Supporting International Spouses of Postdocs at UC Berkeley

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“Spouses who remain lonely and do not adjust well often cause a hardship for the scholars, sometimes even to the point of affecting the latters’ academic achievement.”
The fraction of male and female postdocs who are partnered or married and those who have children.

SOURCE: Sigma Xi National Postdoc Survey 2005 postdoc.sigmaxi.org
International Spouses at UCB

SOURCE: Berkeley International Office

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Profile of International Spouses

- Young: 25-35 years old
  - women and men
- Diverse
  - countries, marital & family status, education, English proficiency, length of stay
- Starting their careers
- No relocation or destination services
- Financial concerns
- Spend a lot of time alone

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Why do spouses come?
Major Challenges

- Adjusting to life in a foreign country
- Making friends
- Learning English
- Learning about the culture
- Creating a fulfilling personal and professional life
  - Finding meaningful work (job or volunteer), educational opportunities and outside activities
Additional Challenges for Parents

- Finding affordable babysitting or daycare
- Understanding American school system
- Meeting other families with children
- Parenting in a foreign country
- Dealing with effect of moving and culture shock on children
Major Needs

- **Support**
  - Share experience with other spouses
  - Sense of belonging to a community

- Knowledge about self and community resources

- Feel less dependent

- Create a new identity

- Regain self-confidence and self-esteem
Creating a Fulfilling Life in America®

- Goals
- Marketing/Registration
- Format
- Content
- Facebook group

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Goals

- Foster friendship and build community
- Create a support system
- Provide information and resources
- Encouragement and motivation
- Empower spouses
- Have Fun!

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Marketing and Registration

- VSPA announces class to postdocs, visiting scholars, student researchers, graduate students
- Questionnaire
- Selection of participants
  - English level
  - Balance of countries
  - Childcare for children
  - Commitment to entire class session
- Maximum class size: 25