We need a new social committee!
All of the members of the Fellows Association Social Committee have moved on to new positions. Do you like to organize social events? If so, we need you! Please contact Paula, paulad@ucar.edu

Monday, September 5th
NCAR will be closed on September 5th in observance of Labor Day.

Staying Abroad or Going Home by Hui Tian

Scientific research in China was at a very low level during the past several centuries. Reasons include the government’s policy of isolation from the rest of the world, invasion and occupation by world powers, civil wars, and political movements. The situation has been changing since 1978, when reform and opening up became China’s fundamental policy. From 1978 to 2007, 1.2 million Chinese people pursued their studies abroad and about 25% of them went back home after obtaining their degrees, making significant contributions to the progress of scientific research in China. However, 75% of them preferred to stay abroad since the expected that salary in China would be too low to support their families and also that the research environment and facilities had not been fully established.

The situation seems to have changed in the past several years. The nation’s investment in science has increased significantly and funding is no longer a problem for many researchers. A lot of research labs and experimental facilities have been established. Scientists can now submit their research papers to international journals, attend scientific conferences, and buy computers since they now have enough funding. At the same time, the government initiated several programs to attract high-level experts who are currently working abroad. One such program is called Recruitment Program of Global Experts.

This program was initiated by the central government of China at the end of 2008. The major aim of this program is to attract senior scientists and engineers (usually university full professors and senior scientists in national labs) to work in China. In the past two years 1143 experts joined this program and started to work in China, mainly in Chinese universities and national labs. While most are Chinese citizens or Chinese descendants, about 30 of them are not ethnic Chinese. The government provides 1 million yuan (~$150K US dollars) for the relocation of each selected expert. These experts’ salary levels in China are comparable to their salary levels abroad. The government also provides con-
Staying Abroad (continued)

sistent funding support (usually around $300K US dollars per year) to the selected experts to carry out scientific research and to establish their research groups. So far some of them have already made world-reputation advances in their research fields.

At the end of 2010, the central government initiated the youth project of the Recruitment Program of Global Experts to attract young scientists and engineers to work in China. The basic requirements include at least 3- years of working experience after obtaining a Ph.D. from a famous foreign university, and currently holding an official position in a well-known foreign university or national lab. The government ensures a relocation budget of 0.5 million yuan (~$75K US dollars), an annual salary of about $30K US dollars, and a one-time research funding of $150-450K US dollars for each selected expert.

Following in the steps of the central government, some province and city governments have also established their own programs to attract experts to work there. All of these programs provide sufficient research funding and decent salary to selected experts.

Stimulated by these programs, more and more Chinese scientists and engineers who are currently working abroad are beginning to seriously consider if they should go back to work in China. In fact some of my friends have already quit their jobs abroad and gone back to work in Chinese universities and institutes. With sufficient research funding and good salary, they can carry out high-level scientific research and also make a good living in China, just as they do in other countries. The advantages of working in China are obvious. First, it’s more convenient to take care of their parents and visit relatives and friends. Second, they can be once again immersed in the Chinese culture in which they were born. While in other countries it’s even very difficult for them to understand a joke. However, people often have to sacrifice something if they decide to move back to China. Usually senior scientists or engineers have stayed abroad for 10-30 years and their spouses have satisfactory jobs in other fields such as industry. It is not so easy for the spouses to find appropriate jobs in China since they have been isolated from the Chinese society for so many years. So in some cases, the expert wants to work in China but his/her spouse doesn’t. Unfortunately in these situations, eventually some of these marriages end in divorce. Another problem is the education of the children. Some experts have young kids who are still in elementary or middle schools. It’s very difficult for the kids to get used to a totally different education style once they move back to China. The cost-of-living in the major cities of China is also a big concern for many scientists and engineers. Almost all of the leading universities and national labs are in major cities like Beijing and Shanghai. However, the average price of a 100-m² apartment in these two cities is around $500K US dollars. The relocation fees provided by different programs are far from enough. In addition, it will take some time for them to establish the scientific environment. They may not have many people with whom to discuss scientific problems. Finally, the best students may still prefer to go abroad rather than work with them.

Fortunately, the governments have realized these potential problems and have made some special regulations to solve them. For example, they promise to help find jobs for the experts’ spouses. And they are constructing apartment buildings so that high-level experts can rent these apartments at a very low price. Undoubtedly, more and more scientists and engineers who have research experiences in developed countries will go to work in China. This should have positive impacts on science and technologies, since it not only leads to more research centers in the world, but also creates more jobs in various research areas.

Do You Need a Mentoring Plan?

Chances are that if you are reading this, you are a postdoc or a graduate student, which means the answer to the question, “Do you need a mentoring plan? is “Yes!” According to the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA), “Postdoctoral mentoring plans can provide a blueprint for the critical professional guidance that has been shown to be a key indicator for a successful postdoctoral outcome… Effective mentoring can lead to more independent, productive and satisfied postdocs.” The good news is that the NPA has created a mentoring toolkit to help you with your plan. Click on Publications & Resources at www.nationalpostdoc.org NCAR is a sustaining member of the NPA.