

Promoting Diversity: Proposal Approved for SBAS Annual Meeting Scholarships



Leah Backhus, MD, FACS
Assistant Professor

Dr. Leah Backhus, Assistant Professor in the Cardiothoracic Division of the Department of Surgery, whose practice is at the VA, recently presented a proposal to the Chair and Director of the Department of Surgery (**Dr. Carlos A. Pellegrini** and Ms. Margaret Gilshannon) entitled “Society of Black Academic Surgeons Annual Meeting Scholarship.” The scholarship proposal establishes 1-2 awards per year to support the attendance of Department of Surgery under-

represented faculty or surgical residentsⁱ to attend the annual meeting for Society of Black Academic Surgeons (SBAS). The maximum amount for each Scholarship is \$2,000 and funds will be used to offset the costs of airfare, registration and lodging. In addition, junior faculty who are selected will also be nominated for the SBAS Leadership Institute for faculty development and formal mentorship.

After careful review, the proposal was determined to be one that would enhance our efforts to foster diversity in our faculty and trainees. Dr. Pellegrini stated that he is delighted to announce that this proposal has been accepted and the Scholarship process will be in effect for the coming year (applications accepted on or until February 1, 2013).

Dr. Pellegrini and Dr. Backhus further stated that they hope the Department of Surgery, in sponsoring these Scholarships, will prompt other surgical specialties to consider similar sponsorship for under-represented junior faculty or trainees in their departments.

Under the leadership of Dr. Carlos A. Pellegrini, the University of Washington has established a strong history with the Society of Black Academic Surgeons. The University of Washington has demonstrated ongoing support as an institutional member and Dr. Pellegrini has been inducted as an honorary member of SBAS. The greatest showing of support was in 2009 when the University of Washington hosted the Annual Meeting for SBAS in Seattle.

Since then, the Department of Surgery has sponsored several faculty, residents, and medical students to attend the

annual meetings for SBAS and all attendees have reported tremendous benefit from this enriching experience. The Leadership Council offered by SBAS is a one-day forum designed to focus on leadership development, mentorship, and developing critical skills for academic success. It is an adjunctive program embedded within the larger annual meeting that focuses on junior faculty who are nominated by their home institution. The University of Washington has had several faculty accepted for this program.

ⁱ Under represented includes Hispanic, African-American, American Indian/Alaskan Native and Women.

Department of Surgery Strongly Represented in UW School of Medicine Diversity Strategic Planning Initiative

The Department of Surgery would like to recognize and thank **Drs. Carlos A. Pellegrini and Leah Backhus** for their work on diversity planning on behalf of the School of Medicine. Each has and is contributing in very important and on-going ways to further the School’s commitment to becoming a truly diverse organization.

In February 2010, Dr. Paul Ramsey charged a large committee to develop a new diversity strategic plan for the School of Medicine. The committee, led by Dr. Pellegrini, submitted its report in April 2011, and the recommendations in the report were discussed extensively in many settings within the School of Medicine community and beyond.

Subsequently, Dr. Ramsey charged a second committee to develop a work plan to implement the key recommendations within three years. The goal is to implement meaningful and tangible improvements toward becoming a truly diverse organization.

The objectives for this important work over the next three years will be to:

- Foster diversity in faculty, education and training settings (undergraduate and graduate), and staff;
- Identify and implement metrics and monitor progress toward diversity, as well as build momentum for culture change to improve diversity; and
- Maintain accountability among leadership for diversity and provide tools to support efforts to measure and improve diversity.

In support of these objectives, the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMCA) will transition to become the new Center for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (CEDI). The leader of CEDI will hold the dual title of director of CEDI and chief diversity officer (CDO) for the School of Medicine. OMCA has very effectively focused on increasing and supporting diversity among our medical students. The role of the CEDI will be to promote diversity and inclusion for faculty, trainees, students and SOM staff.

David Acosta, formerly associate dean for multicultural affairs, has agreed to serve as the chief diversity officer and director of CEDI. He began in these roles on Jan. 1, 2012. David's immediate task is transitioning OMCA to CEDI. He will also fulfill many other leadership roles in support of diversity, including: working with departments and units to identify diversity leads; developing department-specific metrics to track diversity and inclusion and to identify and prioritize goals to be measured; surveying SOM units for successful "best practices" initiatives and disseminating these; promoting new initiatives related to diversity; developing a toolkit for widespread use to improve diversity and inclusion in all departments and units; and meeting regularly with chairs and unit leaders to provide assistance in improving diversity.

In addition, Dr. Ramsey appointed an executive steering committee for CEDI, chaired by Dr. Carlos A. Pellegrini. This committee will provide oversight for the CDO to transition the current activities of OMCA to CEDI; provide ongoing advice and direction regarding CEDI; seek input from departments regarding membership of CEDI's Advisory Board; and serve as an executive committee for CEDI's advisory board.

The School of Medicine also recently established a new standing committee, the Committee on Minority Faculty Affairs chaired by Dr. Leah Backhus, UW assistant professor in the Department of Surgery. This committee is addressing the professional and development needs of our faculty from underrepresented groups in medicine and biomedical sciences and highlighting the needs of minority faculty to aid in the recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty.ⁱ

The Department of Surgery is exceedingly proud of Drs. Pellegrini and Backhus for their work and these appointments and look forward to the future developments from these committees.

ⁱ From Dr. Paul Ramsey's February 3, 2012 Message

UW Spin-out Born Out of Doctor's Frustration with Paper-Based Records



Erik Van Eaton, MD, FACS
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The University of Washington is spinning out a new startup company by the name of TransformativeMed which has developed a new way for physicians to more effectively communicate about their patients. The technology – currently in operation at more than a half dozen hospitals, including Harborview Medical Center, the University of Washington Medical Center and Sinai Grace Hospital – works with the hospital's existing electronic medical record system. The company – founded by **Dr. Erik Van Eaton**, assistant professor of surgery at the UW, and David Stone – said it plans to have more than 20 customers in its first year and achieve profitability.

Dr. Van Eaton came up with the idea and built an early prototype in 2003 as a first-year UW surgical intern, noting that he was frustrated by the inefficient way daily patient updates were prepared for residents and attending physicians making hospital rounds. "It was clear at the time that we were going to need an electronic solution to manage what would become increasingly complex care-team transitions," said Van Eaton in a press release. "The current process of paper, email and Excel simply wasn't going to be efficient or safe."

The company said that the majority of hospitals in the U.S. do not have an electronic system to manage how physicians sign-out and hand-off patients to one another, with many relying on paper-based systems or Excel spreadsheets. Advisors to the company include Ken Myer, former CEO of the Washington Technology Industry Association, and Rob Arnold, CEO of Geospiza.

Story by John Cook from GeekWire