

Promoting Diversity: Proposal Approved for SBAS Annual Meeting Scholarships



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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.