



# BIOSPHERE

## The Weekly Bulletin of Biology

Biology Colloquium: Friday, 20 April 2012, 2:00 pm in CR 5125

### “Alpha1T Encoded CaV3-type Calcium Channels Regulate Neuronal Excitability in Adult *Drosophila* Brain”

Jorge Iniguez

Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology, UC Irvine

#### New Publications

Former grad student **William Goldenheim** and **Dr. Peter Edmunds** have a paper in *Biological Bulletin*: “Effects of flow and temperature on growth and photophysiology of scleractinian corals in Moorea, French Polynesia.”

**Richard Sims**, **Dr. Virginia Vandergon** and **Dr. Cindy Malone** are authors on, “The mouse B cell-specific mb-1 gene encodes an immunoreceptor tyrosine-based activation motif (ITAM) protein that may be evolutionarily conserved in diverse species by purifying selection,” in *Molecular Biology Reports*.

#### Instruction: Adapting to Local Conditions, 2012

Last Tuesday, the University put on a show of how professors are using emerging technology in their courses: video, etexts, online collaboration, asynchronous learning, student-generated content, and online testing. Biology Faculty gave presentations on two of these innovative learning tools. **Dr. Mary-Pat Stein** spoke about student-generated content,

displaying products created by her Immunology students, from music videos to stuffed-animal molecules. The use of online videos made for a CSUN class was exemplified by the Embryology course taught by **Dr. Steve Oppenheimer**.

#### Interested in Law?

—Alexander Kandel

Most students pursuing an education beyond a Biology BA or BS go on to graduate school in biology, or professional school in healthcare fields such as medical, dental, or pharmacy school. It is not common to hear of a biology student attending law school after graduation, yet I will be doing just that.

Contrary to popular belief, science and law are not polar opposites. Lawyers must use many of the skills that are second nature to trained scientists. As biologists we have been taught to use the scientific method. We ask questions, conduct experiments, and draw conclusions based on data. An attorney must do the same: analyze evidence.

As scientists we have learned to convince others of our conclusions. We write papers and give talks. We convince colleagues, students, professors, and skeptics about what conclusions can be drawn from a set of data. We raise doubts about the conclusions of others, and ask for more evidence if we are not convinced. This is the job of a good lawyer.

To demonstrate competence, a lawyer must evaluate the quality of evidence presented by opposing counsel and raise doubts about their conclusions. On the other hand, to represent one's own side, a lawyer must be able to convince a disinterested third party what conclusion must be made, given a certain set of facts.

While a background in science is helpful in all specialties of law, it is vital in some particular fields. With the unprecedented growth in technological developments in the past several years, there is now an increased demand for patent lawyers. To become a patent lawyer, one must take the patent bar, in addition to the bar in the state where one wishes to practice law. The United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) requires that anyone sitting for the patent bar have an education and/or significant work experience in science. Thus, there exists a unique niche in the legal profession for students with a biology background.

There are no prerequisites that one must complete to matriculate into law school, although a Bachelor's degree is required. Nonetheless, the law school admission process is competitive, and one must do everything possible to stand out from other candidates.

A strong undergraduate GPA is one of two main factors that most law schools consider. A second is the score on the LSAT, the standardized exam required to apply to law schools. Other factors that may make a difference include the personal statement, résumé, work and volunteer experience, and diversity. Because the

majority of law students do not have a science degree, a background in science may be counted as a diversity factor, and may help in the admissions process.

My best advice for LSAT preparation is to take as many practice LSATs as possible under timed testing conditions. Old LSAT exams can be purchased from LSAC, which provide the best practice. This approach is also much less expensive than using a test-preparation service.

Because law schools typically do not conduct interviews, it is important for applicants to use the personal statement to inform the committee about things that are not evident from their GPA and LSAT score. Perhaps you have had a unique life experience, overcame a particularly difficult hardship, or are interesting in some other way? If so, share this in the personal statement. And remember, most schools have a rolling admissions program, so apply early. Good luck!

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