Connection was one of the recurring themes of the day on November 2, when the Graduate Division and University Development and Alumni Relations welcomed the newest cohort of Discovery Fellows at the annual Discovery Fellows Fall Workshop and Reception, held at Mission Bay.

The afternoon featured an informal lunch and a communications workshop for all current Fellows, followed by a reception for Fellows, faculty, University leadership, and donors. Discovery Fellows are PhD candidates in the basic and biomedical sciences who have been selected to serve as ambassadors for UCSF’s basic science education programs.

The centerpiece of the afternoon was a workshop led by James Rea of the Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science. This internationally renowned organization empowers scientists to engage non-specialists in conversations about science, thereby encouraging science advocacy broadly. In the hands-on workshop, Fellows used movement, improvisation, and conversation to explore sharing their research stories vividly and empathically in order to
make meaningful connections with a wide range of audiences.

The initial welcome and orientation session for the 25 newest Discovery Fellows, featuring remarks by Graduate Dean Elizabeth Watkins; Jessica Jencek, senior director of University Development; and Professor Charles Craik, explored connection as well, through some personal donor stories and a discussion of how these students might be called upon to interact with donors, legislators, and policymakers in their role as spokespeople for basic science at UCSF. Later, Discovery Fellows program founding donor Sir Michael Moritz offered remarks to students before joining them for refreshments and conversation at the reception. See a video of Michael Moritz and his wife Harriet Heyman sharing the story of what inspired them to establish the Discovery Fellows Program.

The Discovery Fellows program was established in 2013 with a generous gift of $30 million from Sir Michael Moritz and his wife Harriet Heyman to the UCSF Graduate Division to ensure the future of PhD education programs in the basic sciences. Through additional gifts from Moritz and Heyman as well as over 1,200 other donors, the fund has become the largest endowed program for PhD students in the history of the 10-campus University of California. The students chosen as Discovery Fellows serve as ambassadors for UCSF’s basic and biomedical sciences programs, with the hope that they will become outspoken advocates for the importance of the innovative research going on at UCSF.

Since the program’s inception, there have been a total of 152 Discovery Fellows from 10 basic science PhD programs, including 73 current fellows. Program alumni now numbering over 54 have gone on to a variety of positions in academia and industry research.

Congratulations to these 25 students who were named Discovery Fellows in fall 2017:

Emmalyn Chen, Pharmaceutical Science & Pharmacogenomics
Frances Cho, Neuroscience
Olivia Creasey, Bioengineering
Ruiji Jiang, Biomedical Sciences
Isabel Johnson, Tetrad
Madeline Keenen, Tetrad
Kathleen Keough, Pharmaceutical Science & Pharmacogenomics
Nadja Kern, Biophysics
Jacob Kimmel, Developmental & Stem Cell Biology
Lina Leon, Tetrad
Jennifer Liu, Biomedical Sciences
Benjamin Mansky, Neuroscience
Sarah McMahon, Biomedical Sciences
Tamas Nagy, Biological & Medical Informatics
An Nguyen, Oral & Craniofacial Sciences
Xingjie Pan, Bioengineering
Ariane Panzer, Biomedical Sciences
Inez Raharjo, Bioengineering
Hanna Retallack, Biomedical Sciences
Paola Soto-Perez, Tetrad
Ryan Tibble, Chemistry & Chemical Biology
Melissa Truong, Developmental & Stem Cell Biology
Fatima Ugur, Chemistry & Chemical Biology
Alex Wolff, Biophysics
Xucheng Zhu
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