

## Sally Blower UCSF Controversy (4/6/00)

Dear UCSF Faculty Women, <>I have heard from quite a few of you asking for more details as to what is happening. I am happy to tell anybody anything. Here is a brief summary.

1) The Nature Medicine "straw poll" was not my idea & I agree it was not a good idea.

2) I am leaving UCSF - I have just signed an offer from UCLA - and I am

(from July 1st) a full professor in the Department of Biomathematics in the School of Medicine at UCLA - it is a "hard money" position.

3) In early February 2000 I sent some email to Sir Robert May - Bob is the Chief Scientific Advisor in the UK & a professor at Oxford University -this summer he will become President of the Royal Society. Bob will be at UCSF in 2 weeks - he is giving the Annual Gordon Tomkins Lecture. I sent email to Bob - as I know him well - I did my post-doc with him. In this email I described exactly why I was leaving UCSF - because of my "career experiences" at UCSF over the past 5 years. I also sent this email to a handful of senior male colleagues at Yale, MIT, Harvard, NIH, Stanford, Berkeley & Cornell. I also sent a copy of the email to the publisher of Nature Medicine (Dr. Adrian Ivinson). Apparently, this email has been now widely circulated around the US & has also been sent to the Examiner.

I sent this email to Nature Medicine & to a few of my senior male colleagues- not only to tell them about my specific experiences - but to explain (at least partially) the bigger picture. I am so tired of reports that are published in Science & Nature & NEJM that keep asking the question but with such a puzzled tone - "So many women have been trained - why are there still so few senior women in science & medicine". Obviously - the problem is complex - and there are many factors - but my main point is (& was) that the problems are not solely determined by "subtle biases" &/or women "choosing" to opt out.

4) In a nutshell - here are some of my UCSF career "experiences". Four years ago I was in the Department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics - I had office space for myself & 2 postdocs at SFGH

- Dr. Andrew Moss demanded honorary authorship on all my publications - I refused (I had a faculty position - I was an adjunct associate professor - I was funding myself & my postdocs & Moss was not contributing intellectual, data or financial support to my research). Moss responded by evicting me & my postdocs - I & my 2 postdocs had to work at home for 6 months - (luckily as I am a theoretician - check out my web site for my research - my career was not totally destroyed). Steve Hulley Chair of Epidemiology did nothing about the situation - & incidently - even though I asked him - neither did Phil Hopewell (who was one of my closest collaborators during that time).

Because: a) UCSF was worried about a lawsuit &

b) also didn't want to lose my husband (Nelson Freimer - who is on the faculty here & leaving with me to move to UCLA) the Senior Boys tried to resolve the situation. Obviously I had to leave the epidemiology department - Dean Debas told me I had to move into the Department of Medicine.

I had 2 interviews with Dr. Lee Goldman (Chairman of Medicine). The first was my job interview - where he told me that I had to date him & make him "happy" for a year & that if he was "happy" he would then start a search for an In-Residence position for me - he also explained that making him "happy" did not involve any academic criteria. I left his office & I turned down his "offer" via email. I complained about Goldman's behavior. I was summoned to see Goldman again for a second interview - this time Tom Coates was present - Goldman handed me a written job offer & read it to me - then he told me he was going to tell me what he thought of me "off the record" - he then proceeded to shout & yell at me - he told me that "I had broken every rule in the Department of Medicine" and that "I had defied him once - but that was the last time that it would ever happen" - it was quite a performance - Tom Coates said nothing. When we had left Goldman's office - I asked Tom what he thought of that "interview" - he responded, "Well - you got your job offer didn't you?".

I was reduced to tears. It was obvious that my career was not going to "flourish" in Goldman's department & I wanted to leave UCSF - I started looking for jobs elsewhere - the Senior Boys wanted Nelson to stay - so it was decided that I could move to Microbiology & Immunology - I did. In September 1999 - I was evicted - this time - by Tony DeFranco - I (& Nelson) spent the entire month of September begging for space for me & my 4 postdocs - many Senior Boys were involved at this point including Don Ganem & Ira H who tried to help - but the bottom line was that Tony could do whatever he liked & the Deans Office would back him up. At this time - UCLA was actively recruiting both

Nelson & I to hard money senior faculty positions - we made UCSF very aware of this - it was very strange - the Senior Boys were all talking to Nelson about what they could do to retain him & at the same time they were all well aware that I was dealing with being evicted - Nelson explained to many of the Senior Boys that he was leaving because of the way that I had been & was currently being treated - but most of them didnt quite seem to understand. Duh!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

5) So what is happenning? Nature Medicine decided to investigate my

"career experiences" & began to interview Moss, Hulley, Goldman et al. - thenChancellor Bishop decided to launch an investigation. Goldman sent me email demanding a retraction - I was advised to hire a lawyer to protect myself against Goldman & so I have done - Goldman (who is still my Chair) hired a private attorney & is trying to silence me - such a place. I am leaving - I have a wonderful job to go to - I have not filed a lawsuit against UCSF & I am not trying to extract any money from UCSF - I just want people to be aware of how the system works here - the abuse - the "cover-ups" - and hopefully the system will then have to change. Over the past few months I have heard from quite a few women who have also been driven out of UCSF - & a few who are still here & have terrible experiences such as mine.

