



UC San Diego

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

The Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology & Palliative Care Newsletter



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Please consider donating to our mission! While we continue to make great strides, we are limited on what we can accomplish with existing funds. We encourage you to become involved with the UC San Diego Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology, and Palliative Care and join us in helping older adults live their best lives longer and improving care for individuals with serious illness. By supporting our efforts, you can ensure that our research, education programs, and clinical care keep pace with the needs of our community and remain strong.

SUPPORT US

Spotlight: Sasha Weiss, M.F.A.



What is your current profession/role?

I am the Director of Communications for the [Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology, and Palliative Care](#) as well as for the [Stein Institute on Research in Aging](#) here at UC San Diego.

What motivated you to want to work with the Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology and Palliative Care?

During the pandemic, I was looking for a career change. I have always admired the UC Health Care Systems, as I am the daughter of a former Chief of Cardiology at UCLA. I had done a lot of free -

lance work in communications, branding, and design. When this position opened up within the Division, I knew it was going to be a good fit. My husband and I both come from families that have suffered from Alzheimer's disease. In fact, for our wedding we donated to the Alzheimer's Association, so I knew this was already an area that mattered to me a lot. The fact that the position also aligned with my talents was serendipitous.

What do you like best about your role as Director of Communications?

I really love the people I work with. That may seem like an obvious answer, but I am a natural collaborator and creator, and it has been so nice to work with so many people who have an appreciation for that. I also really enjoy when we have events, we get to see our partners in person. I am often the person they have been emailing back and forth with for weeks and finally we get to put a face to the name!

What is your go-to stress relief activity during a busy workweek?

I am an avid crafter. Much to my husband's chagrin, I am constantly picking up a new crafting skill, to which he often says "so, who are you going to gift that to?" just hoping it won't be cluttering our cozy-sized home. No matter how many new crafts I learn (resin, embroidery, jewelry making, painting, Cricut machine,) I always return to crocheting. I find it is calming and meditative.

If you had to choose a different profession, what would it be?

Well, for most of my life I did have a different profession! I used to live in New York City and am a professional Musical Theater performer. I have both my Bachelor and Master of Fine Arts degrees in Musical Theater (The Boston Conservatory & San Diego State University, respectively). I had a wonderful and full career and it's still a huge part of my life and who I am.

How did you get into singing and acting?

My mom. She always loved Musical Theater and introduced me to it at a very young age, and from then on, I had my sights set on that being my career. I started singing from as little as I can remember and being in choir and shows at school and after-school my whole life. I am so lucky to have had both of my parents be so incredibly supportive of me pursuing a career in the arts. And equally supportive of me when I decided it was time to leave NYC and pursue something new.

What do you love most about being on stage?

My favorite part is the relationship with the audience. To have the privilege of telling a story that hopefully allows the audience to feel things and see things from a new perspective, or sometimes a familiar perspective that now can be processed in a different way. It's the most beautiful part, sharing that with a room full of people- in each moment, we are there together sharing an experience that can never be re-created exactly the same way. It's so special.



Photo: Division members showing their support for Sasha Weiss at a performance of Fiddler on the Roof at San Diego Musical Theater.

If you want to experience the magic that Sasha is talking about, you can see her perform in Fiddler on the Roof at San Diego Musical Theater through March 10th.

SDMT | SAN DIEGO MUSICAL THEATRE

Fiddler on the Roof

FEB 9 - MAR 10, 2024
at The SDMT Stage

Tickets on sale now!
1 (858) 560-5740
WWW.SDMT.ORG

Book by JOSEPH STEIN
Music by JERRY BOCK
Lyrics by SHELDON HARNICK

[See dates & get tickets here](#)

What's Happening/Events

The Gerontology Research Collaborative (GRC) and the Stein Institute for Research on Aging's “In This Day & Age” Seminar Series

Please join us on **Thursday, March 28th at 4:00pm PT** for an exciting seminar talk by Dr. Jerome Mertens from the University of California San Diego and Salk Institute of Biological Sciences!

4:00-5:00pm PT at UCSD Stein Clinical Research Building Conference Room 148 and Zoom:
<https://uhealth.zoom.us/j/88182791417> (Meeting ID: 881 8279 1417)

The **Gerontology Research Collaborative (GRC)** and the **Stein Institute for Research on Aging** present:

IN THIS DAY & AGE

SEMINAR SERIES ON
MULTIDISCIPLINARY
AGING RESEARCH

Thursday March 28th 4:00 - 5:00 pm PT
UCSD Stein Clinical Research Building
Conference Room 148, and Zoom
Meeting ID: 881 8279 1417



**“Direct Neuronal Reprogramming
to Study Brain Aging and
Neurodegeneration”**

Dr. Jerome Mertens, PhD
Department of Neurosciences
University of California San Diego,
Salk Institute for Biological Sciences

