal-coding>

Join Zoom Meeting at <https://usc.zoom.us/j/913477250> (Meeting ID: 913 477 250; Password: 052629)

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Health and Fitness

Workout at Home:

Coach Kevin Robinson is leading an at-home workout session with postdocs held twice-a-week over Zoom. This is a great live workout with minimal equipment needed! Workouts are every:

Tuesday and **Friday** at **1 pm** until the end of the semester.

The class runs 40-50 minutes, but the actual workouts are 20-25 minutes. Please email Kevin (kevinrob@usc.edu) to join the workouts.

USC Trojan Fitness Channel will also be offering LIVE classes via Zoom.

Link: recsports.usc.edu/programs-classes/fitness/group-ex-classes

Visit the website for the Zoom link

Schedule:

Mondays – 4PM – Yoga (Lauren)

Mondays – 5PM – Hip Hop Cardio (Jen)

Tuesdays – 6PM – Zumba (Kat)

Wednesdays – 9AM – Yoga (Lauren)

Wednesdays – 4:15PM – Cardio Kickboxing (Jen)

Thursdays – 10AM – Yoga (Divya)

Thursdays – 5PM – Zumba (Shira)

Fridays – 4PM – HIIT (Jen)

Fridays – 5PM – Zumba (Shira)

Saturdays – 11AM – Zumba (Kat)

Sundays- 11AM – Zumba (Shira)

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Aetna Postdoc Health Insurance Updates

Postdoc Health Insurance Updates: As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, we recognize the important role your health insurance plays in addressing this public health issue. Rest assured, Aetna has taken steps to minimize any potential impact to your care and ensure they continue to offer the services and operations you have come to expect. Aetna has also recently announced these resources and enhancements when applicable:

- Waived member out-of-pockets costs or cost sharing for COVID-19 diagnostic testing and introduced zero co-pay telemedicine visits for the next 90 days, helping to remove barriers to care.
- Waived charges for home delivery of all prescription medications from CVS Pharmacy. They are also actively encouraging 90-day refills of eligible prescriptions and waiving early refill limits on 30-day prescriptions for maintenance medications to prevent the interruption of medication availability.
- Introduced *Healing Better* care packages for members diagnosed with COVID-19, supporting members and helping to keep others in the home protected from potential exposure.
- Offering resources to help address any associated anxiety and stress related to COVID-19, including opening Crisis Response Lines and expanding access 24x7 to the Aetna Nurse Medical Line, among others.
- [CVS Pharmacy® locations will serve as testing sites](#) where any consumer can go to be tested for COVID-19 infection at no cost.
- Talk to a doctor 24/7 via the [Teladoc App](#).
- [Aetna Informed Health Line](#): 24-hr info line for all your health questions where you can speak to a nurse, if needed.

For questions and concerns: clients.garnett-powers.com/pd/usc/contact

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Coping with Disappointment in the Wake of COVID-19

As the coronavirus pandemic brings the country to a standstill, many of our everyday activities and even special, once-in-a-lifetime milestones are being postponed or changing in ways we never expected. Most of us understand the gravity of the situation but that does not mean that we don't feel a range of emotions. Board-certified clinical psychologist and USC Clinical Associate Professor [Kimberly Finney](#) shares some guidance for anyone currently coping with disappointment, on learning to be resilient in these rapidly changing times.

Site: <https://dworakpeck.usc.edu/news/coping-disappointment-the-wake-of-covid-19>

[Working and Managing Employees Remotely during COVID-19](#): Scott Darrell, adjunct professor and leadership coach at CareerPQ, provides advice on how leaders and employees can work from home without too much stress.

Tune in: [Parenting in the Time of Quarantine](#): Julie Cederbaum, associate professor, offers advice from taking your child's fears seriously to finding new ways to stay active as a family, as a guest on [KPCC's Take Two](#).

