

# AWNings

The Newsletter of the Academic Women's Network at Washington University School of Medicine

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Spring 2009

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## From the President's Desk by Dayna Early, M.D.

*W*ith a new administration in our state and our country, many of us began the New Year with renewed hope for prosperity and success. Among the dramatic changes that have occurred and have been promised, many of us have been intrigued by President Obama's concept of a "Team of Rivals". Mr. Obama actually borrowed the term from a book written by Doris Kearns Goodwin called *Team of Rivals*, in which she talked about how President Lincoln included in his Cabinet many of the people who had been running against him, including 3 Republicans who loathed him. His focus was not on personal feelings or pride but the issue, "How can we get this country through this time of crisis?" In a similar fashion, Mr. Obama has succeeded at creating an administration that is diverse in all spheres; race, gender, ethnicity, experience and political leaning. It was bold endeavor, but one that will almost certainly reward him.

We may need a team of rivals at Washington University. We may not have a crisis as pressing and omnipresent as our nation's financial situation. But we have a "crisis in confidence" that the University administration appreciates that many female faculty consider their work environment to be discriminatory. We clearly need a team of individuals who can focus on the issue, "How can we make the climate for women faculty at Washington University better?" Over the past at least one year, leaders of AWN and AWF have repeatedly brought this key issue in front of Chancellor Wrighton and new Provost Ed Macias, among others. We had hoped this would be a time of consensus building, yet we sense there are still significant differences between the central administration and the faculty representatives regarding how to address this key issue, as is evident when one compares the Provost's recently released "Diversity Action Plan" to the formal recommendations of

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the Advisory Committee on Women Faculty.  
(<http://provost.wustl.edu/diversity> )

In a recent meeting with Dr. Macias, Rebecca Messbarger (President of AWF) and I emphasized some key points that AWN and AWF have repeatedly underscored; the faculty climate survey shows that cohorts of female faculty feel that the Wash U environment is discriminatory, that women and minorities are underrepresented in leadership positions and professor rank, and that our peer institutions that have successfully changed the environment for women and minorities have done so through an office of Vice Provost for Faculty and Diversity.

In our presentation, we framed our discussion around the notion that it's important to distinguish between diversity in the faculty *per se*, and the climate for women (and under-represented minorities). We coined this as “tangible and intangible diversity issues”.

The tangible issues are the numbers and the bar graphs of faculty at each rank. I believe it is theoretically easier to move the bar graphs than it is to change the culture. You can hire more women and more minorities and you can even promote them and put them in positions of leadership. But if those women and minorities feel that the university culture is discriminatory, then I believe we have not made any progress on diversity.

We know from multiple informal communications, as well as the faculty climate survey, that many women on both campuses feel that they are treated differently than men and we think that is unacceptable. The faculty climate survey showed that women feel that they have fewer opportunities for collaboration, that they are less often mentored appropriately, that they do not know the unwritten rules of their department, and that they are on the fringe of their peer groups.

We believe that this represents culture, and the only way to change culture is from the top down. We feel strongly that a senior faculty administrator is needed to deliver the message to deans, department chairs and faculty that

diversity is a top priority of the Chancellor and the Provost, and that not embracing diversity will not be tolerated. How we achieve this may require the work of a team of rivals, because the concept of a senior faculty administrator, whose primary responsibility is improving the climate for women and minorities, has not been embraced by some of the top university leaders. We have and will continue to remain as engaged as we are allowed, as this process moves forward.

I encourage you to read and try to digest the two reports mentioned above; the Diversity Action Plan by Provost Ed Macias, and the formal recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Women Faculty (both available on the Provost's website). The Diversity Action Plan takes the right tone in making diversity front and center of the Provost's priorities, yet lacks the specifics of *how* he will accomplish what he has committed to, and what exactly will be the role of his executive committee. The following is an excerpt from a letter written to Provost Macias on behalf of the AWN and AWF Boards, in response to his report: “We are gratified by the pledge of an institutional embrace of human difference in its myriad forms, by the high priority you have given to improving the environment for women and under-represented minorities at Washington University, and by your willingness to collaborate with us and other members of the university community to realize needed changes in the demographics and climate here. However, it will come as no surprise that we were disappointed that you have decided not to enact the cornerstone recommendation of the ACWF, the Gender and Equity Committee and the leadership of AWN and AWF for the establishment of an Office of the Vice Provost of Faculty Development and Diversity. As you know, this recommendation, advanced by various faculty groups, came as a result of many months of research and correspondence on best practices for building institutional excellence through diversity with top-level peer institutions that have a record of progress on the issue. That said, we see this as a significant stride forward. We are committed to working with you to realize the broad and specific goals outlined in your plan. We take heart that you have described this as a work in progress. We aim to be constructive partners and, if need be, constructive critics, in the formulation and implementation of new initiatives to enhance the life of Washington University through greater diversity.”

