

November 6, 2024

I (Harout Gulesserian) make no waivers, no admissions, reserve all rights without limitations to amend, revoke, modify, supplement any and all provisions of the instant complaint, especially as additional evidence is discovered on the matters.

Dear Vice Chancellor Krause,

Thank you for your attention to my whistleblower retaliation complaint case number #EP23681. Below, I provide the detailed clarification you requested concerning the adverse personnel actions I have experienced at UCLA without limitations. To support my claims, I hereby incorporate, by reference, all documents submitted to UCLA via email on September 10, 2024, and subsequent documents including, without limitations, the various memorandum(s) sent to UCLA via USPS Certified Mail tracking #9589071052701145964438 in a binder format on September 13, 2024 along with the updated and most recent evidence being supplied to UCLA via a PowerPoint titled *Gulesserian_to_Krause*.

Without limitations, I have endured significant retaliatory actions following my whistleblower activity, requests for FMLA leave, as well as my engagement in other protected activities mentioned throughout my current and previous complaints incorporated by reference full force, without limitations. These adverse actions have materially and negatively affected the terms and conditions of my employment including, but not limited to:

1. Demotion or Reduction in Job Responsibilities: A supervisor demotes an employee or reduces their job responsibilities in retaliation for reporting a complaint or participating in a protected activity, resulting in a loss of prestige, pay, or benefits.

2. Unfair Performance Evaluations: A supervisor gives an employee unfair or biased performance evaluations, which can lead to a denial of promotions, raises, or other opportunities, and can ultimately result in termination.

3. Denial of Promotions or Opportunities: A supervisor denies an employee a promotion or opportunity for advancement, despite the employee's qualifications and experience, in retaliation for reporting a complaint or participating in a protected activity.

4. Unfair Discipline or Termination: A supervisor disciplines or terminates an employee in retaliation for reporting a complaint or participating in a protected activity, without following proper procedures or considering mitigating circumstances.

5. Hostile Work Environment: A supervisor creates a hostile work environment by engaging in harassing or discriminatory behavior, making it difficult or impossible for the employee to perform their job duties.

6. Exclusion from Important Meetings or Projects: A supervisor excludes an employee from important meetings or projects, limiting their opportunities for growth and development, in retaliation for reporting a complaint or participating in a protected activity.

7. Unfair Assignment of Tasks or Duties: A supervisor assigns an employee unfair or excessive tasks or duties, which can lead to burnout, stress, or a decrease in job performance.

8. Denial of Reasonable Healthcare Accommodations: A supervisor denies an employee reasonable healthcare accommodation for a disability or medical condition, despite the employee's requests and medical documentation, further complicating the employee's ability to perform their job effectively and compromising their rights under employment laws.

9. Retaliation Against Whistleblowers: A supervisor retaliates against an employee who reports a complaint or participates in a protected activity, such as reporting a safety hazard or participating in an investigation.

10. Unfair Denial of Leave or Time Off: A supervisor denies an employee's request for leave or time off, despite the employee's eligibility and the company's policies, in retaliation for reporting a complaint or participating in a protected activity.

11. Interference with Benefits: A supervisor interferes with an employee's benefits, such as (patent and inventor intellectual property interests and titles) health insurance, retirement plans, or other benefits, in retaliation for reporting a complaint or participating in a protected activity.

12. Unfair Application of Company Policies: A supervisor applies company policies unfairly or selectively, targeting an employee who has reported a complaint or participated in a protected activity.

13. Damage to Professional Reputation: A supervisor damages an employee's professional reputation by making false or misleading statements about the employee's performance or conduct, in retaliation for reporting a complaint or participating in a protected activity.

14. Unfair Denial of Training or Development Opportunities: A supervisor denies an employee training or development opportunities, despite the employee's eligibility and the company's policies, in retaliation for reporting a complaint or participating in a protected activity.

15. Retaliation Through Technology: A supervisor uses technology, such as email or social media, to retaliate against an employee, such as by sending harassing or threatening messages, or by monitoring the employee's online activity.

16. Unfair Application of Progressive Discipline: A supervisor applies progressive discipline unfairly or selectively, targeting an employee who has reported a complaint or participated in a protected activity, and escalating the discipline to more severe levels.

17. Failure to Investigate Complaints: A supervisor fails to investigate an employee's complaints of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation, or fails to take prompt and effective action to address the complaints.

18. Retaliation Through Third Parties: A supervisor retaliates against an employee through third parties, such as by instructing other employees to harass or intimidate the employee, or by hiring a third party to investigate the employee.

19. Lack of Salary Correction: Despite consistently working 50 to 60 hours per week prior to my FMLA leave, I have only been compensated for 40 hours weekly. This discrepancy materially impacts my financial stability and undermines my professional trajectory. Promises of recognition and compensation for additional hours remain unfulfilled, further deteriorating my employment conditions thus materially and negatively impacting my employment terms.

20. Failure to Acknowledge Contributions: My contributions have not been recognized, particularly in relation to patent applications. Admission committees for graduate programs and prestigious research opportunities favor applicants with filed patents more favorably. By depriving me of this opportunity, my potential for career advancement is severely compromised which affects me in an obvious material and negative way based off of contractual duties signed with UCLA upon hire.

21. Exclusion from Key Projects: Intentional exclusion from significant projects, such as the HIV project, KDM6B project, the Oxygenation project, and the SSPysGene consortium project negatively impacts my professional growth and promotional potential. These exclusions diminish my standing as an emerging scientist and hinder my chances of obtaining competitive graduate admissions and the proper recognition from the scientific community.

22. Refusal to Recognize Inventor Status: The refusal to acknowledge my status as an inventor directly contradicts my contract, which states my rights to intellectual property. This lack of recognition undermines my accomplishments and restricts my professional opportunities, limiting my advancement in a high demanding research field. Not allowing me to be dubbed inventor/creator of my accidental discovery materially and negatively violates my work privileges for working at UCLA based off contracts signed day of hire.

23. Ostracism and Demotion: I have been ostracized and relegated to menial tasks, such as handling stem cells, which are typically assigned to newcomers. This effectively demotes my position and prevents me from engaging in meaningful work related to my discoveries, diluting my contributions and reputation in the lab and the institution collectively. UCLA claims to be an inclusive environment where all types are treated equally, whereas in my situation it is the complete opposite, as I constantly have to be placed under major stress, anxiety, and extreme isolation at work all because I did not comply to violating UCLA policies thus further negatively and materially impacting my employment terms with UCLA.

24. Undermining Intellectual Property Rights: Supervisor Bennett Novitch's actions to thwart my contributions to intellectual property are in direct violation of my rights as outlined in the UCLA patent acknowledgment agreement, which recognizes my 35%

inventor rights. This undermines my professional value and puts my property interests whatever they may be at risk.

25. Emotional and Psychological Distress: The hostile work environment created by the ongoing retaliation has resulted in significant emotional distress, anxiety, and trauma, impacting my mental health and overall job performance. The continuous threats to my position exacerbate this distress.

26. Manipulation and False Accusations: I have faced false accusations regarding my work, such as being accused of abandoning experiments. These misleading narratives are designed to undermine my credibility and create grounds for termination.

27. Isolation and Hostility from Colleagues: The pervasive hostility and derogatory comments from lab members foster an environment of fear and discrimination, isolating me further and impacting my mental well-being.

28. Systematic Undermining of Professional Identity: Supervisor Novitch's actions appear to be calculated to appropriate my discoveries for his own benefit, systematically eroding my professional identity and jeopardizing my future success. This manipulation threatens my potential for recognition and advancement in my field.

Preface Without Limitations

Dear Vice Chancellor Krause,

I am writing to formally elaborate on the points you previously requested clarification on, regarding the ongoing adverse employment actions and retaliatory behavior I have experienced at UCLA. As per our prior correspondence, I have already shared supporting evidence related to these issues incorporated by reference, and I am now providing further details as you requested.

First and foremost, I want to emphasize that prior to these unfortunate events, I was in good mental health, and did not exhibit the symptoms I am now experiencing, which has been a direct consequence of the distressing circumstances surrounding my employment in the Novitch lab. Despite being eligible for recognition as an inventor and for Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) protections, I have faced a series of adverse actions, including, but not limited to, unwarranted allegations that have resulted in my legitimate work and hours being neither acknowledged nor compensated. In addition, I have encountered persistent obstacles from my supervisor, Bennett Novitch, regarding my reasonable healthcare accommodations, which are essential for me to continue to function effectively in my role.

This ongoing retaliation, perpetrated by Supervisor Bennett Novitch, Supervisor Novitch's wife Supervisor Samantha Butler, members of the Novitch/Butler labs, as well as the Neurobiology Department CAO Supervisor Mark Lucas and other involved Principal Investigators, constitutes in part a substantial and motivating factor behind the daily adverse retaliatory actions that I face at UCLA daily. These relevant actions have taken a profound toll on my physical and mental well-being, leading me to seek medical leave and ongoing care, as I will elaborate on further below without limitations.

The toll of these actions on my health had necessitated my taking of Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave for treatment of related healthcare issues as advised by UCLA Human Resources (HR) recommended UCLA Confidential Counselling Services. Upon their recommendation, I sought further support from the UCLA Office of Ombuds Services, where I met with Thomas Griffin to discuss the material and ongoing negative impact on my health, both at the time and continuing to the present day. Due to the severity of my condition, I was also referred to a higher standard of care per the request of UCLA Confidential Counselling for ongoing healthcare needs, stemming directly from the workplace challenges I have faced and further evidencing the material and negative impact of my job. In light of these circumstances, I feel it is imperative to bring these matters to your attentions with the utmost clarity. I continue to face retaliation that undermines both my professional contributions and my well-being, and I trust you will review this information with the gravity it warrants.

Without limitations, the toll of these actions on my health necessitated my requests for taking family care and medical leave, my assertion of inventor rights, and my engagement in other protected activities including but not limited to whistleblowing, have all significantly contributed to the retaliatory measures I continue to endure daily in the workplace, therefore creating the material and negative impact that is somewhat irreparable and violates the terms and conditions of my employment.

Wage and Hours Violations Without Limitations

Lack of Salary Correction: Despite consistently working 50 to 60 hours per week for approximately two years prior to my FMLA leave, I have only been compensated for 40 hours of work per week. This lack of proper compensation constitutes a substantial and ongoing negative and material impact on my employment terms. I was assured that my additional contributions would be recognized, and that compensation for the extra hours worked would be forthcoming; however, these promises have remained unfulfilled, thus materially and negatively impacting my employment terms and conditions. The failure to appropriately compensate me not only jeopardizes my financial security but also detrimentally impacts my professional trajectory, particularly as I work towards advancing in the field.

