

Ex-Ls Report to CUCRA April 24, 2021
Nancy Brown, CUCRA representative

Membership: The new year brought a new slate of officers for the Ex-Ls. They are: President, Ben Feinberg; First Vice President, Howard Hatayama; Second Vice President, Kim Williams; Secretary, Esther Schroeder; and Activities Coordinator, Kathy Bjornstad.

Concerns: The Ex-Ls continue to be very concerned about retiree healthcare and members look forward to updated news from the upcoming CUCRA/CUCEA meetings. We also continue to be concerned about the impacts of Covid isolation on our membership. New concerns are associated with the Accellion Data Breach that is considered to be a serious breach.

Activities: Our quarterly luncheons are our most important activity, and they are currently held virtually on Zoom. Participation has actually increased because we can reach out to a more distant community and others that maybe challenged by having to travel to a specific location.

We had two talks since our last report. **Kevin Doxzen**, a member of the Innovative Genomic Institute, who received his PhD from the lab of Nobel Laureate Jennifer Doudna gave our November talk entitled "CRISPR from Biology to Revolutionary Technology. He explained CRISPR and described how its associated enzymes can be used to cut DNA and RNA. He discussed how thousand of labs are actively programming CRISPR proteins to precisely target and cut DNA and RNA in hundreds of organisms. He indicated that we are now in a biological revolution that has the potential to change fields of medicine, agriculture, and conservation. CRISPR gene editing technology can potentially reshape modern medicine and enable us to cope with a changing planet. He discussed issues beyond those associated with the science by raising questions that we must confront to deal with the difficult ethical and policy related matters. It was a fascinating presentation. **Patricia Valdespino Castillo** gave our February talk entitled "Biogeochemistry at Extremes, working in Antarctica and LBNL." She described her research interests that are devoted to understanding Biogeochemical cycles in extreme environments. She has participated in three Antarctic campaigns studying metabolic diversity and ecological patterns of extremophilic microbes. She described some of the challenges in working in this very difficult environment. At the lab, she uses the Advanced Light Source to perform chemical characterizations of living systems at the microscale.

Retirement Center Interactions: We look forward to continuing to work with the University of California Berkeley Retirement Center to keep our membership engaged. Kris Thornton, the Center's Associate Director retired, and has been replaced by Camille Koue. Many of our future activities will be accomplished using Zoom, and we all look forward to meeting in person at some later date.