## Elizabeth Blackburn Interview

“Go for it” and “Don’t be afraid to ask people for help-and then feel free to ignore it!” This is Elizabeth Blackburn’s advice to young women starting out in biochemistry or the life sciences.



Blackburn, the Morris Herzstein professor of biology and physiology in the department of biochemistry and biophysics at the University of California, San Francisco has spent much of her professional life exploring the far ends of chromosomes. In 1976, she discovered that they were capped by strange repeating sequences of DNA. Her discovery of telomeres, with colleague Carol Greider, and of the telomere-making enzyme telomerase, drew her to the center of a now-burgeoning field, telomere biology, and earned her numerous awards. In 2008, she received the L'Oréal-UNESCO Award for Women in Science. This award aims to improve the position of women in science by recognizing outstanding women researchers who have contributed to scientific progress.

An interview with Blackburn appears in the April 2009 issue of the journal *Clinical Chemistry*. To read the complete interview, go to:  
<http://www.clinchem.org/cgi/content/short/55/5/835>  
 (site active after March 28,2009)

## Missouri Women in Health Sciences Digital Collection

The Bernard Becker Library has a wonderful website that celebrates the achievements and careers of women in Missouri who made an impact on the health science professions during the 20th century.



Mildred Trotter in 1955, using calipers to measure a femur.

The site contains biographies of the first women to attend Washington University School of Medicine such as Harriet Hirrel Stevens and Faye Cashatt. In a section entitled “*In Her Words*” are speeches and essays from such renowned women as Gerti Cory, Jessie Ternberg, and Mildred Trotter. There is a section on health professions that highlights women’s roles in the fields of Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Occupational and Physical Therapy, Social Work, and Health Administration.

Finally, there is an extensive searchable photo gallery that contains hundreds of photos dating back to the 1800’s of famous and not-so famous Missouri women in the health sciences.

This is a wonderful collection for women in Medicine and **should not be missed!** To visit the website, go to:

<http://beckerexhibits.wustl.edu/mowihsp/index.htm>

## Save the Dates!

The “**Changing the Face of Medicine**” exhibit is coming to WUSM.  
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine/>

**Opening Reception & Lecture** August 13, 2009, 6:00 pm  
**Panel discussion on Women in Medicine** September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4:30 pm  
 More information in the Summer issue of AWNings

## Kudos

**Laura Jean Bierut, M.D.**, professor of psychiatry, was featured in the Washington People section of the March 2, 2009 issue of The Record for her work on genetic influences on psychiatric illnesses and behaviors, such as alcoholism, nicotine use and substance dependence.

<http://record.wustl.edu/news/page/normal/13536.html>

**Katherine Henzler-Wildman, Ph.D.**, joins the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics as assistant professor. Henzler-Wildman earned a doctorate in chemistry at the University of Michigan in 2003. She was a Ruth L. Kirchstein NRSA postdoctoral fellow at Brandeis University. Her laboratory studies the conformational dynamics of proteins, using NMR to examine different motional modes during enzyme turnover. Henzler-Wildman is investigating the dynamics of the bacterial multidrug transporter EmrE in detergent micelles and artificial bilayers to identify motions that are linked to the mechanism of active transport.

**Shirley Sahrman, Ph.D.**, professor of physical therapy, of cell biology and physiology and of neurology, has been selected to receive the Richard W. Bowling-Richard E. Erhard Orthopaedic Clinical Practice Award from the Orthopaedic Section of the

American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). The award, which honors Sahrman's outstanding contribution to the clinical practice of orthopaedic physical therapy, will be presented at the Combined Sections Meeting of the APTA in February.

**Linda Van Dillen, Ph.D.**, associate professor of physical therapy and of orthopedic surgery was featured in the Washington People section of the February 12, 2009 issue of The Record.

<http://record.wustl.edu/news/page/normal/13426.html>

**Barbara Zehnauer, Ph.D.**, professor of pathology and immunology and of pediatrics, has received a one-year, \$74,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health for research titled "Specimen Preparation for Construction of Well-Annotated Progression and Prognostic Tissue Microarrays (TAMs) for Invasive Breast Carcinoma for Use in Breast Cancer Research."