Moreover, it is widely recognized that academic, and professional admissions committees, such as those reviewing graduate program applications and prestigious research opportunities, regard candidates with patents filed with the USPTO more favorably rather than those relying solely on letters of recommendations. On October 27, 2023, Supervisor Bennett Novitch made a statement via UCLA Slack urging me to "work in a multi-team setting," emphasizing that "this is at the heart of being able to ask people for recommendation letters that carry a huge amount of weight in graduate admissions and getting your name on additional publications." He further urged I "impress upon others" involved outside of our lab by appearing as a "helpful and skilled person who made contributions to others' research" implying I share my discovery prior to safeguarding the intellectual property rights, and that "admissions committees will be far more impressed" with these actions (Supervisor Bennett Novitch, Slack, 10/27/23). This recommendation, which I interpret as an encouragement to forgo the protection of my intellectual property rights in favor of fostering external relationships, directly contradicts UCLA's policy on intellectual property and the protocols that safeguard my potential for patent filings and is in direct violation of my employment contracts thus materially and negatively impacting my employment terms.

Moreover, Supervisor Novitch's reference to prioritizing the interests of outside collaborators—who later asserted that NIMH funding should take precedence over UCLA's property rights (*see further details in later sections*) — arguably violates the terms and conditions of my employment. These actions have contributed to a material and negative impact on my professional standing, preventing me from securing inventor/creator rights, and forcing me to operate outside the scope of UCLA's established policies regarding intellectual property reporting duty. Furthermore, Supervisor Bennett Novitch has intentionally excluded me from key projects that I was previously involved in, which has significantly undermined my ability to progress professionally, both in terms of promotion potential and my competitiveness in graduate admissions. This exclusion materially and negatively impacts my career trajectory, diminishing my standing as a scientist and restricting my opportunities to contribute to groundbreaking work I discovered.

The refusal to recognize my contributions as an inventor and creator has further compounded the negative impact on my employment. As outlined in my contract, the University of California's Intellectual Property Policy specifies that, "Subject to previous versions of this policy and the University's contractual obligations, the University agrees to pay Inventor(s), or Inventor(s)' heirs, successors, or assigns, 35% of the University's Net Commercialization Income received

for a license or option to patent rights" (University of California. (2024). *IP policy: Policy on inventions, patents, and innovation transfer* (p. 3). University of California). Denying me this recognition has materially and negatively affected my ability to participate in the university's intellectual property commercialization processes and has consequently impacted my professional standing and future career prospects. In the instance the university does not want to patent my discovery, I still retain inventor creator rights as I would have to pursue the patent through the NIH.

Without meaningful opportunities for advancement, there are no viable prospects for promotion, which significantly impacts my employment terms in a highly competitive and demanding field. In this area, novelty is rare, and to produce groundbreaking work that has the potential to advance multiple disciplines—such as medicine, research, pharmaceuticals, academia, secondary education, and business within a billion-dollar industry—without recognition is a substantial detriment to my career and prospects furthering the negative and material impact of my employment terms at UCLA.

III. POLICY TEXT

- A. Copyright and Course Material Policies.** This policy does not modify the ownership rights provided in the University policies regarding [copyright ownership](#) or [course material](#) ownership.
- B. Ownership.** The University owns University IP. This ownership statement fulfills in part the requirements imposed by applicable federal, state, and sponsor policies or regulations. The [Patent/IP Acknowledgment](#) is the document that confirms the University's ownership of University IP and all University employees must sign the [Patent/IP Acknowledgment](#) at the time of hiring.
- C. Income Distribution.** Subject to previous versions of this policy and the University's contractual obligations, the University agrees to pay Inventor(s), or Inventor(s)' heirs, successors, or assigns, 35% of the University's Net Commercialization Income received for a license or option to patent rights. The distribution of Net Commercialization Income from all other University IP is determined by the UC Location or national Laboratory. The remaining 65% will be provided to Chancellors, the Vice President, Agriculture and Natural Resources, or the Laboratory Director to distribute according to local policies and practices, of which 15% will be allocated for research-related purposes. The federal [Bayh-Dole Act of 1980](#) requires the University use Net Commercialization Income from Inventions for scientific research, development, and education. When two or more Inventors /creators are eligible to receive Net Commercialization Income for the same Invention /University IP, each shares equally, unless all Inventors/creators agree in writing to a different sharing arrangement. University-managed national Laboratories may establish separate royalty distribution formulas, subject to approval by the President.

Additionally, the situation surrounding my intellectual property contributions has further materially impacted me. When I signed the UCLA Patent Acknowledgment Agreement, which recognizes my 35% inventor rights, Supervisor Novitch denied my contractual obligations and even attempted to mislead me by stating that "investigators only get a cut." Ironically, Supervisor Novitch initially appeared to understand and emphasize UCLA's inventor policy in this very email by stating that all inventions are "considered the property of the university," which led me to believe we were in mutual agreement regarding university laws. However, he subsequently jeopardized university assets by exposing them to third parties without proper safeguards from the Technology Development Group (TDG), despite having been put on notice multiple times (Novitch, Email, 1/20/2024, 3:04 PM). By Supervisor Novitch continuing to thwart my ability to

obtain the benefits and recognition outlined in my agreement with UCLA, he further misleads the department and the university which materially and negatively impacts my property interests, whatever they may be under contract. These actions also disparage my professional value before other departments at the institution and the collective scientific community by denying association with my work and denying me access to my rightful discoverer/creator UCLA work privilege benefits.

I believe I have effectively been blacklisted by several individuals within the Neurobiology department. On October 22nd, 2024, in the CHS 66-200K Main Laboratory Hallway, Supervisor Bennett Novitch mentioned that he had discussed my situation with other PIs. He then invited me to attend in-person meetings with the consortium group, whereas all previous meetings had been held via Zoom. When I expressed my preference to join via Zoom for healthcare reasons, Supervisor Novitch questioned my need to do so. His reluctance to accommodate my request raises concerns, as I suspect the consortium PIs may further retaliate against me in support of Supervisor Novitch.

During a Zoom meeting on February 26, 2024, three days after Supervisor Novitch erupted on me, the consortium PIs directed the following statement, “Here at UCLA, we have each other’s backs,” towards me, followed by another comment expressing a preference for “NIMH to profit from this rather than UCLA.” These incidents strongly indicate improper conduct regarding the work I discovered. I did not want to be complicit in any illegal activities and have raised objections on numerous occasions despite feeling pressure to participate in exchange for my academic and financial security.

Furthermore, another form of mistreatment I have faced is ostracism, as I have been restricted to handling only stem cells—tasks typically assigned to individuals just starting in the lab—while being prevented from advancing my own discovery. This effectively demotes my position and deprives me of meaningful opportunities to engage with the work I originated. It appears there is an effort to dilute my contributions and present my discovery as the collective knowledge of the lab, undermining my rightful credit. On October 22nd, 2024, in the CHS 66-200K Main Laboratory Hallway in front of the university camera, Supervisor Novitch told me, “You have no rights” regarding the intellectual property I discovered. By undermining my work and contributions, I am materially and negatively impacted; instead of advancing my career, I remain a Staff Research Associate with no awards or recognition for my pioneering efforts at UCLA and no publications under my name for my own discovery. I am being wronged by individuals who prioritize their own interests over the University’s mission, openly expressing intentions to share findings with third parties in Wisconsin, New York and other UCLA labs outside of our own (Novitch, In-Person Meeting, CHS 67-200K, Supervisor Novitch’s Office, February 23, 2024, 3:30PM) without informing UCLA's Technology Development Group, in violation of UCLA’s best practices. My concerns about fraudulent and misleading deceptive practices intensified after this in-person encounter, in which Supervisor Novitch stated his intentions to share with third parties outside UCLA and the State of California without meeting his obligations and duties to UCLA.

Supervisor Novitch’s actions appear calculated to appropriate my discoveries for his benefit, systematically undermining my professional identity and hindering my potential for future

success. This exclusion and manipulation not only threaten my current position, but also jeopardizes my ability to gain the essential experience and recognition necessary to advance in a challenging and competitive research field. If allowed to persist, such actions could result in the irrevocable destruction of my career, reducing my contributions to mere footnotes rather than recognizing them for the pioneering work they represent and ultimately prevents me from being recognized as a notable scientist for my novel discovery, should the opportunity arise.

In light of these serious circumstances, I urge the institution to take immediate action to address these injustices. It is imperative to foster an environment that encourages collaboration and innovation rather than one that tolerates retaliation and suppresses individual contributions. The long-term implications of permitting such behavior to continue are detrimental not only to my career but also to the integrity of the institution itself. I expect UCLA to uphold my rights as an inventor and take appropriate measures to rectify these issues, ensuring a fair and supportive workplace for all employees.

Systemic and Ongoing Retaliatory Plans for Termination and Suspension from All Projects without limitations

Suspension from all Projects: My exclusion from significant projects, including but not limited to, the HIV project (September 2023), the KDM6B project (October 2023), and the Oxygenation project (April 2024), has severely disrupted my work and effectively terminated my involvement in essential research. This marginalization diminishes my professional identity and undermines my contributions, which are crucial for future promotions. Furthermore, this exclusion compromises my current work and dilutes my research contributions, effectively signaling a de facto termination of my role and further undermining my standing among colleagues. Additionally, my exclusion from the SSPsyGene project (August 2024) jeopardizes my work and intellectual property rights, indicating a troubling pattern of retaliation. Despite my requests for reasonable accommodations—such as attending meetings via Zoom due to unacceptable behavior during in-person interactions—these have been denied, and my situation has been misrepresented to department officials. The dissemination of false information regarding my conduct, including baseless and unfounded accusations of abandoning work, appears designed to mislead the department and supports a narrative that could ultimately lead to my termination. These combined actions reflect a hostile work environment that significantly and negatively impact my employment terms, hinders my professional growth, and erodes my mental well-being.

Suspension from My Own Discovery/Protocol Project: I am experiencing significant disruptions and risks to my intellectual property rights related to my own discoveries. This exclusion undermines my professional identity and opportunities for growth and promotion. By obstructing my progress with the patent application, Supervisor Novitch adversely impacted my career trajectory and violated my rights as a creator and inventor. His actions also contravene the contractual duties outlined in my agreement with UCLA regarding inventor rights, depriving me of crucial work privileges thus further negatively and materially impacting my employment terms.

