RETURNING SCIENTISTS
to the University of Haifa
Investing in Our Shared Future
The University of Haifa is fervently committed to supporting the Returning Scientists Program, the national initiative proposed to halt the ‘brain drain’ of Israel’s academics and to attract exceptional and talented expatriates back to the homeland.

Over the past five years, nearly one hundred exceptional and talented scientists residing abroad have chosen to return to academic careers at the University of Haifa. This cadre of gifted researchers has contributed to the University’s heightened international profile and to its high standards of excellence and innovation in research.

“The high calibre of research being pursued on campus is encouraging outstanding scientists to choose the University of Haifa as their academic home and to ensure that Israel’s promising young scientists will seek their future here,” notes University of Haifa President, Professor Aaron Ben-Ze’ev.

Setting the Stage
Returning scientists at the University of Haifa are provided with optimal work conditions to advance their research, including a state-of-the-art research infrastructure and laboratories equipped with cutting-edge equipment. The University’s supportive work environment helps the scientists to raise research grants and to develop and expand their scientific work.

A Program of National Imperative
The University of Haifa requires support from its friends, especially in light of recent program cutbacks by the Council for Higher Education and the Ministry of Absorption.

Your Support of the Returning Scientists Program is Vital
A gift of one million dollars ($200,000 over a period of five years) will support one returning scientist and facilitate the acquisition of research equipment.

This important opportunity will help build an infrastructure that will ensure that gifted young scientists remain in Israel and contribute to the country’s intellectual resources and academic advancement.
Professor David Roe
Promoting Mental Health

Dr. Baruch Eitam
Minding the Mind

Dr. Sarit Larisch
Racing Towards a Cure for Cancer

Dr. Alan Miller
Where Law and Economics Meet

Dr. Dalit Barkan
Outsmarting Metastasis

Dr. Irit Weissman-Fogel
Shedding Light on the Brain-Pain Connection
Dr. Sarit Larisch joined the University of Haifa as head of the Cell Death and Cancer Research Laboratory, where she is developing a novel type of cancer therapy aimed at selectively killing cancer cells. These therapies are based on a protein termed "ARTS", which is a central protein in promoting cell death in normal cells. ARTS is lost in several types of cancers, which allows these cells to avoid death and become "immortal". ARTS-based therapy is aimed at selectively restoring the ability of cancer cells to self-destruct, and it has the potential to affect a wide range of cancers that share the same features, including breast, ovarian, liver, melanoma, leukaemia and lymphoma.

The ART of Research
The University of Haifa is the only research facility in the world focusing on developing this specific type of within cancer treatment. Dr. Larisch discovered this unique protein during a three-year post-doctoral fellowship at the National Cancer Institute at the National Institute of Health in Maryland. Since her return to Israel, her ARTS-based therapy research has gained international attention in scientific communities. Dr. Larisch was recently awarded the prestigious Johnson & Johnson Focused Funding grant for her research exploring the involvement of ARTS in brain cell damage in Parkinson’s disease. This award marks the first time in three years that an Israeli scientist has received the award.

"Because ARTS is important for proper function of the cell's death machinery, and most cancers have a compromised ability to die, the usage of ARTS-based therapies will allow us to selectively enforce 'cell suicide' in many types of cancer," explains Larisch.

Dr. Larisch’s research in the University’s laboratories has led to numerous high-impact publications in leading international scientific journals. She has won a large number of competitive grant awards and holds six patents and patent applications for her discoveries. Dr. Larisch was a Visiting Professor at Harvard Medical School in 2008 and has been a Visiting Professor at Rockefeller University for the last seven years.

A Universal Fight
"The cure for cancer will be a gradual process," cautions Dr. Larisch, "but with time and proper resources, we hope to make a significant contribution to finding an effective cancer treatment."
Returning Scientists Who Have Made There's No Place Like Home

Professor David Roe
Promoting Mental Health

As teacher, researcher and advocate for one of society’s most marginalized populations – those with mental illness – Professor David Roe works to alleviate the often devastating consequences of mental health problems, like isolation, alienation, and stigma.

Grooming Tomorrow’s Mental Health Leaders
Professor David Roe joined the University of Haifa five years ago to chair the Department of Community Mental Health, the first and only department of its kind in Israel. Under Roe’s leadership, the department has trained hundreds of students who will become future community mental health leaders and specialists and is cultivating the next generation of psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners and scholars in Israel.