*Do you have a topic for AWNings?*

*Send ideas to: Ann M. Gronowski;*

*gronowski@wustl.edu*

## "A Town Hall Meeting on Diversity at Washington University"

Featuring:

**Professor Patricia Jones,  
Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity  
at Stanford University**

to speak on

"Building Excellence Through Faculty Diversity: Institutional Implementation"

March 30, 2009:

4:00-6:00 p.m. Olin Women's Building

Gala Reception to Follow

## Three Women Receive School of Medicine Distinguished Faculty Awards

**O**n January 29<sup>th</sup> 2009, eighteen School of Medicine faculty were presented with Distinguished Faculty Awards, which recognize outstanding achievements in clinical care, community service, research and teaching.

"These dedicated and talented individuals have made significant and lasting contributions to the School of Medicine's renowned tradition of excellence in patient care, education, research and community service," said Larry J. Shapiro, M.D., executive vice chancellor for medical affairs and dean of the School of Medicine. "Our awardees' efforts have touched the personal and professional lives of countless patients, families, colleagues and trainees. In the process, they have enriched our academic community and beyond in immeasurable ways."

Among the winners were three women:

**Diane F. Merritt, M.D.**, professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and a staff physician at Barnes-Jewish Hospital, St. Louis

Children's Hospital and Missouri Baptist Medical Center received a **Distinguished Clinician Award**. Dr. Merritt is nationally known for her expertise in pediatric and adolescent gynecology.

**Carolyn Baum, Ph.D.**, Elias Michael Director and Professor of Occupational Therapy and professor of neurology received a **Distinguished Educator Award**. Dr. Baum is considered a leading force in the profession of occupational therapy and a dedicated teacher and mentor to the future leaders in the field.

**Abby Hollander, M.D.**, associate professor of pediatrics received a **Distinguished Community Service Award**. Dr. Hollander's dedication to community service in pediatric diabetes has made a strong and lasting impact on raising awareness and promoting understanding of diabetes among the public, affected families and health care workers.

For more information and photos of the ceremony, visit:

<http://mednews.wustl.edu/news/page/normal/13415.html>

## Conference Held to Direct Strategies for Women's Health Research

**W**ashington University hosted a public hearing and conference March 4-6 to gather input and set priorities for federally funded women's health research.

The National Institutes of Health invited scientists, health-care providers, patients, community groups, advocacy groups and any interested parties to testify at the March 4 hearing held at the Eric P. Newman Center.

The hearing kicked off the conference entitled "Realizing the Vision: Advancing Research on Women's Health in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", which brought together U.S. physicians, scientists and public-policy officials to generate new ideas and initiatives for research on women's health. The speakers represented a prestigious group of authorities including: Vivian Pinn, Director, Office of Research on Women's Health, NIH and Nancy Nielsen, President, AMA.

## New WU Child Care Facility Planned to Open July 2010

**W**ashington University is currently negotiating a contract with a vendor to operate a new childcare facility for WU faculty, staff and students.

The new, state-of-the-art facility will be built on the North Campus site near the Delmar Loop area. The new center will be open to WU families from both campuses and will be large enough for approximately 125 infants and preschool aged children. The administration is committed to having the center open for business by July 2010, despite the current economic conditions.

A child-care advisory committee consisting of faculty from both campuses and administration leaders, chaired by Hank Webber, Executive Vice Chancellor for Administration will be actively engaged in the selection of architects, building plans and development of the center.

## Jean Schaffer Named AAAS Fellow

Six faculty members from Washington University were recently named fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the world's largest general scientific society. The highest honor awarded by AAAS, the rank of fellow is bestowed upon members by their peers in recognition of scientifically or socially distinguished efforts to advance science or its applications.

The honorees include: Charles F. Hildebolt, Ph.D., professor of radiology, Daniel S. Ory, M.D., professor of medicine and of cell biology and physiology, Craig S. Pikaard, Ph.D., professor of biology in Arts & Sciences, George M. Weinstock, Ph.D., professor of genetics, Richard K. Wilson, Ph.D., professor of genetics and of molecular microbiology.

The only female, **Jean E. Schaffer**, M.D., the Virginia Minnich Distinguished Professor of Medicine and professor of developmental biology, was elected to the Section on Medical Sciences for her contributions in increasing the understanding of fat metabolism and diabetes.

