



Theoretical biologist Irena Kareva (centre) is inspired by her mathematician parents.

connection she had so that he could meet faculty members and learn more about the institutes. Jensen recalls that her father made subtle suggestions about which professors to take courses from when she was an undergraduate at Penn State; for those he didn't recommend, he'd say, "He's not particularly interested in undergraduate education." Later on, he gave her the name of the person she applied to for a teaching position at the university, although she earned the position on her own merit. And when Gardner started working in the field of optogenetics, he recalls that his father, a retired laser development engineer, would help him to decide what laser systems to use and how to couple the lasers to fibres, which was valuable as he got started.

Parents should keep a light touch, advises Berquist, so that their offspring can feel independent and think creatively on their own. Three of his four children worked in his office as teens, but he let others supervise them. Now that they are grown — two work at the Children's Hospital and one is pursuing a medical degree — he is careful not to hover. "I try to avoid being very critical, unless I'm asked," he says.

### HIGH EXPECTATIONS

It can be a bit tough to follow the career of a parent, particularly if she or he is a superstar. Stuart Cahalan originally found it disheartening to think that he might never measure up to his father, biophysicist Michael Cahalan, a department chair at the University of California, Irvine, and a member of the US

National Academy of Sciences. "Every kid wants to be better than their parent, or at least as good," says Stuart, a postdoc in biology at the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California.

When the younger Cahalan was being interviewed for graduate school, faculty members quickly recognized his father's name, he says, and he realized that in science, he would always be Michael Cahalan's son. In time, he came to accept that fact. And his knowledge now exceeds that of his father's in some areas. Recently, he proofread and commented on one of his father's grant applications.

Although scientists may stay independent of their parents, others may not necessarily believe that to be the case. David Sabatini's brother Bernardo, a neurobiologist at Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts, says that he's heard occasional quips about the easy path he must have had because their father was well known by those higher up at the university because he chaired the cell-biology department at New York University. "My response is always the same," says Bernardo. "Even if somebody has help getting in the door, what matters is what you do and how you prove yourself once you're given that opportunity."

But the occasional bit of snark or envy is no reason not to follow in a parent's footsteps, be it the field the child chooses or the institution where he or she lands, scientists say.

Nepotism can't get one ahead too much in science anyway, they say, because researchers are evaluated independently in grant and paper reviews. Success comes from passion and hard work, not pedigree. "It's all about following your heart," says Schiffer. ■

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### FACULTY POSITIONS

## Tenure figures tumble

The number of US faculty members who have tenure or are on the tenure track is falling, according to a report by the American Association of University Professors in Washington DC. Over the past 40 years, the proportion of the academic labour force that is in a full-time tenured position has shrunk by one-quarter, and the proportion in tenure-track posts has halved, reports *Higher Education at a Crossroads*. In 2014, the study found, 21% of faculty appointments were full-time tenured and 41% were part-time. On average, male professors earned more than female professors in full-time positions at every rank and across all types of institution. Overall, positions in New England paid the most, whereas those in Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota paid the least. The report also found that part-time appointees were less likely to conduct long-term research and experiment with teaching methods and course content. Citing a correlation between lower student-graduation rates and increases in the number of part-time and non-tenure-track positions, the association calls for institutions to convert part-time, non-tenure positions into tenure-track posts.

### ACADEMIES

## Diversity drive

Women represent an average of 12% of the memberships of academic science societies worldwide, finds a report from the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP): The Global Network of Science Academies. *Women for Science: Inclusion and Participation in Academies of Science* examined the membership of 69 national science societies around the world, and found that women comprise 14–16% of academies whose members are concentrated in the biological, medical and social sciences. In maths and engineering societies, women average 5–6% of membership. Female representation on academy governing boards, however, average 20%. Just 40% of the societies said that they have a gender policy or strategy to increase female participation in academy activities. The report recommends that IAP member academies collect and report data annually on membership and activities. It also suggests that academies create committees to establish strategies that will boost gender equality in membership and governance.