Isolation and Hostility: Suspension from Mentorship and Retaliatory Actions in the Workplace Following FMLA Return:

Supervisor Bennett Novitch has systematically isolated me from the lab, fostering an environment of hostility and retaliation among colleagues. Since my return from FMLA, I have endured derogatory comments and retaliatory actions from numerous lab members, which further contributes to a hostile work environment. After raising concerns about Supervisor Novitch's harassing oversight upon my return, Supervisor Novitch began visiting my bench ten times a day, a stark contrast to his previous behavior where he neither visited nor contacted me for months. During these encounters, he would hover over my workstation, further exacerbating the situation. I faced retaliation in the form of disparaging remarks about my work from numerous individuals, including but not limited to Diana Ibrahim, Supervisor Novitch's wife Supervisor Samantha Butler, and numerous other members of both labs. Diana Ibrahim has made inappropriate and unsolicited comments to undermine my contributions such as "Oh - you just got lucky" and "you're the chosen one huh?" What is being dismissed as "luck" here is, in reality, the result of an overworked scientist who dedicated himself to his field while being forced to work seven days a week for two straight years, achieving a remarkable milestone in a field known for its difficulty and resistance to innovation. Driven by pure passion and an unwavering commitment to the work, I persevered through countless hours of hard work, endless repetition, and exposure to current methods. I was forced to get creative, overcoming obstacles, and navigating situations where others had failed, including the risk of being unfairly held accountable for other lab members shortcomings beyond my control or facing termination due to factors outside of my responsibility. It was through this relentless drive that I was able to discover the application of a molecule already present in the lab but having long been dismissed as having no potential use. Without a deep understanding of the foundational concepts behind organoid development and the advancements made to a protocol previously been considered ineffective compared to current methods, the potential use of this molecule would never have been realized. In fact, previous attempts had been made by the lab's highest-achieving postdoc, who was renowned for producing the best organoids at the time, yet those attempts failed to uncover this breakthrough. In an email exchange on January 20th, 2024, at 3:04 PM, Supervisor Novitch attempted to downplay the significance of pursuing a patent with TDG, suggesting that working with them would be "complicated." He referred to a past interaction where TDG reportedly found that the Novitch lab's "4G protocol" lacked sufficient novelty and applicability to justify the legal costs involved in filing and processing a patent application. However, this was only his perspective. I had already spoken to TDG independently, and they confirmed that they did see novelty in my work. They clarified that they simply needed the MTA and Sponsor information to move forward with securing the patent, contradicting Supervisor Novitch's portrayal of the situation (Novitch, Email, January 20th, 2024, 3:04 PM)

Similarly, Supervisor Novitch's wife Supervisor Samantha Butler made concerning remarks during lab meetings, including "you never know what someone is going to do with a knife until you hand them the knife and you watch what they do with it" (Butler, September 26, 2024, In-Person Meeting, 10:00 AM). This comment followed her previous remarks before my leave, such as, "you have been robbed" (Butler, April 18th, 2024, In-Person Lab Meeting). The juxtaposition between the motivations behind these two statements demonstrates the shift in mindset that occurs when an attempt to steal and misappropriate is thwarted, resulting in the loss of any potential benefits from those plans. Unfortunately, in my efforts to protect UCLA's assets and adhere to institutional policies, I have been portrayed as the villain for confronting this

misconduct. As a result, I have become the target of retaliatory remarks and hostile actions in my daily life since I began to speak out. This pattern of behavior risks misrepresenting the origins of my discoveries. With my exclusion, I will be sidelined from the recognition of my work due to a collective agreement within the lab, while behaviors that potentially constitute fraud are allowed to persist. This will further exacerbate the negative impacts on my employment terms, career trajectory and my financial and academic stability without limitations.

As evidence of the ongoing situation, my most recent experience of mentorship suspension occurred when Supervisor Novitch reassigned my lab partner, Erick Nedd, to another group that already contained four individuals, effectively isolating me as a one-person team. I perceive this as direct retaliation intended to further isolate me, with the ultimate goal of terminating my employment, as I am the only senior member of the lab without a group. Nedd confirmed that the decision to end our partnership was not his, but rather Supervisor Novitch's doing.

Nedd was the only student in the lab who contradicted the polarized view of me, going on to send Supervisor Novitch emails that highlighted my true character. In his emails, Nedd indicated that for "four months" he had "thoroughly enjoyed working in [the] lab" (Nedd, Email, April 30, 2024, 2:11 PM) and specifically enjoyed being mentored by me, stating that he had an "amazing experience" and that "Harout did an awesome job teaching me about the protocols we use in the lab and the scientific background of our research" (Nedd, Email, April 2, 2024, 2:02 PM). This is particularly noteworthy given that around the same time, Supervisor Novitch referred to me as an "obstructionist," accusing me of "holding back people in the lab by refusal to share" my knowledge (Novitch, Email, April 15, 2024, 9:56 AM). However, Nedd's emails reflect the opposite, demonstrating that I was actively communicating my scientific knowledge, encouraging collaboration, and taking time to teach others in the lab.

Nedd not only spoke highly of his experience working with me but even reached out to coordinate time with my schedule so that he could work with me again the following quarter after his return (Nedd, Email, March 31, 2024, 5:26 PM). This is a student who was not influenced by the lies and misconduct directed at me, which have shaped the collective belief about me within the lab. Instead, Nedd's perspective was based solely on his experience with me as a team member and mentor, reflecting the positive and professional relationship we had.

Further Retaliation: Recently, I encountered direct retaliation from Sandeep Gupta, a postdoctoral researcher in the Butler lab, who made derogatory comments about my mental health, questioned me about the complaint form I had filled out, and misled Supervisor Bennett Novitch regarding an incident on October 17, 2024, and October 18, 2024, in CHS 66-200K. As a result, Supervisor Bennett Novitch began questioning me on October 22, 2024, in the main hallway of CHS 66-200K. In the initial instance on October 17th, Gupta approached me asking for specific cell lines that they had never been used before. When I asked a simple "why," he became visibly distraught, making mocking gestures with his hands and stating, "Why are you freaking out?" I responded, "Why are you judging me?" to which Gupta stormed off (Gupta, October 17, 2024, CHS 66-200K, 3:15 PM). The following day, after experiencing discrimination based on the way I speak and look, despite my calm and reasonable response to Gupta, I approached him to address and resolve these inappropriate remarks. Gupta expressed concern about being "in the lawsuit," which I had no knowledge of, and proceeded to accuse me

of being disrespectful and “twisting the story.” He also mocked my healthcare condition again, stating, “I also have a healthcare condition – it’s called getting angry fast.” I attempted to de-escalate the situation by explaining that I did not wish to cause any issues but would not condone inappropriate comments and gestures directed at me for my mental health condition. I also countered his misleading claims suggesting that I had not assisted anyone in the lab, despite my having previously dedicated time to teach Gupta how to make organoids, which he acknowledged (Gupta, In-Person, CHS 66-100D, October 18, 2024, 10:00 AM). Although we mutually agreed to resolve the matter, Gupta proceeded to spread misinformation to Supervisor Bennett Novitch. On October 22, 2024, Supervisor Novitch admitted during an in-person conversation that Gupta claimed I “slammed [my] computer” and was “confrontational,” despite Gupta being the one to confront me at my desk (Novitch, October 22, 2024, CHS 66-200K Main Laboratory Hallway, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM). This is just one example of the ongoing retaliatory acts I experience almost daily. It serves as a prime example of the situations I had to navigate even before my discovery. Unfortunately, as a Staff Research Assistant, I am often at the mercy of the opinions of higher-ranking members who hold more influence with Supervisor Novitch than my own. This creates a situation where I am pressured to work overtime succumbing to the unspoken understanding that my academic standing and future are contingent upon the evaluations of other lab members, rather than being based on my own abilities.

To emphasize the recency of these events, a recent encounter with Supervisor Novitch involved denial of reasonable healthcare accommodations and accusations of leaving work for the day and discarding experiments—when, in fact, I was present the entire day with documented evidence (Novitch, Email, October 24th, 2024, 3:24PM - *Please see the PowerPoint titled Gulesserian_to_Krause for Documented Evidence*). Several concerning and contradictory claims were made by Supervisor Novitch, which I believe to be baseless. Key accusations included that I had “abandoned [my] commitments altogether” for missing a meeting that I had requested accommodations for to avoid further emotional strain as advised by my healthcare providers and demanded I “report” my supposed absence as “personal time off/sick leave”. He also assumed that I “discarded... or instruct[ed] others” to discard a viable plate of cells without communication and claimed my “unwillingness to use Slack [did] not help the situation.” However, I was removed from Slack by Supervisor Novitch, supposedly per FMLA policy, and I have evidence that I was still accessible on UCLA Slack, through which other lab members successfully contacted me, yet Supervisor Novitch made no such attempt. The reality of the situation was that I had been present in the lab the entire day, as clearly indicated on a calendar that Supervisor Novitch has notification access to. The plate was also left in the agreed-upon location, reflecting the ongoing communication we maintained—contrary to his claim that we need to “establish some better means of communication.” Moreover, my isolation from the Novitch/Butler Slack group was not voluntary, though the ability to communicate via UCLA slack remained available which Supervisor Novitch never attempted to use to reach out to me.

This encounter highlights the contradictions and unwarranted assumptions in Supervisor Novitch’s accusations and the baseless nature of his assertions. Such retaliatory actions contribute to a hostile work environment that is detrimental to my career, as there seems to be attempts to get me formally written up and/or fired for taking FMLA and partaking/informing the institution of various unethical wrongdoings going on in the lab among other various protected class measures without limitations. Moreover, I am facing constant obstacles with respect to

reasonable healthcare accommodations being denied by Supervisor Novitch for retaliatory reasons.

Corrective Action on Salary, Wages, and Hours without limitation

Evidence of Unpaid Hours

The pay stubs I have received fail to accurately reflect the hours I worked, particularly regarding weekends, holidays, and overtime. Despite my supervisor's acknowledgment of this unpaid work stating, “nobody should be working 7 days a week” (Novitch, Email, February 23, 2024, 11:56 PM), and that he was “concerned about the 7 days of work” (Novitch, UCLA Slack, August 9th, 2023), no corrective action has been taken until my UCLA HR approved healthcare accommodations prohibited me from working weekends. This lack of accountability constitutes adverse employment actions because it results in financial loss and undermines my entitlement to appropriate compensation for my labor thus materially and negatively impacting my employment terms.

For further evidence of uncompensated weekend and holiday work please see the weekend wages and hours supplemental. Video evidence can be provided upon request.

Furthermore, this situation complicates my ability to claim my rightful intellectual property interests, as inadequate compensation erodes my professional standing and credibility. The persistent discrepancies in my pay create significant stress and uncertainty, adversely affecting my overall job satisfaction and mental well-being. This ongoing issue highlights a disregard for fair labor practices, further impacting my ability to perform my duties effectively.

