Health Equity Leadership and Mentoring (HELM) Program

A. Participating Divisions/Departments(s): Medical School Program in Health Disparities Research

B. Mentoring Co-Coordinators: Kola Okuyemi, MD, MPH, Professor of Family Medicine and Community Health; Sue Everson-Rose, PhD, MPH, Associate Professor of Medicine

C. Program Start Date: September 26, 2014

D. Program Description:

Overview. The Health Equity Leadership & Mentoring (HELM) Program, housed within the Program in Health Disparities Research (PHDR) in the Medical School, was established in 2014 to support junior faculty and post-doctoral fellows within the Academic Health Center who are from underrepresented minority groups and/or whose work focus on health equity. The HELM Program utilizes an innovative multi-level culturally responsive mentoring model to foster career and leadership development and success. The year-long program was designed to support up to 12 fellows annually; due to demand the inaugural cohort includes 15 fellows (mentees).

Goals. The program’s specific goals for this first year include: 1) Formally match each HELM mentee with a mid-career/senior mentor at the University to provide more systematic guidance and support in career planning (at least 3 meetings/year); 2) Establish an advisory group of Culturally Responsive Mentoring consultants for consultation, advice, and group mentoring that is anchored in effective cultural strategies for enhancing mentees’ transition to independent academic careers; 3) Support the work of mentoring dyads with institutional-level programs and resources, e.g., from the Medical School Office of Faculty Affairs and the University’s Office for Equity and Diversity; 4) Coordinate existing and create new professional development offerings for mentees; and 5) Evaluate the program to guide adaptation and measure success.

Mentor Matching. Fellows were asked to select up to 5 individuals from our list of mentors at the University with whom to meet and discuss possible mentor-mentee relationships. On the basis of scientific need and personal fit, mentees then ranked their choices and were successfully matched with 1 mentor. Additionally, mentees have access to an advisory group of nationally recognized leaders in health equity and culture, academic leadership, and scholarship.

Structure & Activities. The program began with a half-day retreat in September. Monthly 2-hour sessions are planned throughout the year. In addition to “traditional” academic career development topics, seminars cover critical topics in health equity research and leadership, e.g., cultural resonance and diversity, micro aggressions and historical trauma, and the continuing impact of institutional racism on professional development in the 21st century. Seminars also offer practical skill development in time management, goal-setting, and work-life balance. Additionally, mentors in the program will be offered training to enhance their cultural responsiveness and attentiveness to cultural diversity with proven methods to enhance mentoring effectiveness.

Continuation & Sustainability. There is a clear need for strong mentoring programs designed for scholars from underrepresented backgrounds to facilitate both success and satisfaction with academic careers. We anticipate and have planned for the HELM Program to be offered annually. Evaluations of specific activities and the overall program will occur with the goal of adapting the program as necessary to promote long-term success and sustainability.

Resources. The HELM Program is supported by funds from the PHDR and a pilot grant from the Office of Faculty Affairs. In addition to the Mentoring Co-Coordinators, one of the Community Advisory Board members for PHDR has been instrumental in planning the kick-off retreat and monthly seminars and has arranged for several outside speakers to present to the fellows. PHDR office personnel had been responsible for administrative duties, scheduling, and correspondence with mentees and mentors.

D. Contact for more information: Kristin Eide, keide@umn.edu, 612-626-8497

Report Date: November 21, 2014