

Spotlight

Faculty Vitae

About this Issue

Feature

Leadership Lesson

Perspectives

Spotlight

Contributors & Staff

Archives

FD&L Home

Award-Winning Women in Medicine Programs: University of Pennsylvania and Georgetown University

This Spotlight highlights two award-winning medical school-based programs for women faculty professional development. The University of Pennsylvania's [FOCUS on Health and Leadership for Women](#) is comprehensive, with a full time centralized staff, and one of the strongest budget lines of any Women in Medicine (WIM) program in the United States. Georgetown University's Women in Medicine program (GWIM) has maintained the grassroots, decentralized organization of its founding and operates on limited financial support and volunteer leaders to develop programming. Both schools have received the [AAMC Women in Medicine Leadership Award](#), which recognizes outstanding contributions to develop leaders in academic medicine.

Both programs were established in 1994 by a handful of women faculty through grassroots efforts. Each has received various levels of support and funding, and has used numerous strategies to sustain their initiatives.

University of Pennsylvania's FOCUS on Health and Leadership for Women

FOCUS was founded by a senior faculty member, Dr. Jeane Ann Grisso, within the Center for Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics. Its purpose in 1994 was to provide a multidisciplinary network to encourage interest in women's health research. Three years later, faculty of the National Center of Excellence in Women's Health, working with the Dean of the medical school, expanded the role of FOCUS to include a leadership and mentoring program. With financial support from the Dean and national agendas before them, FOCUS worked quickly to identify their audience and communicate the value of the proposed initiatives to department chairs and other leaders.

Today, FOCUS offers a wide variety of programs and manages an annual operating budget of over \$250,000. A handful of committed women leaders are responsible for developing and carrying out the goals and objectives of the FOCUS program with input from an advisory committee of women faculty from many departments.

The [FOCUS program leadership](#) includes four directors and administrative support: Executive Director, Stephanie Abbuhl, M.D.; Director of Research, Anne Cappola, M.D.; Director of Professional Development, Lucy Tuton, Ph.D.; Director of Operations, Patricia Scott; and Administrative Coordinator, Susan Primavera. Dr. Abbuhl believes that hiring the right personnel to staff the office is key to its success. She relies heavily upon Ms. Scott for managing the day-to-day operations. "Pat is an individual that understands the big picture of the institution, yet can negotiate all the details to run the program." The group relies on teamwork to carry out a multitude of initiatives with a limited staff. One of their key initiatives is their annual Benchmark report, a compilation and analysis of gender statistics for Penn medical faculty which is presented to all department chairs and senior leadership. FOCUS believes that these data have significantly raised the visibility, urgency, and legitimacy of gender equity concerns at Penn. Another key component to the FOCUS program has been the yearly conferences with national speakers where women faculty not only attend small-group mentoring and faculty development sessions and network, but also hear from nationally recognized speakers about key concepts in gender equity in plenary sessions.

Georgetown University's Women in Medicine program

Georgetown's Women in Medicine program (GWIM) was founded in response to salary inequities reported by women in the Department of Internal Medicine. Four women faculty leaders (Drs. Terry Taylor, Bonnie Green, Mairlee Cole, and Miriam Toporowicz) recognized the importance of strengthening women's support networks and building community within the medical center. Their grassroots efforts continue to reach out to the 400 women faculty at Georgetown University Medical Center. With limited support and funding, but rich in energy, ideas and passion, the GWIM continues to make small, significant steps toward developing [programs for medical women faculty](#) at Georgetown.

The AAMC recognized the success of these efforts with the 2003 AAMC Women in Medicine Leadership Award, which received wide attention from Georgetown's leadership. Past president, Dr. Toporowicz said, "The national award helped legitimize our efforts to GUMC leadership. The award gave us an increased visibility across the university and renewed our efforts and energy for advancing women." With new momentum, GWIM leveraged the national recognition when negotiating with leadership for increased financial and administrative support.

Today, 20 focused, active volunteer women faculty sustain and drive the organization's activities. All women faculty are invited to activities that support GWIM's mission to promote the professional advancement of medical women faculty at GUMC and establish policies and a working environment that promote equality and diversity in hiring, promotion, and compensation. The group organizes skill-building workshops, networking activities, and recently has established two awards, the Estelle Ramey Mentorship Award, which is given to faculty who demonstrate dedication to advancing women in academic medicine, and the John Eisenberg Award to support a faculty member's attendance at the AAMC Early Career or Mid-Career Women Faculty Professional Development program.