Retaliation Following Complaints

When I raised concerns about wage violations and activities related to my protected class, one instance being an email that I sent on March 18, 2024, highlighting that I had “remain exposed to nearly half a year of non-inclusive/discriminatory activities by lab members” which in reality encompassed two years of exclusion. I reminded Supervisor Novitch that I had previously told him “numerous times in the past” about the “numerous past verbal threats and discrimination that we’ve discussed that I essentially live/lived through” as well as my concerns that “individuals intend to misappropriate my discovery.” Supervisor Novitch dismissed my claims, asserting they were “all in your [Gulesserian’s] head” to which I remarked that it “took people actually telling me [Gulesserian] in writing that they will ‘steal’ my intellectual property for you [Supervisor Novitch] to believe me.” When confronted with this evidence, Supervisor Novitch paradoxically admitted that “yes, it is not all in my [Gulesserian’s] head” but that “it’s all just a joke,” further undermining the seriousness of the non-inclusive threats against me, even after getting this “crystalized in brazen written demands.” I reiterated to Supervisor Novitch that I “was, and to some extent still remain, the subject to a many months long non-inclusive discrimination by lab staff,” touching on the fact that Supervisor Novitch “appeared to be upset with me for trying to point this stuff out to” him including, but not limited to, the “prejudice against how I talk” and “how I enunciate” and that “I remain marginalized” to this day.

Another critical issue I raised, without limitation, was how it was “axiomatic that UCLA, you [Novitch], myself [Gulesserian] and the lab would suffer immediate irreparable harm should someone decide to retaliate and simply take my discovery and allow a prior filing to outpace our pending filing.” I warned that such actions could “trigger [an] unneeded litigation” which I wish to avoid. Despite this, I stated that I “have suffered actual harms, threats, [and] non-inclusive discrimination,” particularly as I “still [am] not allowed to participate in the HIV project” and many others, while “remain[ing] harmed” for simply requesting the “minimum needed for a preliminary time stamped document” that we could “complete within the year” which would be the “safest method to share the protocol with third parties to do deep dive research and data”(Gulesserian, Email, March 18th, 2024, 3:42 PM). I am not being an “obstructionist” as Supervisor Novitch later labeled me, but rather I seek to safeguard UCLA assets (Novitch, Email, April 15th, 2024, 9:56 PM).

Unfortunately, Supervisor Novitch did not respond to my concerns despite my willingness to engage in “outside mediation or other dispute resolution mechanisms available at UCLA.” instead, he dismissed my individual contributions, attributing my discovery to a “collective wisdom and property” of the lab and perpetuating a false and deceptive narrative that I was “impeding other’s progress.” He claimed this “harms everyone” and insisted that “if someone in the lab is struggling or needs help – it should be provided, period” referring to everyone’s progress but the actual harms that were and continue to be done to me (Novitch, Email, April 13th, 2024, 12:36 AM).

Once again, I was forced to justify my claims, emphasizing that Supervisor Novitch’s statements of ‘collective wisdom’ is “irrelevant and insidious.” This “discovery” by me [Gulesserian], as I pointed out, was a “complete accident” that occurred due to my “working 7 days a week while also progressing the work of multiple grad students for two years (one who seldom showed up and another who essentially rarely stepped foot in the TC for the last 1.5 years), nor was in lab working on Saturday/Sunday while I was there Saturdays and Sundays for no extra pay feeding their respective batches and insuring their respective projects go forward” all while occurring in the context of “an ongoing hostile work environment” where I “remain subject to ... discriminatory, non-inclusive, retaliatory, individuals further trying to misappropriate my invention of the FF protocol and my discovery of usage of SB590885.” While I dedicated my Saturdays and Sundays in the lab, providing critical support to their projects without extra pay, others were not similarly committed. (Gulesserian, Email, April 15, 2024, 2:25AM).

I reminded Supervisor Novitch that I had “put [him] on notice about these matters for some time now” and “accepted proposed outside mediation” which Supervisor Novitch made “zero attempts to schedule or execute.” I even brought forth the “non-inclusive discrimination” done “before my discovery” and “nothing was or has been done about it.” As a result, I remain “intentionally marginalized” and “remain singled out” from multiple projects which “precludes me from meaningful opportunities to participate in” them despite me having majorly contributed to their success. This exclusion continues to prevent me from having meaningful opportunities to participate in these projects, and I consistently emphasize the importance of adhering to UCLA policy. Despite my ongoing efforts, I have instead experienced “repeated attempts” from Supervisor Novitch to “force me to waive my rights” to individuals who “openly” expressed intentions to steal and misappropriate my IP in “exchange for my and any other staff pay checks”

is not only insidious but also “not in line with UCLA policies, State, or Federal Law” (Gulesserian, Email, April 15, 2024, 2:25AM).

After numerous attempts to bring these concerns to light, I faced escalated retaliation and hostility from both supervisors and colleagues. Specifically, Supervisor Novitch explicitly threatened my employment, stating that “as a staff research assistant, it is part of your [Gulesserian’s] job requirement to assist others.” He argued that “people in the laboratory are encountering difficulties in achieving their goals,” arguing that my refusal to share my protocol (deliberately described as my “refus[al] to hep members of the laboratory”) would leave him “no choice but to conclude that you [Gulesserian] no longer wish to do your [Gulesserian’s] job” thus providing grounds for my termination. As previously mentioned, Supervisor Novitch labeled me as an “obstructionist,” and claimed that I am “endangering our previously good working relationship and [am] raising tensions across lab members.” Interestingly, this “good working relationship” was never “endangered” while I was working 7 days a week and shouldering the workload of every graduate student. It was only when I began to ask for aid, fair compensation, and proper acknowledgment of my efforts that the relationship became strained in Supervisor Novitch’s eyes. Rather than treating me equally as he would a graduate or post-doctorate student – who would typically be granted ownership of their intellectual contributions – he treated me as less than, undermining my contributions in the lab due to my lower status as a Staff Research Assistant. What is even more troubling, however, is Supervisor Novitch’s emotionally manipulative rhetoric. He asserted that “our obligations are not to TDG and its leadership, it is to the NIH,” reinforcing that I was “specifically paid from funds that we have received from NIH – funded by the American people.” He emphasized our loyalty to “the American taxpayer and patient needs,” while downplaying the importance of adhering the institutional guidelines. Furthermore, he made the inaccurate claim that “the university does not mandate use of their services” which directly contradicts both TDG and university policy. He concludes with the erroneous assertions that that UCLA has “no authority over our research” (Novitch, Email, April 15, 2024, 9:56 AM) thus indicating that Supervisor Novitch believes he is above policy and may act as he wishes without regard for established guidelines, regulations, or institutional authority. This was made clear in an in-person encounter when Supervisor Novitch yelled at me that he “does not give a shit about policy” (Supervisor Novitch, In-Person, CHS67-200K Novitch’s Office, February 23, 2024, 3:30 PM)

Incident of Workplace Violent and Abuse of Power: Verbal Abuse with Intent to Harm

The culminating moment that brought forth my initiation of FMLA and ultimately seeking a higher level of healthcare was an incident of verbal assault towards me for my whistleblowing activity that occurred on April 24, 2024, on the first floor of CHS, near Café Med, from approximately 4:10 PM – 4:15 PM. During this encounter, Supervisor Bennett Novitch and Supervisor Novitch’s wife Supervisor Samantha Butler verbally attacked me. Supervisor Novitch’s wife Supervisor Butler, in particular, accused me of dishonesty, Supervisor Novitch’s wife Supervisor Butler directly calling me a “liar” and loudly threatening that I would be “written up” and “fired.” She made targeted remarks about personal matters only known to Supervisor Novitch, further escalating the hostility of the situation with intent to harm and infringing upon my HIPAA rights. Supervisor Novitch’s wife Supervisor Butler’s aggressive

posture that of a fighting stance, widened eyes, and intense gestures made me feel “extremely apprehensive and uncomfortable” as I later reported to Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Mark Lucas. I attempted to report this incident to Supervisor Mark Lucas twice, starting on April 25, 2024, where I described the encounter as “offensive, unprofessional and inappropriate.” I detailed their “hostile behavior” and how they questioned “what I was doing here” while I was simply getting a snack, assuming that I had “walked off the job” which, of course, was already reported to Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Mark Lucas prior to them attempting to reach me. The “demeaning” and “slandorous comments” that followed instilled immense “fear of personal harm,” triggering my need for FMLA (Gulesserian, Email, April 25th, 2024, 12:48 AM). It is worth noting that I had already requested to use my 216 accumulated vacation hours and 48 sick hours from my two years of uninterrupted work for mental health purposes, which Supervisor Novitch denied, stating that the “timing and length of your [Gulesserian’s] request are unusual” and that Supervisor Novitch “need[ed] to consult with Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Mark Lucas” (Novitch, Email, April 18th, 2024, 9:32 PM). While I consistently worked without pause, all other lab members were granted their vacation requests without issue and were never subjected to additional monitoring concerning their experimental progress. In contrast, my requests for leave were questioned, and the only time my workload was ever addressed was after I raised complaints—yet even then, no effective resolution was offered.

The fact that this direct retaliatory act of hostility occurred publicly on campus grounds should be of utmost concern to the university. Not only was this incident highly visible, but it was later rationalized by those responsible, with no repercussions for their actions. This lack of accountability underscores a concerning disregard for maintaining a safe and respectful environment on campus. In an in-person encounter on August 19th in Supervisor Novitch's office at CHS 67-200K, Supervisor Novitch stated that it was acceptable for Supervisor Novitch's wife Supervisor Butler to yell at me "because she is a supervisor."

Although my 3-week vacation request was denied, I still had essential health care matters to address, as recommended by the healthcare professional(s) I was seeing due to the ongoing hostility I had experienced in my work environment for the past two years, amplified further in the six months following my discovery. I notified Supervisor Novitch on April 19th, 2024, at 12:00PM that I had a “few healthcare matters” to attend and assured him that I would “respond to any and all laboratory items and matters... at the earliest time after my healthcare matters” (Gulesserian, Email, April 19th, 2024, 12:00 PM). In response, Supervisor Novitch acknowledged my communication and noted that he “really appreciates [my] sending this message and letting me [Supervisor Novitch] know what you [Gulesserian] are up to” clearly demonstrating his awareness of my whereabouts (Novitch, Email, April 19, 2024, 12:42 PM). I returned on April 24th, 2024, as advised by my healthcare provider, following my stated intention to address any lab matters promptly upon my return. This made clear that I was not on any unapproved leave. Despite fulfilling my duties, I was unexpectedly met with a hostile and malicious confrontation on the 24th of April as mentioned above.