Professor Roe returned to Israel following an extended period in the US, where he earned his PhD in Clinical Psychology from Columbia University and completed a post-doctoral fellowship at Rutgers University. The fellowship eventually led to a tenure-tracked position at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. Despite his many years in the US, David missed Israel and began to feel like an outsider. “Although living in the US broadened my professional opportunities, I was sad that my contributions through teaching and training were not happening in the community which was most important to me: Israel,” he said.

Bridging Scholarship with Policy and Practice
Since his return, Professor Roe has worked extensively to combine research in psychiatric rehabilitation with hands-on practice in the field. He recently established the Center for Mental Health Research, Practice and Policy to foster interdisciplinary dialogue and train mental healthcare practitioners. Roe is also spearheading an ambitious national project designed to develop a system for monitoring the impact, effectiveness and efficacy of mental health practices. He is conducting this effort in collaboration with the Israeli Ministry of Health and the Laszlo N. Tauber Family Foundation.

Roe’s decision to return to Israel was a win-win-win opportunity for Israel, the University of Haifa and the professor and his family. “I was lucky to be able to return to Israel and raise my family here and to find an exciting professional challenge at the University of Haifa,” said Roe.
Dr. Baruch Eitam joined the University of Haifa’s Department of Psychology after completing post-doctorate fellowships at Cornell University and Columbia University. There he worked with world-class professionals and honed his expertise in the field of motivational and cognitive mental processes.

While at Columbia, Dr. Eitam was awarded the prestigious David McClelland Postdoctoral Scholarship for his research on implicit learning and unconscious motivation. Eitam’s work studied how the mind is affected by the introduction of abstract, motivation-related concepts – for example, how environmental cues associated with the concept of achievement affect learning.

Unlocking Autism
In his research on the learning of “social grammars,” Eitam explored the hypothesis that socially appropriate behavior can be affected by modulating implicit learning. This research holds potential implications for understanding autism spectrum disorders.

Dr. Eitam did not always envision a career as a social cognitive psychologist. He initially pursued an undergraduate degree in Arabic and Middle East studies, but had a change of heart and enrolled in an accelerated PhD program in psychology, continuing the legacy of his grandmother, an educational psychologist. During the program, Eitam worked with troubled youth at a rehabilitative home, where he became interested in integrating clinical and research psychology.

Coming Home
Although tempted by a promising future and comfortable lifestyle in the US, Dr. Eitam and his wife felt a personal commitment to return to Israel and began to seek the way back. Eitam received several offers for faculty positions in Israel, but was drawn to the University of Haifa and its unique and diverse mix of faculty members in the Department of Psychology. “I was impressed by the Department’s strong research in cognition and social psychology and I hope to make a significant contribution to the scholarship being conducted.

In the future Eitam hopes to apply his basic research of the motivational system to develop a deeper understanding of neuro and psychopathology, which may lead to breakthroughs in treatment of Parkinson's disease.
Dr. Dalit Barkan is the newest faculty member of the University of Haifa’s Department of Biology. Her research seeks to expose the insidious nature of metastasis (the proliferation of cancer cells) by studying dormant tumor cells that suddenly begin growing again after long periods of inactivity.

Wreaking Vengeance on Cancer
Dr. Barkan has successfully developed a three-dimensional model that facilitates the reactivation of cancer cells, enabling her to study the molecular mechanisms linked to this process. Her findings have the potential to identify novel targets to fight metastatic growth. Ultimately, they may lead to the development of treatment that will prevent metastatic growth in breast cancer.

Dr. Barkan inherited her love of science from her father, a Weizmann Institute physicist, who gave Dalit her first microscope as a young girl. She continued in her father’s footsteps as a doctoral student at the Weizman Institute of Science. Her choice to study biology and specialize in cancer research stemmed from the personal loss of friends and loved ones from the disease.

NIH Kudos
Dr. Barkan joined the University of Haifa after completing a five-year post-doctoral fellowship and a two-year research fellowship at the NIH’s National Cancer Institute. While a fellow at the Laboratory of Cellular Biology and Genetics, Dr. Barkan received the National Cancer Institute Director’s 2007 Career Development Innovation Award, and published her findings in Cancer Research 2008, which was selected for the prestigious Faculty of 1000 Biology.

"The time I spent abroad was a wonderful experience for our family. I was lucky to work in a world-class laboratory – a true paradise for scientists – and although I had the opportunity to continue my research there, I didn't hesitate to accept the University of Haifa’s offer," notes Barkan.