Site: <https://www.scpr.org/programs/take-two/2020/03/26/20742/>

Domestic violence

During this time of isolation in the home, national reports of intimate partner violence are rising, as women and men living with abusers may be forced to stay in situations where they are not safe or they may need help to alter their "safety plan." If you or someone you know is in need of help during this time, contact: National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233, or text LOVEIS to 22522 Los Angeles County Domestic Violence Safety Plan Hotline: 1-800-978-3600

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Career Development

Postdoc Travel Awards application:

postdocs.usc.edu/scholars/career-development/travel-awards

The Postdoctoral Scholar Travel and Training Awards (up to \$3,000) are designed to enable postdocs to attend workshops and conferences or to learn new techniques or perform research at off-site locations or in other labs, experiences which would enhance their training but which cannot be funded through their mentor's grant.

Eligibility: The Postdoctoral Scholar Training and Travel Award is only open to current postdocs in the following job titles: Postdoctoral Scholar – Research Associate (Job Code 98227), Postdoctoral Scholar – Teaching Fellow (98223), Postdoctoral Scholar – Fellowship Trainee (Job Code 98219), and Postdoctoral Research Associate (Job Code 98067).

Deadline: May 22, 2020

Mentor Training Opportunity for Postdocs

If you are interested in expanding on your professional/skill development, consider mentor training. Mentor training is extremely useful when providing hands-on and instructional guidance to trainees in the lab. The training is an interactive and self-paced program offered online by the [University of Minnesota](http://www.ctsi.umn.edu/education-and-training/mentoring/mentor-training) (<https://www.ctsi.umn.edu/education-and-training/mentoring/mentor-training>). On the site, you will find three mentoring modules available. We encourage you to complete the CTS 100 and CTS 101 modules (approximately 3 hours). If you work with undergraduates or anticipate doing so in the future, the CTS 102 should be added to your list.

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To access the training program, you need only to register an external user, (https://www.ctsi.umn.edu/sites/ctsi.umn.edu/files/mentoring_modules_registration_guide_2019_external.pdf). Once logged into the site, enroll in the courses and launch the session. Upon completion of each module, you will receive a certificate for your records which will give documentation of mentor training that can be included on your CV.

CTS 100 - Enhancing Motivation Using the CARES Mentoring Model

(Online, self-paced, ~75 minute completion time). Motivation is a key driver of student and employee engagement, persistence, satisfaction, and performance. This course describes an approach to mentoring that focuses on fulfilling the core psychological needs that enhance a mentee's motivation. Targeted to faculty who are mentoring students, fellows, or other faculty in academic settings, including research training programs.

CTS 101 - Optimizing the Practice of Mentoring 101: For Research Mentors of Graduate Students, Fellows, and Early-Career Faculty

(Online, self-paced, ~2 hour completion time). This course is designed to help faculty members or other experienced scientists become more effective research mentors for graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and early-career faculty. Learners are introduced to different mentoring models, roles that research mentors play in their mentees' development, strategies for building effective relationships with mentees, and application of these strategies to common mentoring scenarios.

CTS 102 - Optimizing the Practice of Mentoring 102: For Research Mentors of Undergraduate Students

(Online, self-paced, ~2 hour completion time). This course is designed to help faculty members or other experienced scientists become more effective research mentors for undergraduate students. Learners are introduced to different mentoring models, roles that research mentors play in their mentees' development, strategies for building effective relationships with mentees, and application of these strategies to common mentoring scenarios.

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Volunteer

General Note:

Please obtain the appropriate approvals as needed to participate in any of the programs below. If you wish to volunteer during regularly scheduled work hours, approval from your manager/supervisor is required for time off. Approved time off is to be coded as vacation or may be taken without pay. Volunteering outside of regularly scheduled work hours does not require management approval.

