

COMMENT AND PERSPECTIVE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN, UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

February 19, 2014

Here is my latest message in the ongoing series giving perspective on relevant topics to promote communication and stimulate dialogue between the College of Medicine Dean's office and faculty.



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Diversity and Inclusion in the College of Medicine

A diverse and inclusive faculty and student body provides a vibrant and dynamic environment for creativity, innovation and learning. We can only increase the opportunities to effect positive change by recognizing and embracing diversity in our workplace. More importantly, diversity breeds the cultural and social competencies that will help us tackle the intractable problem of health disparities.

The University of Cincinnati recently stepped up efforts to promote diversity and inclusion across campus with the recent appointment of Bleuzyette Marshall, PhD, as Chief Diversity Officer. The College of Medicine initiated its own response to the call to increase diversity in mid-2013 with the appointment of Mia Mallory, MD, as Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion. Along with Christopher Lewis, MD, Assistant Dean for Diversity and Inclusion, and William Harris, Program Coordinator for Diversity and Inclusion, the team is working energetically to further the office's agenda, in particular, to attract and support the best underrepresented minority students.



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Our Numbers

The initial efforts to recruit underrepresented minority students have been successful. The Class of 2017 includes:

- Sixteen African-American students, or 9 percent of the class, the highest percentage in many years
- Nine students of Hispanic and Native American heritage

Beyond this, Robert Highsmith, Associate Dean for Graduate Studies, is working to increase the number of graduate students who identify as underrepresented minorities from the current 10 percent. His strategy is to build a pipeline by using the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellows (SURF) program to attract highly capable minority college students from UC and across the country. Ensuring that all these students feel well supported is a goal of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI).

ODI also is working with residency program directors to identify and recruit more diversity into our Graduate Medical Education programs. Residency training is enhanced with a diverse cadre of trainees. Furthermore, our residents often stay in the Cincinnati area for their careers in healthcare. Increasing the diversity of our workforce is one important way that the College of Medicine and UC Health can contribute to reducing health disparities and ensure that we continually improve the health of our community.

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The Issue

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Beyond our student body, there must also be a renewed emphasis on recruiting and maintaining a diverse faculty. Currently, about 5 percent of the nearly 1,000 medicine faculty are underrepresented minorities. An important goal of the College of Medicine is to identify and bring to our campus additional accomplished underrepresented minority faculty.

Similarly, while the medical school class has achieved a notable gender balance, it is important that we continue to increase the number of women faculty leaders to serve as role models and mentors for our young women students and faculty.

Student Organizations

We are fortunate to have at the College several active organizations representing a diverse student body:

- Student National Medical Association (SNMA), which focuses on activities and interests of our African-American students
- Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA)
- Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association (APAMSA)
- American Medical Women's Association (AMWA)
- Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT) People and Allies in Medicine

These groups provide excellent support to our students and promote strong diversity and inclusion agendas. Several local SNMA and LMSA members are involved in medical student organizations at the national level:

- *Candice Carpenter* (M2) was recently selected as a member of the House of Delegates Credentials Committee for the American Medical Student Association
- *Stacey Williamson* (M3) is the regional secretary for the SNMA and will travel to the national conference in April

- *Martha Estrada* (M3) is the regional LMSA parliamentarian and recently returned from the national conference
- *Alex Cortez* (M3) is the regional co-president of LMSA and played a primary role in the development of the medical Spanish elective now offered to our medical students

Scholarships will be very important to advance our diversity and inclusion agenda and to attract strong pre-medical and graduate students. A great example is the Oxley Scholarship, named for Lucy Oxley, who in 1935 became the first African-American student to graduate from the College of Medicine. The story of Dr. Oxley was recently featured on wcpo.com (subscription required). Alumni, community members and the Cincinnati Medical Association (CMA) have been active contributors to this scholarship that currently supports two students of color. These students were featured at a recognition event this past fall for Kenneth Davis, MD, and his wife, Johnie, who have been instrumental in the creation and the ongoing support of the Oxley Scholarship.

The College of Medicine's diversity and inclusion efforts were prominently featured at the CMA's recent annual banquet. While acknowledging our gains in attracting students of color, the CMA leadership encouraged the College to continue improving our efforts to entice residents, faculty and healthcare professionals from diverse backgrounds to Cincinnati. This is an unwavering goal of the Dean's office.

It is my hope that everyone in the College of Medicine works to ensure that a vibrant level of diverse representation is achieved over the next several years.

I look forward to your input on this topic. Please contact me with your comments and questions or suggestions for other topics.

Thomas F. Boat, MD
Vice President for Health Affairs
Christian R. Holmes Professor and Dean



Lucy Oxley, MD, with fellow members of the College of Medicine Class of 1935.

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