History and Background of FMLA Interference and Accommodation Denial without limitations

Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Mark Lucas disregarded my initial attempt to report the April 24th incident and instead responded to a separate email from Supervisor Novitch at 9:24 PM that same day, arranging to “talk” in light of the reprimand I’d just received from Supervisor Novitch’s wife Supervisor Butler and Supervisor Novitch. Notably, Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas’ response on April 25th, 2024, at 7:40 AM revealed his awareness of misleading statements Supervisor Novitch had made regarding my absence with the implication that I had taken unapproved vacation after I “didn’t show up to work on Friday” after wanting to “take vacation (3 weeks)” according to Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas (Lucas, Email April 25, 2024 7:40 AM). I had to follow up with a second email on April 25th, 2024 at 5:20 PM where I ask for Lucas’ assistance in the “FMLA process” as it is “virtually foreign to me” and to “kindly forward to me the proper UCLA link(s), contact person info, and/or any other necessary details” to guide me in the “right direction to insure that I am properly and thoroughly using any and all relevant applicable benefits.” Additionally, I explained to Lucas, “in an abundance of caution” that I had “in-fact noticed Ben that I was going to be out Friday due to Medical/Healthcare issues” and that Supervisor Novitch “responded to my notice” demonstrating clear communication between each other. I also emphasized the “outrageous retaliatory and harassing conduct” in the presence of Supervisor Novitch that “intended to inflict injury to me” demonstrating that Supervisor Novitch’s wife Supervisor Butler, a PI who is not my supervisor, had access to my confidential healthcare matters that I only intended to share with supervisor Novitch (Gulesserian, April 25, 2024, 5:20 PM). Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas dismissed my concerns and deemed them unimportant, stating that he wanted to “focus this email to help with the leave questions” and that “we [could] discuss the other item you [Gulesserian] cite separately” (Lucas, Email, April 25, 2024, 5:42 PM). This was never done. Despite my asking for proper UCLA contact information and being notified by Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas that he is the FMLA initiator, Lucas told me to contact HR Rep Helen Nguyen but provided the wrong email address. Additionally, he stated that to I am required to fill “a small bit of paperwork” and “a doctor’s note” with a link to the Family and Medical Leave guidelines that stated I have to submit “certification from a health care provider ... within 15 calendar days of receiving” an FMLA request (University of California. (n.d.). *Family and medical leave* (UC Family and Medical Leave Policy) page 5; Lucas, Email, April 25, 2024, 5:42 PM).

Following my corresponding with Lucas, I reached out to Campus HR representative Victoria Castaneda on April 25th, 2024, at 11:17 AM to request “additional guidance and assistance” emphasizing that the “FMLA process seems entirely foreign to me.” I wanted to ensure proper UCLA oversight on this matter to avoid any compliance issues (Gulesserian, Email, April 25th, 2024, 11:17AM). Castaneda responds promptly on April 26th, advising me to “connect” with “UCLA Health’s Employee Relations team” and to “refer [me] to the appropriate HR representative who can provide [me] with FML information and the next steps” whom she had cc’d to the message (Castaneda, Email, April 26, 2024, 4:04 PM).

Initially trusting the email address Lucas provided, I attempted to contact Helen Nguyen three times to initiate my FMLA – first on April 26, 2024, at 1:40PM, second on April 27, 2024, at

12:58 PM and third on May 14th, 2024 at 4:55 PM not understanding why I had not received a response for over 2 weeks nor why the Neurobiology Department left me without crucial FMLA information for so long. After having gone through a chain of various HR correspondence, HR representative Vera C. Moubayed clarified Nguyen's correct email on May 2nd, 2024 clearly noting helenanguyen@mednet.ucla.edu as the address, not the incorrect one (helennguyen@mednet.ucla.edu) that Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas had provided me. Meanwhile, Derouhe Shegian directed me to the Leave of Absence (LOA) team, which contacted on April 29th, 2024, stating that I was seeking the necessary documents to formalize my FMLA that "was in effect on 4/24/24" (Gulesserian, Email, April 29th, 2024, 9:36 AM). The LOA Team quickly provided comprehensive instructions, including a "link to request a leave of absence," after which I'd be "assigned a Leave Analyst," and receive a "DocuSign email with the appropriate paperwork to have completed" and a request to "upload documentation" to my Employee Experience Center (LOA Team, Email, April 29th, 2024, 10:27 AM). I promptly completed and submitted all paperwork, including physician-approved healthcare documents mandating immediate FMLA, within the 15-day submission window state in UCLA FMLA guidelines (*Please Refer to the Memorandums Previously Sent for Evidence of Submission*). This submission was logged in the LOAN system on May 3, 2024, opening my FMLA case (HRC0301037) as of April 29, 2024. The leave was formally approved on April 30, 2024, with UCLA records confirming documentation was uploaded on May 3, 2024, and an official FMLA start date of April 25, 2024.

The Loan System noted Valentino T. Manlutac as my Leave Analyst. However, after receiving no communication from Manlutac for 12 days following my document submission – and a full 21 days after the urgent start of my FMLA due to the verbal retaliation incident – I reached out via the LOAN system to ensure compliance with UCLA policy. On May 7th, 2024, a new, unexpected complication rose: the Neurobiology Department opened a second FMLA ticket under my name which Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Mark Lucas later uses to mix up the dates between the two tickets, not only adding further confusion, but also demonstrating retaliatory actions that intentionally misrepresented my compliance with university policies. In an email from UCLA Health HR on May 7, 2024 at 7:43 AM, I was instructed to complete steps that I had already received from the LOA Team on April 29, 2024.

This entire process, which Lucas had described as "a small bit of paperwork" and a "doctor's note" (Lucas, Email, April 25, 2024, 5:42 PM), turned into a series of overwhelming obstacles that left me feeling panicked and exhausted. On May 15, I sought assistance through the LOAN messaging system and via email. Manlutac finally responded, explaining that he worked in the Department of Ophthalmology and believed he'd been mistakenly assigned to me. He stated he would contact the LOA Team to ensure I was reassigned to a Leave Analyst within my own department (Manlutac, Email, May 15, 2024, 12:41 PM). However, the LOA Team replied by redirecting me back to Manlutac, insisting that he remained my assigned analyst (LOA Team, LOAN System, May 15, 2024). Seeking clarity, I contacted Manlutac again on May 14, 2024, regarding my leave status and, via email on May 15, requested an extension of my leave through at least July 15, 2024. During the extended period of uncertainty, I suffered physiological distress linked to the trauma I endured, and my physician advised me to take additional time for recovery. I noted in my email that I had already reached out to Manlutac on the platform about my extension request and asked him to confirm if there were any mandatory compliance steps

needed on my part (Gulesserian, Email, May 15, 2024, 9:37 AM). When I received an out-of-office autoreply from Manlutac, I reached out to his supervisor, Cassandra Smith, on May 17, 2024, at 1:26 PM to ensure my extension request was properly communicated (Gulesserian, Email, May 17, 2024, 1:26 PM). Smith did not respond.

Despite my attempts to keep the Neurobiology Department informed, including my email to both Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Mark Lucas and HR rep Helen (using the original email provided by Lucas) on May 14, 2024 at 4:55 PM, confirming that I remained unavailable on FMLA leave until at least July 15, 2024, I was met with further misrepresentations and retaliatory acts. Lucas responded on May 14, 2024, at 4:59 PM, with statements claiming that I “had not yet officially filed the FMLA” in the UCLA LOAN system and that the department had not received my doctor’s note, implying non-compliance on my part (Lucas, Email, May 14, 2024). These assertions were factually incorrect, as I had received confirmation from HR representatives, and had an active FMLA ticket with an assigned Leave Analyst, which demonstrated my documented compliance.

In response, on May 16, 2024, at 8:06 AM, I expressed my complete confusion and frustration to Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas, explaining that I had made every “good faith” effort to adhere to “all requirements” communicated to me by UCLA Health HR, the LOA Team, and my designated Leave Analyst. I emphasized that I was at a “complete and utter loss as to what exactly [was] going on” and noted that I had diligently followed all steps, given the complex and confusing information I had received from various HR sources over the past month. I further explained that I was operating “at the complete mercy of UCLA Health HR, the LOA Team, and my assigned Leave Analyst(s),” and clarified that this situation could not have arisen without a mistake “solely” within the “LOA Team’s control”. I affirmed that I had done nothing to contribute to such errors and that any misrepresentations regarding my compliance were solely due to issues beyond my control (Gulesserian, Email, May 16, 2024, 8:06 AM). This response outlined my continued efforts to follow protocol despite an increasingly hostile and confusing process, which was now compounding the trauma I experienced from my work environment.

In response to the escalating confusion and retaliatory actions, on May 16th, 2024, at 2:33 PM, I reached out to all relevant UCLA Health HR, LOA, Employee Relations and DPO contacts involved outside of the Neurobiology Department. I emphasized the urgency of the situation stating that “time is of the essence” in putting an end to any false statements regarding my compliance with the FMLA process with regards to the ticket that I had opened on 4/20/2024. As I received no response, I sent an alarming follow-up message on the May 23rd, 2024, notifying UCLA Health HR, the LOA Team, and other related parties that I was being harmed due to someone within UCLA’s system either intentionally or negligently misrepresenting facts. I provided evidence showing that I had met all the necessary FMLA healthcare certification requirements yet was faced with “inconsistent and contradictory” statements from different representatives within UCLA, making false claims about my compliance. The false statements, presented as facts, were directly contradicted by the evidence I provided, demonstrating that these representations were untrue and appeared to be part of a broader pattern of adverse employment actions aimed at violating my FMLA rights. I also raised the critical issue of being “locked out of the UCLA Health System,” which prevented me from accessing the platform needed to upload additional documents, while UCLA continued to demand actions from me

within that very system. I highlighted that I had already provided all required healthcare documentation, and yet UCLA was now attempting to fault me for delays that were clearly beyond my control. I urgently requested an investigation into why my access to the system had been blocked and called for a resolution, as it appeared that a false narrative was being created around my FMLA leave (Gulesserian, Email, May 23, 2024, 4:55 PM).

Finally, I received a response from Vera C. Moubayed on May 28, 2024, at 6:57 PM, confirming that my FMLA had been appropriately processed by my departmental leave analyst, Ms. Helen Nguyen, and that everything should be in order. While she noted that suspension of MedNet email access during leaves of absence was “routine and appropriate,” this response did not address the critical issue that I had been placed in a situation where I was unable to upload necessary documents because I had been locked out of the system. It is assumed that those specialized in processing leaves of absence would be aware that such suspension occurs during a leave, yet this was not acknowledged, and my lack of access was then used against me. This contradiction further highlighted the ongoing issues with the processing of my FMLA leave, as the LOAN system had already confirmed that I had uploaded everything on time, on May 3, 2024. The situation seemed to point to an error or mishandling by UCLA HR or the LOA Team, yet I continued to be blamed for delays and non-compliance that were not my fault.

