Research organizations such as the IU Center for Aging Research are highly dependent on the creative energy, enthusiasm, and talents of junior faculty. One clear sign of the health of any research center is the quality of the next generation. The future of the organization hinges on these young minds not only because they will inhabit the future, but also because they are key to the professional satisfaction and productivity of our more experienced faculty. Unfortunately, junior faculty with an interest in aging research are as rare as hens’ teeth and there is a large demand for these scientists at a national level. It takes at least a quarter century of formal education before a scientist is competitive for a faculty position and another 5-10 years before a faculty scientist is prepared for an independent research career in academic medicine. All along this pathway are multiple competing career opportunities of great appeal and great need. These competing opportunities include teaching, clinical care, administration, and other forms of service. Thus, when a young faculty member interested in aging research arrives in our care, we make an enormous effort to shepherd them through the final hurdles. Perhaps the best way to accomplish this important task is through mentoring.

Consistent with a history of formal mentorship dating back to the origins of the Division of General Internal Medicine and Geriatrics and the Regenstrief Institute, Inc., IU-CAR has adopted a structured program of group mentorship that has been well-received by our new faculty.

A mentor has multiple roles and responsibilities. These include supervising, providing feedback on performance, acting as advocate at the local and national level, maintaining an environment for creativity, opening doors to resources and expertise, cheering, goal-setting, and role-modeling for professional relationships, leadership, and family-career balance. Mentoring, however, is not a one-way street. Mentoring works best when the relationship is one of mutual respect and benefit. Young faculty help us excel.

This year’s annual report highlights some of the wonderful mentoring relationships that will help shape the future of IU-CAR. In addition to an impressive growth in our extramural funding and publications over the past seven years, we also want to celebrate the growth of the next generation. We have some of the most talented young faculty-scientists in the country right here in IU-CAR. We would like to find a few more!

Christopher M. Callahan, MD
Cornelius & Yvonne Pettinga Professor in Aging Research
Research Scientist, Regenstrief Institute
October 1, 2005
Sources of Center Funding

The IU Center for Aging Research submitted data as one of 761 research centers at 57 academic institutions invited to participate in a 2004 survey conducted by the Association of American Medical Colleges. The purpose of the survey was to determine the size, scope, and range of activities at centers and institutes affiliated with research-intensive medical schools and their parent universities in the United States. The results were published in “Characteristics of Research Centers and Institutes at US Medical Schools and Universities” which is available online at www.aamc.org.
People make a place. “It’s a rule of thumb that I keep close in our line of work,” states Michael Weiner, MD, MPH. As a scientist in the Center for Aging Research, Dr. Weiner credits the organization’s leaders with having a keen understanding of the elements essential for developing junior faculty into talented, productive, collaborative, and happy investigators.

Those elements contributed to his successful career award, a K23 proposal “Recommendations of Inpatient Geriatrics Consultation” funded by the National Institute on Aging in 2003. The research component supports Dr. Weiner’s interest in measuring and improving aspects of implementation of geriatrics consultants’ recommendations for hospitalized older adults. K23 mentors are Drs. Chris Callahan and Steve Counsell from IU-CAR, and Drs. Tom Inui and Clem McDonald from Regenstrief Institute.

For young faculty members and their mentors, professional development is a specific weekly agenda item whether in one-on-one or group sessions. Dr. Weiner attests to IU-CAR’s ability to balance Center-related goals with the mentee’s need for individual milestones—he recently was promoted to associate professor of medicine.

“Our resources are excellent, and our organization is strong,” offers Dr. Weiner. “I don’t think I could formulate a stronger vision, plan, or environment for professional development.”

Kevin Terrell and Doug Miller

Being named a 2004 Dennis W. Jahnigen Career Development Scholar was an individual research milestone for Kevin Terrell, DO, MS. But he credits an interdisciplinary team of mentors for his early success.

“It’s a young discipline,” offers Dr. Terrell of his field, emergency medicine. “It is predominantly a clinical discipline with relatively few established clinical investigators.”

As a result, many emergency medicine (EM) junior faculty seek mentors outside their department. Enter Drs. Chris Callahan and Doug Miller from IU-CAR who teamed with Drs. Rolly McGrath and Carey Chisholm from EM to form Kevin’s mentor panel.

“Dr. Miller had collaborated with emergency physicians,” notes Dr. Terrell. “The combination of his understanding the complexities of the emergency department and his expertise in health services research makes him the ideal mentor for me.”

With other senior IU-CAR leaders such as Dr. Siu Hui helping to develop research projects and providing advice on identifying campus and national experts, Dr. Terrell feels as if he has “struck gold.” He adds, “Career development is ingrained into the culture of IU-CAR. It’s also inviting and effective.”

Dr. Boustani, a geriatrician with a masters in public health, is the second IU recipient of a Paul B. Beeson Career Development Award in Aging Research. The first was his primary mentor, Dr. Chris Callahan in 1996. Drs. Steve Counsell and Hugh Hendrie are Beeson co-mentors.
Visit the Center for Aging Research website to find a list of our publications as well as information about the center, our investigators, and our research.

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