This year's fellows are announced in the Dec. 19 issue of the journal *Science*, published by AAAS. Fellows will be recognized in February 2009 at the AAAS Annual Meeting in Chicago.

An international non-profit organization, AAAS is dedicated to advancing science around the world by serving as an educator, leader, spokesperson and professional association. Founded in 1848, the association includes some 262 affiliated societies and academies of science serving 10 million individuals.

## Jennifer Lodge Named Associate Dean for Research

Jennifer K. Lodge, Ph.D., has been named associate dean for research at the School of Medicine effective February 1, 2009.

In the newly created position, Lodge will coordinate efforts to advance research at the school, focusing particularly on projects that involve multiple departments, multiple disciplines and core facilities that can serve a wide variety of researchers. She will assist faculty in identifying potential funding opportunities and maximizing the benefits of school-wide investments in research.

In addition, Lodge will join the School of Medicine faculty as professor of molecular microbiology and continue her research into the pathogenic fungus *Cryptococcus neoformans*, which causes meningitis in immune-compromised individuals. Her laboratory is identifying biochemical processes essential for fungal survival that could be targeted by novel antifungal therapies. The lab has two major interests that have potential as targets for antifungal treatments.

Lodge was a research instructor and research assistant professor at the School of Medicine from 1993-97. She earned a doctorate in microbiology at WUSTL in 1988 and was a postdoctoral fellow in plant sciences at Monsanto Co. from 1989-1991. She was a postdoctoral fellow in the School of Medicine's Department of Molecular Biology and Pharmacology from 1991-93.

Lodge was most recently associate dean for research and a professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at Saint Louis University School of Medicine. She also previously served as a research assistant at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston and at Harvard University. She earned a bachelor's degree from Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio.

For the complete story visit:

<http://record.wustl.edu/news/page/normal/13296.html>

## Leslie Kahl & Linda Pike Receive Goldstein Awards

The 2008 Samuel R. Goldstein Leadership Awards in Medical Student Education have been awarded to Leslie Kahl, M.D.; David Murray, M.D.; and Linda Pike, Ph.D.

The annual awards, which recognize outstanding teaching and commitment to medical education, are among the highest honors that School of Medicine faculty can achieve. They were established in 2000 in honor of Goldstein, a longtime friend of the School of Medicine.

A selection committee made up of faculty and a student representative from each class reviews all submitted nominations and selects three awardees based on incorporation of innovative approaches to teaching and curriculum development, commitment to enhance educational skills and teaching evaluations. The committee forwards its recommendations to Larry J. Shapiro, M.D., executive vice chancellor for medical affairs and dean of the School of Medicine, for final approval.



Linda Pike, Ph.D.



Leslie Kahl, M.D.

Kahl is a professor of medicine and associate dean for student affairs. She has been coursemaster of the rheumatology course for second-year medical students since 1992, which includes a formal curriculum in rheumatology and small-group sessions with patients. Kahl teaches in all four years of the medical school curriculum, including oath-building in the first year, the second-year rheumatology course, third-year lectures in the internal medicine clerkship and hosting fourth-year students in her rheumatology clinic. Students have rated the second-year course very highly and have awarded her numerous teaching awards.

Pike is associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biophysics. She is coursemaster for the first-year "Molecular Foundations of Medicine" course, which she reorganized by increasing the clinical relevance, reducing the number of lecturers, changing the nature of exams and introducing electronic presentations. Pike is also a lecturer for the "Cell and Organ Systems Biology" course.

For complete story, see:

<http://record.wustl.edu/news/page/normal/13227.html>

### Did you know ...

That you are welcome to attend any AWN Board meeting?

The next meeting will be **April 13 at 3:30pm** in the Barnard Health & Cancer Information Center located in the first floor lobby of the CAM, right behind the player piano. The conference room is at the back of the Information Center.

*"Excellence is the best deterrent to racism or sexism"*

**Oprah Winfrey**

Talk show host & philanthropist

# AWN Spring Dinner

Thursday, April 23, 6:00 p.m.

Missouri House Representative

**Rachel Storch**

Will Discuss

## Healthcare and the New Administration

Location: King Center

(6<sup>th</sup> floor of the Bernard Becker Library).

The AWN Mentor Award and Rosalind Kornfeld Student Leadership Awards will be presented.

If you would like to attend, please send a check for \$35 per attendee to Lisa Moscoso, box 8116.



Academic Women's Network  
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