Meanwhile, I finally received word from Helen Nguyen on May 24th, 2024, who stated that she is the “HR Analyst for Neurobiology” and “official Leave Analyst while you [Gulesserian] are taking time off.” She acknowledged my FMLA ticket and attached a “Leave form” that I was instructed to “fill out and return back to me [Nguyen] by May 31, 2024.” The form that Nguyen attached had 3 parts to it:

- **Part one** was the **Designation Notice (R12/22)**, which was already completed by Nguyen.
- **Part two** was the **Notice of Eligibility and Rights & Responsibilities (R12/22)**, which was also filled out by Nguyen, with no section for me to sign or complete.
- **Part three** was a **Return-to-Work Certification**, which is typically filled out by a healthcare provider approximately one week before returning to work.

Nguyen insisted that I complete the return-to-work documentation, even though I had specified that I was not due to return to work until after my extended leave (Nguyen, Email, May 24th, 2024, 2:03 PM). Her insistence to complete these forms six weeks before my return date was clearly out of policy. Despite this, I continued to object to prematurely filling out these documents, as I was committed to adhering to UCLA’s policies.

On May 29th, 2024, Nguyen reiterated her request, stating she “needed your [Gulesserian’s] documents to process your (Gulesserian’s) leave,” and even cc’d my supervisor in the official document, which falsely implied I was not compliant with the policy, further fueling any misconceptions about my character due to growing tensions now within the department. These statements were misleading, as Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas and the LOA team had previously confirmed that processing an FMLA request only required documents that had already been uploaded to the LOAN system, along with the healthcare provider’s note to process the leave (Nguyen, Email, May 29th, 2024, 4:51 PM). I had to continuously object to

prematurely filling out these documents on numerous occasions, including May 29th, 2024, and June 10th, 2024, as I was adamant about upholding UCLA's policy. I firmly insisted that the forms be filled out according to the correct timeline and procedures, which were outlined by UCLA's policies and my healthcare provider's recommendations. My objections were rooted in the understanding that I should not be required to complete these documents or take actions outside the established guidelines for FMLA leave, especially given my leave was not scheduled to end until after my specified return date.

I raised several issues to Nguyen on May 31st, 2024, detailing the following concerns:

1. **Healthcare Providers' Requirements:** The healthcare providers indicated that they needed an attached "job description," which was not included in the document.
2. **Inconsistent Dates:** The document listed an **FML start date** and **anticipated end date** that appeared inconsistent with the "FML end date of May 15, 2024." UCLA Health HR, LOA, and Employee Relations had already been updated on my leave, with the new return date being July 15, 2024.
3. **Conflicting Information:** The document suggested I would be informed whether my leave would count towards my FML entitlement only after HR obtained the necessary information. However, my leave had already been approved, as evidenced by the correspondence with UCLA Employee Relations Management and the approval uploaded to the LOA system.

(Gulesserian, Email, May 31, 2024 12:41 AM)

These issues raised serious concerns about the accuracy of the documents being processed and the consistency of the information provided by UCLA Health HR and my Leave Analyst.

Though appearing helpful, Nguyen's email response on May 31st, 2024, at 12:47 PM brought more problems that caused unnecessary confusion, shock, and uncertainty about how my FMLA was being processed during a time when I was mentally compromised due to my trauma. A new return date of "June 7th, 2024" was suddenly provided, which contradicted the previously approved return date, already recognized by multiple UCLA representatives and systems. I outlined all the discrepancies in my response on June 6th, 2024, at 5:57 PM:

- The job description "appears to be outdated," referencing the year 2011 and identifying "another individual, not merely myself."
- The documents requesting healthcare provider certification "were duly provided...to UCLA, and UCLA seemingly approved this via the employee task portal, among other places."
- I "no longer [had] access to [the] necessary UCLA portal," despite UCLA's expectation for me to upload healthcare-related documents to comply with university policies. This situation was effectively placing me in an impossible position.
- There was "written confirmation from the UCLA Health Employee Relations Department" stating that the tasks requested of me were already completed.
- Most notably, I had "not received any payment nor guidance from UCLA on how to proceed to obtain payment during this challenging healthcare leave" after being on leave

for over a month and a half. I was “entitled to utilize my accrued vacation and sick hours for FMLA purposes, as stipulated in my contract.”

(Gulesserian, Email, June 6th, 2024, 5:57 PM)

These ongoing issues caused significant distress, as they continued to misrepresent the status of my FMLA and further delayed the processing of my leave and pay.

To clarify, this was by no means a vacation. I want to emphasize that the period that I was on leave was marked by severe mental and physical health challenges that significantly affected my well-being. The symptoms that I endured were deeply debilitating. On top of which I faced overwhelming burden of financial instability, living off savings, and supporting my family all while being denied the proper support and pay that I was entitled to. The continuous struggle that I faced in attempting to have my FMLA leave properly processed, with repeated emails from Nguyen and refusal to address my concerns, only compounded the stress and frustration of my situation. Having to navigate these complexities under such a condition was not only unfair but unjust. This situation was not caused by any negligence on my part but rather the result of misleading, retaliatory actions from the Neurobiology Department, which left me in a constant state of fear of termination and misrepresentation.

The situation further escalated upon my return to the lab when Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Mark Lucas acknowledge “receipt of [my] physician’s note” and authorized my return to work on “Tuesday, August 7, 2024” However, Tuesday, August 7, 2024 does not exist, leading me to believe that Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Mark Lucas was intentionally providing incorrect dates to confuse me upon my return, causing me to miss my actual return date and possibly creating grounds for my termination. In addition, Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas mentioned that Supervisor Novitch was on vacation and that they “do not have assignments for [me] to complete this week in lab,” which seemed highly unlikely given my previous contributions, including shouldering the work of every graduate student’s project for two years and making a significant novel discovery. This claim made it difficult to believe that there were no tasks for me to be engaged in. Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas then asked me “not return to lab before August 13th” and decided to “pay [me] for the remainder of the week” (Lucas, Email, August 5, 2024, 5:33PM). This, to me, seemed like the beginning of a demotion, which I found completely absurd considering my status as the inventor/creator of the work would at least give me grounds to continue contributing to my discovery. What added to the confusion and frustration was that Supervisor Novitch was reportedly seen in the lab on August 9th, further raising questions as to why I was being instructed to stay away from the lab until August 13th.

Contrary to what Lucas had notified me of, Nguyen later stated that I was now "tentatively on leave" and that she would finally begin processing my paid leave after three months of no pay (Nguyen, Email, August 7, 2024, 3:46 PM). To make matters worse, their complete disregard for my leave and benefits was starkly reflected in Nguyen’s email to me on August 5, 2024, at 11:46 AM, where she requested a "doctor’s note clearing [me] to return to work" as well as the "Return to Work certification document" just the day before my originally scheduled return despite having approved my doctor’s note on August 2nd. Given the short notice, I had "not had enough time to complete" the certification document and did my best to "reach out to my healthcare

provider" while also notifying Nguyen of Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas' communications to me in my response on August 5, 2024, at 8:56 PM.

Despite Nguyen knowing that Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas had wanted me back on August 13, 2024, she sent me a follow-up email on August 12, 2024, at 1:37 PM, reminding me that I was "scheduled to return to work from [my] leave of absence today." This was completely contradictory to what Lucas had directed me regarding my return. Essentially, Nguyen stated that I was still on leave while she processed my healthcare documents, while Lucas insisted that I was expected back but was granted an extension only due to Supervisor Novitch's absence. This created a glaring inconsistency and further complicated my already stressful and confusing situation.

I reached out to Nguyen with utter confusion, highlighting the discrepancy between her and Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas' return days and stating that "there is no way I could have known that 'August 13th' meant August 12th." I was simply following Lucas' instructions "in good faith and it is unreasonable to expect me to have somehow interpreted the date differently". This, I believe, is direct retaliatory behavior aimed at setting me up for termination and attempting to mislead me into appearing negligent of UCLA guidelines. However, with no clarification on the matter, I proceeded to come to work on August 13th, 2024, in compliance with HR's request to refrain from entering the lab until otherwise specified. That day, I received no notice, approval, or authorization from Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas, Nguyen, or Supervisor Novitch to return to the lab. Instead, I "spent the day sitting in the lobby of CHS and the biomedical library at CHS because I was instructed not to go up to the lab unless I had an assignment," a point that I made clear to Nguyen in my email on August 13th, 2024, at 4:20 PM. I even reached out to Supervisor Novitch for guidance, and he responded at the end of the day around 2:30 PM, informing me of his absence from the lab but his willingness to "meet over Zoom" to "discuss my return, schedule, plans, and expectations." According to Supervisor Novitch, "both [Nguyen] and [Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas] were aware of his [Supervisor Novitch's] situation" but failed to communicate this to me, leaving me to wait aimlessly "all day... for a response." Additionally, I was still unable to update the Employee Experience Center task that Nguyen had requested, because "my login was, and continued to be, locked," forcing me to attempt the impossible once again. (Gulesserian, Email, August 13th, 2024, 4:20 PM; Novitch, Email, August 13th, 2024, 2:28 PM; Novitch, Email, August 14th, 2024, 9:28 AM).

Unbeknownst to me, Nguyen decides to place me on "administrative leave from Tuesday August 6 through Friday August 9, Monday August 12, and Tuesday August 13 2024" without my prior notice, consultation, or consent, during the same period I had been previously noted to be on "tentative leave" (Nguyen, Email, August 13, 2024, 8:30 AM) I was never given a proper explanation for this administrative leave, nor was I provided with a meaningful opportunity to be heard regarding its enactment. This action, along with other retaliatory measures, further illustrates the negative treatment I faced upon returning from FMLA leave. Such actions undoubtedly constitute adverse employment actions, as they created a hostile work environment and discouraged open communication about workplace issues, cultivating a culture of fear rather than support.

The bottom line is that Neurobiology HR made false and misleading statements about my leave, all as part of a series of retaliatory actions taken against me for standing up for both the institution and my own rights and dignity. To this day, Lucas has taken no steps to address these retaliatory acts, despite being in constant communication with Supervisor Novitch about my activities within the lab, which further underscores the ongoing bias, discrimination, and retaliation I am subjected to. The heightened hostility I have experienced not only affects my day-to-day interactions but also undermines my job performance and professional relationships. This environment significantly impacts my ability to address legitimate concerns and seek recourse, further exacerbating the emotional distress I endure as a result of standing up for my rights. The lack of support and the fear of retribution hinder my capacity to contribute effectively to my role and compromises my overall job satisfaction.

