

Two UCSF Graduate Students Named PD Soros Fellows

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Nairi Hartooni, a PhD student in the Tetrad graduate program, and Lindsey Osimiri, a PhD student in the joint UC San Francisco/UC Berkeley graduate program in Bioengineering, have been named as recipients of the Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans.

Today, the Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans, the premier graduate school fellowship for immigrants and children of immigrants, announced their 2016 recipients. The thirty recipients, called "Fellows," were selected for their potential to make significant contributions to US society, culture, or their academic field, and were selected from a pool of 1,443 applicants. With a two percent acceptance rate, it was the most competitive year in the Fellowship's history.

Daisy M. Soros and Paul Soros (1926-2013) founded the Fellowship program in 1997, which has awarded more than 550 Fellowships over its 18 year history. The couple, both Hungarian immigrants, has contributed \$75 million to the organization's charitable trust.

In addition to receiving up to \$90,000 in funding for the graduate program of their choice, each new Fellow joins the prestigious community of recipients from past years, which includes US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, leading Ebola researcher Pardis Sabeti, Aspiration founder Andrei Cherny, Oscar health insurance co-founder Kevin Nazemi and over 535 other New American leaders.

"The Fellows are from all different countries and socio-economic and religious backgrounds, and they have come to the United States in a myriad of ways?but they all bring excellence to the table," said Craig Harwood, who directs the Fellowship program. "They demonstrate that immigrants, regardless of their background, continue to be a critical part of our nation."

The 2016 Fellows, who are 30 or younger, come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, and are all naturalized citizens, green card holders, DACA recipients, or the children of immigrants. Their backgrounds reflect the diversity of recent immigrants and refugees in the United States. Those who were born abroad hail from Bangladesh, Burma, Canada, China, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Germany, India, Iran, Israel, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom.

Nairi Hartooni

Fellowship awarded to support work towards a PhD in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at UCSF

Born in Tehran, Iran, Nairi (pictured on the right in photo above) is a member of a minority of Armenians who have lived in Iran for centuries. Her parents, who were the first generation to live outside of their familial village and receive a formal education, noticed that post-revolution Iran would not fairly offer their daughter educational opportunities. Thus, they moved to Glendale, California where Nairi grew up surrounded by immigrants seeking a better life.

Despite their financial struggles and language barrier, Nairi and her family often visited local museums, the observatory, and the public library for free educational events. Through these visits, Nairi became fascinated by biology and thus began her journey in pursuing a career as a research scientist.

As an undergraduate at UC Berkeley, Nairi was a Regents' and Chancellor's Scholar and double-majored in molecular biology and toxicology. While at Berkeley, she conducted research in plant evolution and worked several jobs to fund her undergraduate career including a position at the state's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch. Nairi started the Toxicology Student Association and designed an outreach program called the Lead Education Awareness Program at Berkeley to address an issue she noticed at work. The group conducted several outreach efforts including a day of K-12 public science education at the local science museum.

Now, Nairi is pursuing a PhD in biochemistry and molecular biology in the Tetrad Program at UCSF. In the laboratory of David O. Morgan, she studies regulatory processes in cell division with particular interest in the enzymology of the anaphase-promoting complex. Remembering the importance public science education has had in her journey, she continues to be involved with outreach efforts.

Lindsey Osimiri

Fellowship awarded to support work towards a PhD in the UCSF/UC Berkeley joint program in Bioengineering

Born in Texas, Lindsey (pictured on the left in photo above) is the daughter of Nigerian immigrants. Her parents left Nigeria in the 1980s to seek educational and economic

opportunity in America. As a child, Lindsey watched her mother return to school to pursue a medical degree and her father run his own business, all while supporting four children and family in Nigeria. Through their example, Lindsey learned the importance of perseverance and the value of education.

Inspired by her mother's dedication to medicine, Lindsey focused on studying biology in grade school. However, as an MIT undergraduate, she discovered her passion for computer science and engineering. These diverse interests led her to the field of systems biology, where quantitative methods are applied to characterize biological systems.

While a student at MIT, Lindsey worked in several research labs and contributed to multiple publications. After graduation, she worked at Selventa, a systems biology consulting company, as a computational biology research associate. In that role, she used computational analyses and bioinformatics to make recommendations for multiple pharmaceutical companies and academic collaborators.

Currently, Lindsey is studying to complete a PhD in Bioengineering through the joint UCSF/UC Berkeley graduate program. She plans to use algorithms to analyze and predict the functions of complex biological systems in her research, and later return to industry to create tools to make biological research more efficient.

Further information about the Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans, including an application for 2017, can be found on the [Fellowship website](#) [1].

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[UCSF Main Site](#)

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[1] <http://www.pdsoros.org>