Sponsored by the GRC and the Stein Institute for Research on Aging at UCSD. For questions, contact Howard Phang (hphang@health.ucsd.edu)

Title: Direct Neuronal Reprogramming to study Brain Aging and Neurodegeneration

About the speaker: Dr. Jerome Mertens is Associate Professor for Neurodegenerative Disease and Dementia at the Department for Neurosciences of the University of California San Diego. The Mertens lab focuses on modeling and studying the interface between human biological aging and neurodegeneration. The lab uses human cell reprogramming techniques such as direct conversion of skin fibroblasts into induced neurons (iNs) to generate adult patient-specific models that retain aging information. By combining iN and iPSC models, functional genetics, next-generation ‘multi-omics’ strategies, and functional cell biological approaches, the ultimate goal is to better understand age-related disorders via elucidating the interplay between genetic and aging-related cellular changes and disease pathways.

Dr. Alison Moore Visits Town Square at the George G. Glenner Alzheimer's Family Center, Inc.



Joy Glenner and Dr. Alison Moore at Town Square in Chula Vista, CA.

The Glenner Alzheimer's Family Centers have been part of the San Diego community for over 40 years, providing innovative adult day care programs, family support, case management, crisis intervention, and family and community education to individuals living with dementia and their families. Town Square®, inspired by Junior Achievement's Biz Town located here in San Diego, CA, was developed based upon CEO, Scott Tarde's vision of creating a similar environment for individuals living with dementia. The goal was to create an immersive space designed to replicate a small town from the 1950's era that participants grew up in and would help to facilitate Reminiscence Therapy, bringing them back to a time where their memories are the strongest. Joy Glenner and her late-husband, Dr. George G. Glenner are the founders of the Glenner Centers and have done so much for individuals living with dementia. This organization is an excellent resource and our division is fortunate to work with their leadership and staff on such projects as our Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program.

[More about The Glenner Centers](#)

Dr. Khai Nguyen Attends Dinner with Chancellor Khosla



Dr. Khai Nguyen attended a recent dinner with Chancellor Khosla on February 12. This event was part of a faculty club initiative with the purpose to provide Chancellor Khosla an opportunity to meet directly with junior faculty and better understand their needs.

Congratulations
are in order...



Congratulations Dr. Kiana Aran!

Dr. Kiana Aran has been named a Senior Member by National Academy of Inventors (NAI) on February 27th. She is part of the 124 of the foremost emerging academic inventors identified by NAI's Member Institutions and welcomed to the 2024 class of Senior Members.

NAI Senior Members are active faculty, scientists, and administrators from NAI Member Institutions who have demonstrated remarkable innovation producing technologies that have brought, or aspire to bring, real impact on the welfare of society. They also have growing success in patents, licensing, and commercialization, while educating and mentoring the next generation of inventors.

The ability to nominate an individual for NAI Senior Member recognition is an exclusive opportunity afforded to NAI Member Institutions to recognize their outstanding innovators and foster an inclusive culture of innovation and invention on their campuses. Each of these member organizations are widely regarded as innovation powerhouses that continuously promote and foster the spirit of innovation.

This year's class of NAI Senior Members is the largest to date and hails from 60 NAI Member Institutions across the nation. Collectively, they are named inventors on over 1000 U.S. patents with 344 of those being licensed technologies and commercialized products. The 2024 class also showcases the shared commitment to celebrate the diversity of the academic ecosystem, with 50% of this year's Senior Members being outstanding female and/or underrepresented academic inventors.

"This year's class of Senior Members is truly a testament to the outstanding innovation happening at NAI Member Institutions and what happens when the academic space encourages and celebrates invention and commercialization," said Paul R. Sanberg, President of NAI. "We are proud to welcome these outstanding academic inventors to the Academy and look forward to supporting and celebrating them as they continue in their innovation journeys."

The 2024 class of Senior Members will be celebrated at NAI's Annual Conference taking place June 16-18th, 2023 in Raleigh, North Carolina. To learn more about the event and register, visit <https://academyofinventors.org/annual-conference/>.

A full list of NAI Senior Members is available [here](#).

In the news...

- Dr. Khai Nguyen is a co-author on "Cohort for Alzheimer's Disease (ACAD) pilot study on genetic and non-genetic risk factors for Alzheimer's disease among Asian Americans and Canadians." To learn more about the Asian Cohort for Alzheimer's Disease (ACAD) study and the work that Dr. Nguyen and others here at UC San Diego are doing, [read here](#).
- Dr. Ian Neel is co-author on a paper published as part of the HALT-AD trial, entitled: "Developing the Healthy Actions and Lifestyles to Avoid Dementia or Hispanos y el ALTo a la Demencia program". This paper was published in *Alzheimer's & Dementia: Translational Research & Clinical Interventions*. To find out more about the HALT-AD study, [read here](#).

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