Retaliation and Administrative Leave: Return to Work Hostilities and Wage Violations Without Limitations

Upon returning to work from FMLA on August 6, 2024, I was initially placed on what was described as an FMLA extension (08/05/2024 email), then tentative leave (08/07/24 email), then administrative leave (08/14/2024 email) as noted above. On August 14, Helen Nguyen indicated that it would be classified as administrative leave. This leave lasted from August 6 to August 19, but official documents, including my pay stub, only reflect the period from August 11 to August 17. This retaliation by the department constitutes adverse employment actions because it results in improper compensation and places me on administrative leave without explanation, undermining my job security and professional reputation thus materially and negatively affecting my employment conditions.

Moreover, the ongoing harassment I have experienced has severely impacted my working conditions, creating a hostile environment that prevents me from focusing on my research. The emotional distress, anxiety, and trauma I endure daily are direct consequences of these actions. They stem from my efforts to uphold university policies and my rights, making it clear that these retaliatory measures not only disrupt my work but also compromise my mental well-being.

Throughout all these discrepancies I faced, I managed to arrange a Zoom meeting with Supervisor Novitch and Nguyen for the 15th of August 2024 at 8:45 AM. During this meeting, we discussed the logistics of my return to work, in which I requested reasonable healthcare-related accommodations, as advised by my healthcare provider. These accommodations were as follows:

1. Flexible hours from 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM to minimize exposure to individuals who caused high levels of stress.
2. A stress-free work environment.
3. Meetings with Ben over Zoom, with HR always present.
4. Occasional remote work.

These accommodations were initially denied and even exaggerated by Supervisor Novitch, who claimed it was impossible to provide complete remote work, which was not what I requested. As a researcher, computer work and data analysis are essential parts of our research process and do

not require physical presence in the lab. In fact, many researchers in the Novitch lab have worked remotely for extended periods, sometimes weeks, without issue. Additionally, both Supervisor Novitch and Nguyen rejected the flexible 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM schedule, insisting that I must overlap with Supervisor Novitch’s schedule from 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM. Supervisor Novitch also claimed it was impossible to create a completely stress-free work environment and stated he could not control the actions of those around him. Following this meeting, Nguyen sent an email on August 16, 2024, at 8:25 AM to both Supervisor Novitch and I, memorializing the details of our conversation on August 15, 2024, regarding my return to work. In the email, she clarified that UCLA would be “setting [my] regular work schedule” to 7:00 AM – 3:30 PM, which would not require any after-hours or weekend work. She emphasized the need to “reduce stress as it arises,” but then falsely stated that I had asked for a “completely remote” work schedule, which was not my request. I had only asked for the option to occasionally work remotely. Nguyen also mentioned that “we [would] meet in Dr. Novitch’s office (66-200 CHS) at 1:00 PM on Monday, August 19, 2024, to review work assignments for the coming week”. It was essential that Nguyen attend, as Supervisor Novitch had a history of becoming verbally violent, which caused me to fear for my emotional and physical safety without a third-party present. I communicated this concern to Nguyen repeatedly. To my shock, she neither showed up nor notified me of any changes. She completely disappeared, leaving me alone with Supervisor Novitch, who spoke to me for the first time since he and his wife, Supervisor Butler, verbally assaulted me in public (Nguyen, Email, August 16, 2024, 8:25 PM).

After this, Supervisor Novitch still attempted to deny my requested work hours by insisting I work 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM to align with his own schedule. Despite my repeated explanations about the necessity of my accommodations, he dismissed my needs until I reached out to HR, at which point he finally stopped pressing the issue. During this period, I was contacted via phone on August 16th, 2024, by Shelly Frohrip, the Program Manager of Employee Disability Management Services, who reached out to discuss my healthcare accommodation requirements. When Supervisor Novitch became aware of my communication with her, he suggested that he accompany me to the meeting to discuss my confidential accommodations—a request that I, understandably, refused. This request reflected a disregard for my privacy, further amplifying the issues around my return.

Most Recent Example of Systemic Retaliation as of October 2024

Without Limitations

Denial of Reasonable Accommodations: I am experiencing ongoing systematic retaliation and discrimination regarding my HR-approved reasonable accommodations from Supervisor Ben Novitch. Despite having notified him about my needs for reasonable hours and Zoom meetings, these requests have been consistently denied. Since my return, I have had to repeatedly escalate this issue to HR, yet Supervisor Novitch continues to refuse my accommodations. Most recently, without limitation, I was retaliated against by being told to use a sick day on multiple occasions when, in fact, it should have been a regular workday. These events are expressed evidence documented in writing that demonstrate how this materially and negatively impacts my employment terms, including wages and hours, as it forces me to exhaust my paid sick days

unjustly. It is concerning that he is disregarding HR's approval of my reasonable healthcare accommodations, raising questions about compliance with established guidelines.

Before my FMLA leave, when I reported my healthcare issues related to sick days, Supervisor Ben Novitch retaliated by making false statements to Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Mark Lucas. His actions created a false statement about my work ethic (proven in an email correspondence between Neurobiology CAO Supervisor Lucas and I below stating that “[Novitch] said that you did not respond and just took off on Friday” and “assumed that you were out on the 3 weeks (unapproved) vacation (Supervisor Mark Lucas, Email, April 25, 2024, 7:40AM” This is documented and written evidence of retaliation and discrimination of an attempt to terminate my employment which materially and negatively impacts my employment terms (*Please refer to the memorandums previously sent for the complete overview*). This blatant lie to the CAO of the department is direct discrimination against my healthcare needs and retaliation in an attempt to have me terminated for falsely not knowing where I was despite having clear evidence in email that Supervisor Novitch not only knew but also approved of my “healthcare matters”. This not only denies me my healthcare rights, but also resulted in my seeking higher level of care because the UCLA-HR recommended counselor terminated his treatment with me due to his indicting that I needed a higher standard of care. Since then, I have transitioned to a higher standard of healthcare that has now determined that I need reasonable healthcare accommodations that were approved by HR and due to Novtich’s retaliatory and discriminatory intentions he refuses to provide these accommodations.

I would like to note that prior to the situation, I did not need these reasonable healthcare accommodations. The discrimination, harassment, retaliation for whistleblowing has caused my need for reasonable healthcare accommodations which materially and negatively have impacted my job and employment terms. All these situations materially and negatively impacted my employment terms, forcing me to remain on high alert as I was subjected to scrutiny and hyper-monitoring for actions that other lab members could freely undertake.

Then, since the onset of my FMLA leave, I continue facing ongoing and systematic series of retaliatory actions and denials of necessary, healthcare documented reasonable accommodations that UCLA HR has approved which Supervisor Novitch and Department CAO Supervisor Mark Lucas refuse to comply with. Supervisor Novitch has refused to grant my HR approved healthcare documented reasonable accommodations since my return to work from FMLA. This retaliation is current and ongoing. His own admissions in emails are documented and serve as evidence of retaliation and discrimination, where he denies my HR-approved accommodations, violating his management and supervisor duties, and engaging in continuous protected class discrimination of various types. This behavior creates a hostile work environment intentionally and violates Supervisor Novtich’s obligations to follow UCLA HR rules and guidelines, as memorialized in recent correspondence from Program Manager of Employee Disability Management Services Shelly Frohrip.

Attached in the supplemental PowerPoint is additional evidence of Supervisor Novitch creating a hostile work environment, materially impacting my work whereas the accommodations are reasonable, verified and approved by Shelly Frohrip. Despite providing documentation for FMLA and requesting essential accommodations, I encountered consistent pushback, delays, and

even outright denials, with HR having to force through one accommodation after multiple refusals. This resistance, coupled with UCLA's restrictive actions on my work assignments and ongoing job threats, has created an unpredictable and unstable work experience, undermining my professional growth and ability to perform effectively. The approach taken by the institution's supervisors and management has prioritized discrimination, and retaliation against my various protected class reporting. Without limitations, against my healthcare diagnosis, these acts are proven by denying my UCLA HR approved reasonable healthcare accommodations and could not be further from a supporting role, thus leaving my employment terms negatively compromised and materially impacted.

Retaliation for Protected Class Activities

Without limitations, the adverse actions I have faced have escalated following my complaints regarding discrimination and wage violations along with numerous complaints about misappropriation of university owned assets after whistleblowing.

Hostile Work Environment: The cumulative effect of management's actions or inactions has created a hostile work environment. This atmosphere not only affects my mental well-being but also impairs my ability to perform my job effectively. The ongoing discrimination has further marginalized me within the workplace as I am now completely isolated within the lab.

The first meeting I had after returning from FMLA was an unexpected one-on-one, in-person interaction with Supervisor Novitch—completely contrary to my healthcare provider's recommendations. On August 19th, 2024, at 1:00 PM, I entered Supervisor Novitch's office (CHS 67-200K) only to be met with his visible anger. Throughout the meeting, he raised his voice at me, told me to "just go home," and claimed he didn't "think I was ready to be back." He even justified Supervisor Butler's previous behavior, stating that it was "okay for her to yell at you [Gulesserian] because she is a supervisor." This interaction was not only intimidating but also directly conflicted with the accommodations I had requested for a safe and supportive work environment. As a reminder, HR representative Nguyen assured me and Supervisor Novitch, as documented in her email, that she would be present for this meeting. However, she gave me no prior notice of her planned absence nor followed up regarding the meeting.

Denial of Career Advancement: My exclusion from meaningful participation in research projects and the systematic marginalization I have experienced directly impede my ability to compete for promotions. Without the opportunity to engage in critical projects, I am unable to demonstrate my capabilities, thereby stifling my professional growth and the ability to claim my intellectual property rights further causing harm to my employment terms in a material and negative way. *Please see project exclusion details as outlined above.*

Intellectual Property Rights Violations

Denial of Inventor and Creator Status: Without limitations, I have made repeated requests to be recognized as the inventor/creator of my significant novel findings within my research. Despite my contributions, management has failed to take appropriate actions to acknowledge my rights and misleadingly notified me that my “scientific career is in very good standing” and that “if a methods paper comes from this, you [Gulesserian] will be the first author, and likewise on any sort of intellectual property application that we may be to submit” (Supervisor Novitch, UCLA Slack, October 27th, 2023, 4:01 PM) notifying me that I would receive credit for my contributions. When I sought UCLA’s asset protection to ensure proper handling of this matter, I was met with a shifted narrative with comments indicating that “this whole business about ‘the patent’ is driving me [Supervisor Novitch] nuts” and that my contributions under Supervisor Novitch’s view is “the collective wisdom and property of the lab” as he believes “a lot of work and contributions from people in the lab before” me “have gone into these methods” (Supervisor Novitch, Email, April 13, 2024, 12:36AM). This completely contradicts his initial statements asking for a “written copy of your [Gulesserian’s] most up to date protocol, warts and all” (Supervisor Novitch, UCLA Slack, February 27th, 2024 8:29 AM) and subsequent statements saying he’d “really like for Cendi to be able to test out your [Gulesserian’s] methods on her own to expedite this process” because they could “examine how your [Gulesserian’s] approach stacks up to others’ methods.” He even goes to ask whether I have “made any revisions on [my] protocol” and to “share this information with Cendi” or else he “will pass it on” all while putting our patent at risk by requesting that Cendi get “access to the stock of the SB590 inhibitor” (Supervisor Novitch, Email, March 12, 2024, 5:08 PM). This also contradicts his statement just 2 days after he mentioned my contributions being the collective property of the lab as he claims that I “will get credit for [my] discovery (Supervisor Novitch, Email, April 15th, 2024 9:56 AM).

