AAMC Awards Innovations in Research and Research-focused Training Partnerships

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) has announced four recipients of the AAMC Award for Innovative Institutional Partnerships in Research and Research-focused Training. This is the second annual award developed in collaboration with the GREAT Group and GRAND leadership. The GREAT (Graduate Research, Education, and Training) Group is the AAMC’s professional development group for the faculty and administrative leaders of biomedical Ph.D., M.D.-Ph.D., and postdoctoral programs. The GRAND (Group on Research Advancement and Development) leadership is the AAMC’s professional development group for research deans, deans of clinical research, and other research leaders at academic medical centers.

The primary goal of the awards program is to identify bright spots and disseminate innovations that create and sustain institutional partnerships in research and research-focused training. The four awarded projects—chosen from 35 submissions—were selected by a panel of leaders in biomedical research, education, and training from AAMC-member institutions as well as senior AAMC staff. Entries were judged by the extent to which they advance creative, collaborative partnerships and their impact on institutional practices. Awards were presented at the GREAT Group Annual Professional Development Meeting in Atlanta on Sept. 20, 2013.

Winner:
myIDP: An Online Career Planning Tool for Doctoral and Postdoctoral Science Trainees
Cynthia Fuhrmann, Ph.D., University of California, San Francisco (now at University of Massachusetts Medical School)
Philip Clifford, Ph.D., Medical College of Wisconsin
Jennifer Hobin, Ph.D., Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (now at American Association for Cancer Research)
Bill Lindstaedt, M.S., University of California, San Francisco
Michael Savelli, M.B.A., American Association for the Advancement of Science
Zdenek Becka, American Association for the Advancement of Science
Melissa Rosenthal, American Association for the Advancement of Science
Jim Austin, Ph.D., American Association for the Advancement of Science

Finalist:
Building Bridges: An Engineering Capstone Experience in Translational Medicine
Nicholas Kenyon, M.D., University of California, Davis, School of Medicine

Finalist:
Pathway to the Ph.D. at Tufts University’s Sackler School of Graduate Biomedical Sciences
Laura Liscum, Ph.D., Tufts University School of Medicine

Semi-finalist:
Translational Biology, Medicine, and Health Training Across Multiple Colleges
Michael Friedlander, Ph.D., Virginia Tech
Audra Van Wart, Ph.D., Virginia Tech
Awardee Abstracts

Winner:

**myIDP: An Online Career Planning Tool for Doctoral and Postdoctoral Science Trainees**

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Jim Austin, Ph.D., American Association for the Advancement of Science

In 2002, the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) introduced the Individual Development Plan (IDP) as a framework to help postdocs structure their career planning. Though met with positive acclaim, both trainees and mentors reported a need for more resources to effectively carry out the career decision-making and planning process. To address this national need, we formed a cross-institutional and cross-disciplinary partnership to create an interactive online career-planning tool: myIDP. The objective was to have a self-contained unit that helped guide graduate students and postdoctoral fellows through the process of creating an IDP. This unique partnership comprised two major scientific organizations (FASEB and AAAS) and two academic institutions (UCSF and Medical College of Wisconsin), with catalytic funding from the Burroughs Wellcome Fund. Across a three-year period, our co-author team developed the Web site content, layout, and resources, and the AAAS IT team translated the vision to create the Web interface. Close collaboration between the co-authors and web developers led to the design of innovative elements, such as the first career matching tool to help Ph.D.-scientists identify career paths that match their skills and interests. myIDP launched in September 2012 and has been widely promoted by institutions nationally, with more than 30,000 registered users.

Finalist:

**Building Bridges: An Engineering Capstone Experience in Translational Medicine**

Nicholas Kenyon, M.D., University of California, Davis, School of Medicine

College of Engineering (COE) students are the glue for a unique partnership that bridges the University of California, Davis Clinical and Translational Science Center (CTSC) and the School of Medicine (SOM). For the past five years, the COE Capstone Senior Design Course, with funding from the CTSC pilot program, has brought together engineering students and clinical faculty in the development of device and therapeutic prototypes. Initially conceived in 2008 by Professors Nicholas Kenyon (Internal Medicine: Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine) and Cristina Davis (Mechanical Aeronautical Engineering) as an experiment in breaking down the silos of medicine and other disciplines, the effort has succeeded beyond expectations. The program has included 40 faculty mentors and more than 100 students and 25 projects. Several positive outcomes have resulted, including a New Technologies Summer Camp for rising COE seniors to deeply engage in clinically relevant translations of engineering innovations. To date, students have produced peer review papers, abstracts, patent disclosures, prototypes, and preliminary data to support federal grant proposals. Other outcomes include increased student...
interest in medical-based commercialization and company formation. This unique UC Davis collaborative shows that effective translational teams can be formed very early in the training experience.

Finalist:
**Pathway to the Ph.D. at Tufts University’s Sackler School of Graduate Biomedical Sciences**

*Laura Liscum, Ph.D., Tufts University School of Medicine*

The Sackler School seeks to diversify its student body. We hypothesize that establishing strong ties with early undergraduate science majors at a Boston school with diverse students will increase the number of diverse applicants to Sackler undergraduate and post-baccalaureate training programs. We predict that this will result in increased numbers of qualified applicants of diverse backgrounds to Sackler Ph.D. programs. We are testing this hypothesis by bringing talented University of Massachusetts Boston undergraduate science majors to Tufts during their January break. Undergraduates interested in medical school participate in Pathway to the M.D., whereas those interested in research participate in Pathway to the Ph.D. For the latter, Sackler graduate students lead the undergraduates in laboratory experiments, while faculty members offer career development workshops and introduce them to our undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, and graduate research training opportunities. This provides an enriching experience while giving Sackler graduate students teaching opportunities. Program success is being measured through pre- and post-experience surveys and tracking student outcomes. We also host a reception for the student's families for whom this is often the first introduction to Ph.D. career paths. We propose to make this program portable to other graduate schools that wish to partner with undergraduate institutions.

Semi-finalist:
**Translational Biology, Medicine, and Health Training Across Multiple Colleges**

*Michael Friedlander, Ph.D., Virginia Tech*  
*Audra Van Wart, Ph.D., Virginia Tech*

This partnership for a new Ph.D. program in Translational Biology, Medicine, and Health (TBMH) was developed across seven colleges and 17 departments at Virginia Tech for innovative graduate education in translational research. The program has six tracks: i) health implementation science; ii) development, aging, and repair; iii) brain and cognitive sciences; iv) cancer; v) cardiovascular and metabolic sciences; and vi) infection, immunity, and inflammation. A new organizational unit, open to faculty from all colleges—the Faculty of Health Sciences—houses the program. The program will accept students from the life and physical sciences, engineering, computation, mathematics, social/behavioral sciences, and medicine. The program was developed with strong support from the provost, graduate school, and multiple colleges. The rationale was to incentivize integrated education, research, and training in translational medical sciences, incorporating strengths of traditional health sciences disciplines with non-traditional disciplines, including companies. The partnership will attract a new cohort of students, provide them with skills and perspective for multiple career paths, and catalyze/reward medical-engineering-computational-social sciences-business collaborative training. Graduates will enter the workforce with technical, intellectual, and real world application expertise, providing a new breed of innovative biomedical thought leader who learns to embrace translation and application in real-world settings.