There are many problems here - most women are too frightened to speak up about them - I understand this - I am doing it as I am leaving & I am so deeply disgusted by the system here. I am not sure what the purpose of the Chancellors investigation is - is it just to cover-up things or does Mike Bishop really want to change the system - we will all see.

6) The 2 major problems that I have seen at UCSF are these:

a) Chairs (incidentally all are male in the Medical School) are given

"absolute power" - they get to do what they like & the Deans Office will then back them up - this leads to abuse - there should be checks & balances.

b) There is no powerful & independent office or person with which to lodge a complaint. I have dealt with Dr. Diane Wara in her capacity as the associate Dean of Women & Minority Affairs for years - she has no power & is just there as a "token" to placate & reassure women who "complain".

I would suggest that if Chancellor Bishop is concerned about the treatment of female faculty at UCSF that he deals with these two major problems as quickly as possible - many/some of the other problems will then disappear.

He could also post an electronic chat group - so that he could receive input from the female faculty as to what they perceive the problems to be & what should be investigated or improved at UCSF - email is a wonderful way for everyone to be heard. The problems at UCSF are very different from the problems at MIT - & an "MIT-type" investigation - which is underway at UCSF - is unlikely to reveal any big problems.

Finally I would suggest that instead of sending a barrage of email to

Nature Medicine that you may want to use your limited time to deal with some real problems & to send your concerns or comments regarding the treatment of female faculty at UCSF to Chancellor Bishop. Some may argue - as Diane Wara does - that conditions have improved for women & very slow & steady is the way to improve things. Women have been in academics & medicine for a long time - (my grandmother recieved her MD in 1923 & worked her entire life as a doctor in the slums of Glasgow in Scotland) - but the rate of progress is way too slow & the current conditions at UCSF are completely unacceptable - so I am leaving. I am glad to be leaving - and I wish the rest of you the very best of luck.

Best wishes,

Dr. Sally Blower

## Nelson Freimer's comments on UCSF Controversy (4/6/00)

Dear colleagues:

I know that you have already received email from Sally Blower indicating that she and I are leaving UCSF. Although we are both leaving for excellent jobs elsewhere, as Sally has already stated the reason that we are leaving is because of her treatment here, and more generally, the appalling status of women at UCSF. I am sending this email to let you know that I am in complete agreement with Sally on these points and am very proud that she has so openly brought attention to this situation which brings shame on the institution. Certainly the abuse of and discrimination against women faculty occurs at other institutions. However this is the one in which you have chosen to work. Sally has already been public about her experiences; demands for honorary authorship from more senior faculty, eviction from research space, intimidation from department chairs. Since she has gone public with her story she has received a flood of supportive email from women faculty members here who have also been treated terribly but who have been afraid to speak out. This is also a situation that does not depend on anecdote. Looking at the administration of the institution gives a clear picture; for example, of 25 department chairs in the school of medicine, 24 are male. There are large departments here with virtually no tenured women faculty. This is not just a problem of the clinical departments; I recall that at meetings of the large Mission Bay planning committee almost all of the attendees were male. I regret that I have not been more outspoken about this issue. The terrible status of women on this campus and at other institutions will not change if only women are concerned about it. There are too few women in influential positions to effect, on their own, real change here. As many of you know I have worked very hard since I have been here to improve UCSF (and this graduate program in particular); my effort was because I was proud to be associated with this institution. Over the past few years however, this pride has turned to shame and then to disgust, as I have observed how Sally (and a great many other women are treated). This is why I am leaving. I wish to say that I have had many friends here and colleagues with whom I have enjoyed working, and whom I will miss. I would be happy to discuss further the above points with any colleagues who wish to.

Yours,

Nelson Freimer

## Response of UCSF Chancellor to Gender Bias (4/6/00)

Dear Colleagues:

Many of you by now know that Dr. Sally Blower, Associate Adjunct Professor in the School of Medicine, has made allegations of misconduct and discrimination against UCSF and several of our faculty. Dr. Blower chose not to file these allegations as a formal grievance with the campus, but instead has publicized them by means of several widely distributed emails to colleagues, scientific journals and the press. The allegations are not entirely explicit. But they have been interpreted to include institutional sexism, gender discrimination, sexual harassment and professional misconduct. Despite the absence of a formal grievance, I felt obliged to initiate an inquiry into these charges, according to the campus Procedures for Investigation of Faculty Misconduct. I appointed Professor and Associate Dean Zina Mirsky from the School of Nursing to perform the requisite preliminary investigation. Over the past month, Associate Dean Mirsky interviewed Dr. Blower, all of the faculty named in Dr. Blower's emails, as well as a number of other faculty and staff with first hand knowledge of the matters about which Dr. Blower had complained. Dr. Mirsky has now completed her investigation and has shared her findings and conclusions with me.