Prior to my visiting TDG, there were numerous requests made for my protocol, so much so that I disclosed my protocol to the lab at 2:00 PM on January 30th, 2024, with Chief Intellectual Property Officer Charanjit Arora Bcc’d. These requests were then memorialized in email by Natella Baliaouri on February 20, 2024 at 10:17 AM and Cendi Ling on February 21st, 2024 at 12:06 PM in response to me confirming that TDG must “take appropriate legal steps to safeguard my intellectual property” prior to anyone sharing to “external parties” and that CIPO “underscores that discussing the protocol outside of the lab may hinder IP protection and commercialization of my idea” (Gulesserian, Email, January 30th, 2024, 5:00 PM, February 19th, 2024 10:37 PM). In that very same email, I state to those “who desire to share my protocol” request engagement so UCLA can take “appropriate steps to protect my IP, which UCLA, Ben [Supervisor Novitch] and myself [Gulesserian] share interests in” showcasing that not only am I not withholding information, but I am seeking to act under UCLA’s best interest and within the boundaries of my contract. Later on, I received additional confirmation from Natella Baliaouri stating that they “hope your [Gulesserian’s] protocol is patented and published quickly” clearly acknowledging me, Harout Gulesserian, as the creator and inventor of this protocol (Natella Baliaouri, Email, April 12, 2024, 7:49 PM). Supervisor Novitch even stated to me 3 months post discovery that he is “actually interested in learning how to make organoids [himself] in the new year” highlighting that the protocol did not exist prior to my discovery (Supervisor Novitch, Email, December 11, 2023, 11:16PM). If this is all so, then the idea of this being a collective effort is completely false not only infringes upon my intellectual property rights but also limiting

my potential for recognition and advancement within the institution and the field of neuroscience collectively.

To this day, I continue to experience denial of credit for my work, with the latest verbal statements from Supervisor Novitch explicitly stating that I “don’t have any rights” (Novitch, In-Person, October 22, 2024).

Abuse of Power and Coercion over Intellectual Property Rights

During my time in the Novitch lab, I experienced significant coercion surrounding the intellectual property I generated, particularly involving a novel use of a molecule for brain organoid production. After making this discovery on September 11th, 2023, several lab members, including Supervisor Novitch, pressured me to waive my rights as the inventor, framing these requests as being in the best interest of the lab and stating that “we all win when people’s experiments are more successful.” Supervisor Novitch also asked if I would be “willing to present a synopsis of [my] efforts,” which essentially meant sharing my protocol (Supervisor Novitch, Email, January 20th, 2024, 3:04 PM). While I am fully supportive of others’ success and have consistently encouraged collaboration, I emphasized that this work should only move forward under the secure safeguards required by our university policies and as specified in my contract. I even offered to teach the lab my methods to support our collective research goals, provided that my intellectual property rights were protected appropriately. Supervisor Novitch urged me to relinquish my IP rights to support lab progress disregarding these safeguards. Over time, the coercive pressure intensified through both subtle and overt efforts to undermine my legal rights as the creator.

When I reported my discovery to the Technology Development Group (TDG), I faced direct threats to my job from Supervisor Novitch, along with verbal confrontations aimed at dissuading me from asserting ownership or pursuing the intellectual property independently. Supervisor Novitch retaliated openly on February 23, 2024, in his office at CHS 66-200K at 3:30 PM, where he displayed overtly aggressive behavior, clenching his teeth in visible anger and yelling as I informed him of a recent threat from a lab member seeking to take credit for my discovery. Additionally, I disclosed to Supervisor Novitch that I had shared my invention with TDG, which further heightened his anger and his hostile stance toward me. My refusal to comply with these demands led to increasing hostility in the workplace, including a reduction in meaningful assignments and deliberate exclusion from lab activities. This coercion was an attempt to force me to waive my rights to my invention, in clear violation of university policy and state law. These actions collectively infringed upon my IP rights and fostered a hostile environment intended to pressure me into abandoning my rightful claims to my discovery. This happened on numerous occasions including, but not limited to, the following dates:

- **October 2, 2023 (3:08 PM, Email):** Supervisor Novitch requests a revision to the discovery narrative, suggesting I frame the use of SB-590885 differently: “Calling it a mistake does not add confidence... this may take some crafting of a suitable narrative.”
- **October 27, 2023 (Email):** Supervisor Novitch introduces a new protocol that includes elements of my discovery, potentially setting up the basis for claiming it as his and his wife’s (Supervisor Butler) contribution.

- **October 27, 2023 (Slack):** Supervisor Novitch asks me to share my protocol with Aparna Bhaduri's lab.
- **November 6, 2023 (1:00 PM, Zoom Consortium Meeting & Google Doc):** It's stated in consortium records that "Harout will send out his SB protocol for replication in Bhaduri lab."
- **November 11, 2023 (Email):** Supervisor Novitch shares my work with Dan Geschwind for presentation at the Annual NIMH Consortium Meeting.
- **November 15, 2023:** My work is displayed to the NIMH consortium.
- **December 11, 2023 (Email & In-Person):** Supervisor Novitch asks me to teach him my protocol, aiming to eventually claim it himself.
- **January 20, 2024 (Email):** Despite TDG's prior approval after my disclosure, Supervisor Novitch states that "nothing can happen until we have some compilation of data to discuss with them."
- **January 30, 2024 (In-Person, Lab Meeting):** During a private conversation, Supervisor Novitch comments, "I haven't screwed anyone over yet," after making me share my discovery statement at the end of the meeting.
- **February 5, 2024 (Text):** Supervisor Novitch requests again that I share my protocol with Bhaduri's lab.
- **February 6, 2024 (UCLA Slack):** I receive a threat from Natella Baliaouri related to my work.
- **February 23, 2024 (In-Person Meeting):** Supervisor Novitch raises his voice, saying he wants to share my work with contacts in Wisconsin, New York, and other UCLA parties, all prior to TDG's protection.
- **February 26, 2024 (Zoom Consortium Meeting):** Supervisor Novitch and others express support for NIMH benefiting financially over UCLA, stating that they "had each other's backs."
- **February 27, 2024 (In-Person Interaction):** Sandeep Gupta tells me that I would need to negotiate directly with Supervisor Novitch regarding what I receive for my discovery, rather than UCLA TDG and patent counsel overseeing these terms.
- **March 7, 2024 (Email):** Supervisor Novitch pressures me to waive my IP rights for data depth and admits to misleading me about Gupta's role in the tensions surrounding my discovery.
- **March 12, 2024:** Though Supervisor Novitch already has my protocol, he continues requesting it, seemingly to imply my waiver of rights.
- **March 15, 2024 (UCLA Slack):** In a group chat, Supervisor Novitch mentions using my protocol in a grant, acknowledging that mass organoid production is feasible only with my novel protocol, not with existing methods.
- **April 2, 2024 (Email, 1:37 PM):** I formally object to going against UCLA policy.
- **April 12-15, 2024 (Email):** Novitch makes false, misleading statements about my alleged obstruction of lab progress and shifts the narrative to imply that my discovery is a collective lab effort, undermining my individual contribution and pressuring me to forfeit my IP rights.

Marginalization in IP Development: Without limitations, my exclusion from key projects has precluded me from participating in the development of intellectual property I discovered at UCLA, which is vital for my career progression. This situation reflects a broader pattern of discrimination against me further complicating my ability to assert my rights as an inventor.

Conclusion

Given the ongoing coercion and retaliatory actions I have faced, as well as the repeated efforts to undermine my intellectual property rights and disregard UCLA's policies, I am seeking urgent assistance from UCLA's administration to ensure my rights are protected and that appropriate measures are taken to address the hostile work environment and ethical violations within the lab. I request that UCLA intervene to uphold my legal rights, safeguard my intellectual property, and ensure that further retaliatory actions are prevented.

Change in Legal Team

Please forward all future correspondence to my email at hkg90@icloud.com, as I am in the process of transitioning my legal team and will update your office accordingly.

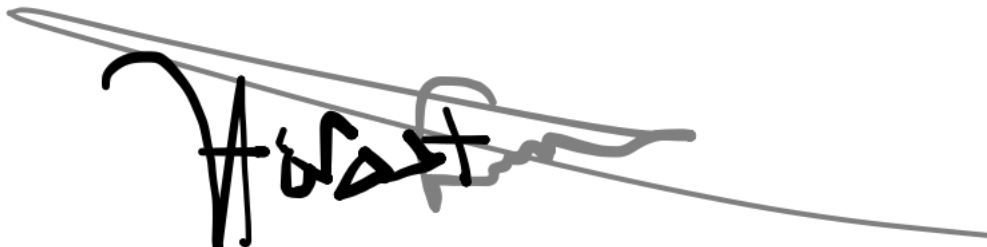
Sworn Declaration

I, Harout Gulesserian, hereby state under oath that all terms and provisions set forth in any and all attachments to this instant complaint, including but not limited to those materials previously delivered to UCLA via email or USPS certified mail, are hereby incorporated herein by reference with the same force and effect as though fully set forth in this instant complaint.

Furthermore, I, Harout Gulesserian, make no waivers, no admissions, and reserve all rights, without limitations, to amend, revoke, modify, or supplement any and all provisions of the instant complaint, particularly as additional evidence is discovered in connection with these matters.

Sworn: The complaint concludes with the following sworn declaration: "I swear under penalty and perjury under the laws of the State of California that the facts set forth in my Whistleblower Retaliation Complaint and in any supporting documents I have submitted are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief."

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harout Gulesserian', is written over a long, thin, slightly curved horizontal line.

Date: November 6th, 2024

Harout Karnik Gulesserian
hkg90@icloud.com
Case Number: EP23681