

1996

Lawrence Goldstein

Larry Goldstein is a Professor in the Division of Cellular and Molecular Medicine and Department of Pharmacology, and an investigator in the Howard Hughes Medical Institute at the University of California at San Diego.

Goldstein recently came home to UCSD where he was an undergraduate in the Class of 1976, majoring in biology. At first it didn't occur to Goldstein to pursue a career as a scientist. His father had been a physician and he assumed he would be one, also. However, Goldstein started working in Dan Lindsley's lab as an undergraduate and recalls it as a "great place to learn and be exposed to science...[Lindsley] infected me with his enthusiasm for science and was instrumental in awakening me to the idea that I could become a scientist." This experience influenced Goldstein to move to Seattle to study genetics, which, at that time, was "the place to go [for genetics research]."

After briefly flirting with the idea of working on mammals, he continued with *Drosophila* genetics and cytology with Larry Sandler and Breck Byers. Sandler and Byers gave Goldstein an unprecedented degree of freedom and support to follow his instincts even though "their major interests and directions were not the same as my own." Sandler and Byers supported Goldstein's work, which was to conduct a light and electron microscopic analysis of meiotic mutants in *Drosophila*. As a result, Goldstein became interested in the mechanisms of mitosis and microtubules, which led him to Boulder in 1980 for postdoctoral work with Dick McIntosh. McIntosh also gave him the freedom to study and experiment "on pretty much whatever I wanted. Even though Dick's lab didn't work on *Drosophila*, I brought my own along and ran my own closet *Drosophila* shop on the side. As a result, I was able to develop a direction that my lab still pursues today, namely, the genetic analysis of cytoskeletal components."

Goldstein moved to Harvard in 1984. The Department of Cellular and Developmental Biology was new at that time, and Goldstein thought it would be an exciting place to go. Harvard was a great experience for him. Goldstein received enormous support from many of his senior colleagues there, including Rich Losick, Dan Branton, Bill Gelbart, and Fotis Kafatos. Goldstein developed a collaborative scientific project with Branton that Goldstein describes as quite "stimulating and rewarding and which I still miss. I learned a great deal from my time there and look back on it fondly." Goldstein left Harvard for a combination of personal and professional reasons. He had not gone to Harvard intending to stay indefinitely, and he and his wife missed their families on the west coast. UCSD and "La Jolla offered the possibility of an unusually interactive scientific community nearing critical mass in several fields that I was interested in." Goldstein and his wife found the environment attractive and the scientific community growing rapidly, so they decided the time had come to move. Since going to UCSD, Goldstein's science "is moving into new areas as a result of new interactions, and I am enjoying the highly interactive and collegial environment." Goldstein also feels very fortunate to be a member of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. "The support for me and my lab is generous, and it has allowed me to carry my research in new directions." Goldstein is also

the director of the Cell Biology course in the Biomedical Sciences Graduate Program and teaches part of the first year Medical School Cell Biology course. In the Medical School, Goldstein has become intrigued with the problem of educating future clinicians on the value of basic science to clinical medicine, and he has tried to pass this interest on to medical students.

A member of the ASCB since 1980, Goldstein is also politically active on behalf of the Society as coordinator of the San Diego-area Congressional Liaison Committee. He believes that scientists tacitly agree to participate in several types of social compacts: "one of these concerns our relationship with the public, which pays for our work either via taxes through the NIH or via donations to charities such as the American Cancer Society. These people have a right to know what we are doing with their money and how the investment made with their taxes or donations will benefit them. If we expect them to pay for our scientific endeavors, then we have a responsibility to educate and inform them about our work. My participation in the CLC reflects this view.

We cannot expect Congress to give us more money without explaining why it is important to them and their constituencies." Toward this end, Goldstein recently wrote an op-ed piece for the San Diego Union Tribune [see the ASCB Newsletter, October 1995] about the value of NIH sponsored research, and he has also interacted extensively with his congressional Representative Randy Cunningham (R-CA) through letter-writing and personal visits. Goldstein's own experience is that several letters and a visit or two "seem to be enough to draw attention to an issue; this effort doesn't take all that much time. In fact, it seems to me that if we have time to write grants to ask for money from a granting agency, then we surely have time to explain to our elected officials why we deserve that money. While the Washington establishment gives the impression of being monolithic, each Representative's office is actually relatively small, so that the staff notices if 10 or 20 letters arrive on the same subject. Thus, our involvement and effort absolutely make a difference. I have seen this in the case of my own Representative. My perception is that Representative Cunningham has gone from passive to active support after only a year of concerted attempts to inform him of the value of NIH-sponsored research by me and my colleagues in the area. I have also been surprised in my meetings with my local Representative that he was actually quite open to the discussion and obviously interested in science." Goldstein finds that support for the NIH transcends partisan boundaries. "My own experience is that this issue is non-partisan and knows no conservative-liberal division. Members of both the right and left are concerned about their own health and that of their constituents, as well as the costs of health care and disease.

Our mission is to convince members of both sides that the NIH is a government program that works and is therefore worthy of support at a time when many less effective or less popular government programs are being weeded out. Goldstein's wife, Connie Holm, is also a scientist and faculty member at UCSD. They have two children, Kelly, age 5, and Toby, age 3. Goldstein, a self-described "semi-fanatic athlete," enjoys swimming in the ocean, biking on the coast, and running on the beach. He occasionally participates in triathlons, although he says he is not particularly fast. Goldstein also enjoys cooking,

which he compares to doing a biochemistry or molecular biology experiment, "except that you get to eat the results."