Pam Saunders, Terry Taylor, Rosaire Verna, Ray Mitchell, Rhonda Friedman, Virginia Steen, Miriam Toporowicz, Kate Taylor, Bonnie Green, Aziza Shad, Karen Gale, Dan Sedmak, Marilee Cole, Joy Drass at the 2003 AAMC Women in Medicine Leadership Award Ceremony

Future Directions: FOCUS



Lucy Wolf Tuton (Director of Professional Development); Susan Primavera (Administrative Coordinator); Anne Cappola (Director of Research Programs); Stephanie Abbuhl (Executive Director); Patricia Scott (Director of Operations)

FOCUS continues to support a dual mission to recruit, retain, and advance women in academic medicine and to promote women's health research. Strategically, FOCUS has capitalized on a two-part mission (women's health research and medical faculty professional development) to broaden its programmatic reach and appeal to faculty, both men and women, who might otherwise not be involved in a "WIM" program. FOCUS welcomes men faculty to the majority of its programs, believing in the philosophy that what benefits one group of faculty will benefit all faculty, and will create greater support for FOCUS initiatives. FOCUS also believes that many men, particularly of the younger generation, share many of the concerns that women have, and their participation is essential for true institutional change to occur.

Dr. Abbuhl's vision of the next decade is to expand the work they have begun. "We'd like to expand our work toward the acceptance of flexible work options and increase availability of part-time as well as work for the increased recruitment of women to chair and other leadership positions. In addition, FOCUS currently plans to host a national conference addressing the issue of how to approach institutional change to improve the environment of academic medicine so that a more diverse faculty can be successful in achieving their personal and professional goals, and contribute to the mission of academic medicine. Finally, FOCUS would like to write up our "lessons learned" and our benchmark data for a journal article."

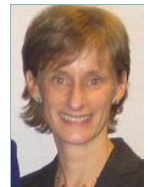
Future Directions: GWIM

A sure sign of commitment from leadership is a budget increase in the midst of institutional fiscal cuts. Recently, GWIM received an increase bringing their program budget to \$22,000. The funds are primarily used to deliver professional development programs to faculty and to cover the expenses for women faculty accepted to the AAMC Early Career Women Faculty Professional Development Seminar. GWIM is a model of what can be done with limited resources and broad faculty commitment. GWIM continues 12 years after its founding, nurtured by key ingredients of a respected leader's commitment, and a strong women faculty organization with multiple sources of energy.

GWIM president Leslie Walker, M.D., is preparing for the next phase of GWIM activities. "Our efforts will focus on increasing a sustained active membership and board specifically increasing the number of women department chairs by working with leadership." Dr. Walker offered words of encouragement to women leaders starting women in medicine programs: "Never be discouraged, continue to work toward equity, inclusion and career development for all women faculty; it benefits everyone."

Lessons in Building a Strong Professional Development Program for Women Faculty

1. **Be clear with leadership** as to why the institution needs to invest in professional development for all faculty, but especially for women faculty. Women now make up half the medical school classes and, thus, a significant portion of the pipeline of talented faculty and potential leaders.
2. **Research and present data** on women faculty and leaders in your institution. A simple power point presentation showing the number of women by rank and leadership position (department chairs, division chiefs, associate deans, vice deans) can make a strong impression with institutional leaders. Your message should be clear, simple and inclusive.
3. **Develop a proposal** for WIM programs that have broad interest and appeal. Align your program goals with those of your institution. Address institutional change for all faculty. Use other successful Women in Medicine programs as models and include issues of importance to everyone, such as supervising staff, planning for promotion and tenure.
4. **Make a reasonable request** for start-up funding. Your programming success will help you negotiate additional funding.
5. **Maintain ongoing communication** with your dean and other institutional leaders. Seek opportunities to have your dean get the message out about the program and why the program continues to be supported.



Stephanie Abbuhl, M.D. Executive Director of the University of Pennsylvania's FOCUS program offers lessons learned from her own experience

A National View of Women in Medicine Programs

The AAMC's 2002 report on [Increasing Women's Leadership in Academic Medicine](#) outlines the importance of support for WIM programs in cultivating women leaders.

The 2004-2005 AAMC report on [Women in U.S. Academic Medicine Statistics and Medical School Benchmarking](#) describes the structure, funding, and activities of 109 medical schools Women Liaison Officers who responded to the survey in June 2005. Ninety-nine schools report ongoing support of professional development of women faculty. For those schools reporting funding, levels of support range from \$200 to \$250,000 (average of \$27,197 and median of \$11,500). Fifty-eight report a centralized organizational structure within their institutions. Thirty schools report some level of on-going grassroots or volunteer activities.

Resources for Women in Medicine (WIM) programs and types of WIM activities are listed below:

Resources

- Administrative staff
- Designated office space
- Web site development and maintenance
- Publications and subscriptions
- Newsletter publications
- Listservs
- Exhibits

Activities

- Professional Development workshops
- Gender equity consultations
- Informal discussion groups — teas and brown-bag lunches
- Journal clubs for professional development
- Sponsorship of women faculty to AAMC and ELAM career development programs
- Regional WIM meetings and conferences
- Visiting professorships honoring women of distinction in science and medicine
- Programs for medical and graduate students and residents

- Valarie Clark