For Barkan, returning to Israel was always in her long-term plan. "I knew I wanted to come back to the place where I was best suited and trained to use the tools and knowledge that I acquired. I knew I wanted to establish a laboratory that would lead and promote science in Israel," she explains.

A Soft Landing
Dr. Barkan attributes her successful return to Israel to the supportive work environment at the University of Haifa. "Colleagues have been extremely helpful and have helped create a warm and caring work environment."

In her new laboratory, Dr. Barkan hopes to continue to study the genes responsible for the recurrence of latent breast cancer and to better understand the microenvironment surrounding dormant tumor cells. The next phase of her research will involve testing the effect of radiation and chemotherapies on the remodeling of the microenvironment surrounding dormant tumor cells.
Dr. Irit Weissman-Fogel is unraveling the elusive mystery of what drives chronic pain, a debilitating condition widespread in the western world. "Modern pain treatment and medical diagnostic capabilities are hampered by our incomplete knowledge of the basic central nervous system mechanisms," explains Dr. Weissman-Fogel, who recently joined the Department of Physical Therapy at the Faculty of Social Welfare and Health Sciences.

Imaging Pain
Dr. Weissman-Fogel's neurophysiologic approach to understanding these mechanisms combines advanced brain imaging techniques (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) and psychophysical measurements, such as an individual's perception of pain, and personality traits. She is currently the only researcher in Israel using imaging techniques to examine the brain mechanisms of pain processing in chronic pain patients.

Dr. Weissman-Fogel first became interested in the subject of pain while working as a physical therapist, treating people who hurt. In search of a way to improve quality of life for sufferers of chronic pain, she pursued her Master's and PhD degrees in the Clinical Neurophysiology Department at the Faculty of Medicine at the Technion. In her graduate work, she explored the mechanisms of chronic pain using a broad spectrum of psychophysical measurements in humans. She set up an animal laboratory and pain research program, which included a combined model of behavioral studies, telemetric cardiovascular monitoring, and surgical procedures.

Dr. Weissman-Fogel completed her post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Toronto's Western Research Institute, the leading research facility in the field of brain imaging and behaviour systems. Her research project, supported by a grant from the Canadian Institute of Health Research, explored activity patterns and neuro-anatomical changes in the brain and aimed to understand the interaction between pain, attention and cognition in chronic pain.

"Working in a research institute of this calibre was a wonderful, enriching professional experience," says Dr. Weissman-Fogel, who received a tempting offer to stay on at a leading University in Canada. But without much hesitation, the Haifa-born researcher decided to come back to Israel. She missed her family and friends, and the Israeli way of life. "Israel is still the best place to raise children," asserts Dr. Weissman-Fogel.

No Pain – All Gain
Dr. Weissman-Fogel hopes her research with chronic pain will make a real difference in patients' lives by helping practitioners identify patients at risk of developing chronic pain, choosing proper treatment plans for patients, predicting successful completion of treatment, and improving rehabilitation processes.
For Dr. Alan Miller, accepting a position at the University of Haifa’s Faculty of Law and Department of Economics represents the fulfillment of a life-long goal. "Immigrating to Israel had been a dream of mine for many years and I have always been drawn to the city of Haifa," says Miller, whose research specializes in microeconomics, game theory, and social choice theory.

**Mathematical Underpinnings**

Miller uses mathematical economics as a tool to analyze compelling legal issues in modern society, such as the identification of groups ("Who is a Jew?") and the limits of free speech. "Combining opinions using an 'axiomatic' approach enables simple properties to be translated into mathematics, and from this we can derive implications for legal institutions," he explains. This work also gives us a mathematical foundation to investigate contemporary issues, like those of religious identity.

Born and raised in the US, Miller earned his J.D. at Northwestern University and completed his Ph.D. at the California Institute of Technology. He first became interested in law and economics as an exchange student in Israel, where he took classes in law and game theory and was intrigued by the subject.

Dr. Miller visited the Department of Economics on several occasions in various academic frameworks before making his decision to relocate. "I was extremely impressed by the quality of research at the Faculty of Law and Department of Economics and the research communities in Israel," he says.

**Coming Full Circle**

As a lecturer at the University of Haifa, Dr. Alan Miller is teaching the very topics that first sparked his legal interests as a young student in Israel. While he may have closed one academic circle, his personal and professional journey is wide open.
We welcome your partnership in supporting the Returning Scientists Program and in continuing our tradition of excellence in research and innovation.

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