*Completion of the **Volunteer Agreement** and **Code of Ethics** forms are required to participate for most volunteer opportunities. To receive these forms, please email uscpda@usc.edu.*

Boyle Heights/East & South Los Angeles Food Security COVID-19 Relief Initiative

A collaboration between USC Civic Engagement, Keck Medicine, KSOM Office of Community Initiatives, Adventist Health White Memorial and Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA

More than 10,000 bags' worth of fresh fruit, vegetables and food have been distributed to nearby communities due to the collaboration efforts of neighbors. Volunteers are needed to assist with food packaging, distribution, and making phone calls to recipients. Some activities are in-person/on-site and others can be conducted remotely.

Hours of operation: 8:30am – 4:30pm

Volunteer criteria/eligibility: USC students and employees

Instructions:

Complete [this google form](#)

(<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1fRm8wxUuVJreaoVmxy85jo5zs1GAtrXX2pkXyUHF9hE/edit?ts=5e98d71f>)

Completion of the two forms below is also required to participate. Please send completed forms to ksom_special_events@med.usc.edu

[Volunteer Agreement](#)

[Code of Ethics](#)

Contact: Dulce Acosta, (323) 781-8818; darias@usc.edu

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Free Online Tutoring

Due to temporary school closures related to COVID-19, transition to online education has increased. The KSOM Office of Community Initiatives and Keck Medicine of USC is partnering with academics at USC to bring private online tutoring to our caregivers' families and the community. Tutoring is now available in math, science, reading, math, writing and more.

Eligibility: USC students and employees

Instructions:

If you are interested in volunteering as a tutor, please email BenefitandOutreach@med.usc.edu.

Completion of the two forms below is also required to participate. Please send completed forms to ksom_special_events@med.usc.edu. Once the forms are submitted, Rosa Barahona from the Office of Community Initiatives will follow-up with you.

[Volunteer Agreement](#)

[Code of Ethics](#)

Public Health Information Translation Projects

Organized by the KSOM Office of Community Initiatives

Volunteers are needed to translate various public health flyers and materials into several languages. Volunteers with advanced skills in any of the following languages are needed: Traditional Chinese; Simplified Chinese; Korean; Vietnamese; Armenian; Arabic; Russian; Cambodian; Farsi; Tagalog.

Volunteer criteria/eligibility: USC students and employees

Completion of the two forms below is required to participate. Please send completed forms to ksom_special_events@med.usc.edu. Once the forms are submitted, Rosa Barahona will follow-up with you.

[Volunteer Agreement](#)

[Code of Ethics](#)

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Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Donation Sorting and Organizing

Organized by: Keck Medicine Materials Management

Project description: Volunteers are needed to help sort and organize personal protective equipment donations to Keck. Volunteers are needed Monday-Friday each week, from 10am-2pm. PPE donation location is at Norris Healthcare Center (HC3), loading dock, roll-up door. Volunteer criteria/eligibility:

- USC students (Note: KSOM medical students should contact Dr. Kairos Llobrera for weekly sign-ups; llobrera@usc.edu)
- USC staff (Note: staff volunteers should contact Cynthia Stender; Cynthia.Stender@med.usc.edu)

On-site project coordinator: Cynthia Stender; 310-427-4961;

Cynthia.Stender@med.usc.edu

Donate Cloth Masks for Our Staff

Join our community in creating masks that can be used in non-patient care settings. Please use this link (<https://www.latimes.com/lifestyle/story/2020-04-02/time-to-make-your-own-face-mask-doctors-and-hospitals-show-you-how>) for instructions provided for proper production and handling of homemade masks. Once the product has been finished, please email DonateProtectiveGear@med.usc.edu to designate a drop of date, time and location.

Note: The masks are not medical-grade and will not be used by health care providers as protection from COVID-19 during patient-provider interactions. The products may be helpful in non-patient care settings to contain coughs and is a helpful reminder to staff to refrain from touching their face.

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Additional Resources for COVID-19 in Los Angeles and California

- How to stay safe and healthy
- Directives and mandates
- Testing

California Department of Public Health
[covid19.ca.gov](https://www.cdph.ca.gov)

Los Angeles County Public Health
publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus

-- Fight on --