Although investigations of this nature are normally conducted in a confidential manner and the results are not disseminated, in this case Dr. Blower has chosen to share in detail with the faculty and others both the nature of her allegations, and in her most recent March 17, 2000 email, the fact that I had initiated an investigation. I therefore felt it appropriate under these circumstances to share with you the results of Dr. Mirsky's investigation. In examining each and every one of Dr. Blower's charges, Dr. Mirsky found no misconduct or inappropriate behavior on the part of any of the faculty named by Dr. Blower. Specifically, Dr. Mirsky found no evidence of institutional sexism, gender discrimination, sexual harassment or professional misconduct directed against Dr. Blower. I have accepted these findings and plan no further action on this matter. I do want to note, however, that some months ago I initiated a general inquiry into the status of women on the UCSF faculty. That inquiry will continue.

Sincerely,

J. Michael Bishop, M.D. Chancellor

## **Rebuttal to Sally Blower Comments (4/21/00)**

I am writing to respond to the allegations of Dr. Sally Blower regarding my actions as Interim Chair of the Department of Microbiology & Immunology contained in a recent email sent to this group of recipients. The facts related to the incident referred to by Dr. Blower (excerpted below) are as follows:

- 1) Dr. Blower (then and now a member of the Department of Medicine) was loaned space in the Dept. of Microbiology & Immunology (4th floor of HSE). The written loan of space gave the term as 12-18 months and this elapsed around May of 1999. In other words Dr. Blower was in loaned space beyond what had been committed.
- 2) I was recruiting a new faculty member to a position in the Department of Microbiology & Immunology and had promised him lab space including that occupied at that time by Dr. Blower and her lab members. Negotiations related to the recruitment continued during the summer of 1999. Others had arranged for renovations of other space for Dr. Blower on the 3rd floor of HSE (belonging to the Department of Microbiology and Immunology and to the Department of Pediatrics) and I had been assured that Dr. Blower would be able to move into that space in the near future.
- 3) In August of 1999, I became very concerned that Dr. Blower was still in the lab space that had been promised to someone else. Checking into the situation, I found that the renovations to the new space for Dr. Blower were stalled by financial problems (the cost estimate was \$150,000 to \$200,000 and only \$40,000 had been identified for the renovations). I wrote a letter to Dr. Blower (dated August 16, 1999) stating that the space she was occupying had been promised to a new recruit who might come at some time in September (he ended up coming in early October) and that the Department would have to move her and her lab to alternative temporary space. The plan was always to provide departmental space for her office and for her lab members in the interim until her new space could be renovated. At no time was "eviction" mentioned.
- 4) Shortly after the letter was sent, Dr. Blower failed to show up at a scheduled meeting with me to discuss the situation and what her space requirements would be. She adamantly refused to move out of the loaned space or to consider alternative space. In short, she did not contribute to constructive efforts at solving the problem at hand.
- 5) Thanks to the generosity of other departmental faculty members, fully adequate space on the same floor was identified for Dr. Blower to occupy and, after her high pressure tactics failed to get me to change my decision, she agreed to move. We paid for movers to move her office furniture, computers, etc. and her lab computers. To characterize this as an eviction or her actions as "begging for space" is totally misleading. In short, the space was not assigned to Dr. Blower, it was loaned to her temporarily and that promise had ended. The space had been promised to a new recruit as part of the recruitment. Thus, I was obligated to make the space available to the new recruit and I had no such obligation to Dr. Blower. Moreover, practical reasons dictated the same approach, the space Dr. Blower's lab was occupying has 7 lab benches and she had 4 postdocs. The new recruit was expected to need 6 lab benches within a month or

two. In no way did Dr. Blower's gender figure into the decisions on my part. I fully discussed this decision with many people, including the Chair of Dr. Freimer's department, who was very concerned with retaining Drs. Freimer and Blower, and none of the people I consulted told me I should do the opposite. We provided excellent space for Dr. Blower (you are welcome to view it) and provided assistance with her move. Again we did not "evict" her. Whether Dr. Blower's other allegations have any greater basis in fact than those described above remains to be seen. I certainly hope that the Chancellor's office and WILS will be able to get to the truth regarding these serious charges.

Sincerely,

Anthony L. DeFranco  
Interim Chair, Department of Microbiology & Immunology