



NRMN-CAN Conference Re-Cap

November 1-3, 2015

The NIH-funded National Research Mentoring Network (NRMN) – CIC Academic Network (CAN) initiative held its inaugural Professional Development and Grantwriting Conference November 1-3, 2015, at the Big Ten Conference Center in Rosemont, IL, with much success. This event brought together more than 50 postdoctoral trainees and early career junior faculty members and 40 experienced faculty members and administrators from across the CIC network, which is comprised of the Big Ten Universities, now including University of Maryland College Park, Rutgers, Penn State, and Purdue Universities, along with the University of Chicago and University of Illinois at Chicago. The NRMN-CAN program addresses the need for greater diversity in the biomedical academic research workforce across the country and is primarily designed to support the academic career paths of researchers from underrepresented backgrounds.

The NRMN-CAN kick-off conference, *Passport to Success*, featured professional development and grantsmanship skill building. The postdoctoral and junior faculty trainees gathered on Sunday evening, November 1st, for a networking reception followed by an opening interactive workshop, “Your Science Identity”, led by Dr. Mary Nucci and Dr. Xenia Morin, both of Rutgers University. In this session, the trainees learned about the demographics of the science community, the value of diversity in science, and how to develop confidence in their personal sense of scientific identity in research, teaching, education and mentoring.

On Monday, November 2nd, the trainees participated in a full day of professional skill development workshops, focused on academic research career preparation. Dr. Philip Clifford of the University of Illinois at Chicago, started the day off with “Navigating a Successful Academic Career”, an interactive workshop in which the trainees began to create their individual development plans (IDP) and set specific goals for moving their careers ahead. The next workshop, “Tools for Success: What and how to prepare for the academic job search process” was led by Dr. Peter Hitchcock, from the University of Michigan. This session covered the details of the academic job search: application materials, the interview process, and negotiation considerations.

Following lunch, Dr E. Albert Reece, Vice President for Medical Affairs and Dean of the School of Medicine at the University of Maryland, delivered the Keynote Address, “Steps to a Successful Career in Academic Medicine.” His inspiring talk described his distinguished career and touched on the career development of several trainees whom he has mentored. Dr. Reece encouraged the trainees in attendance to seek out multiple mentors in the workplace who will provide them with the boost they need to successfully launch their careers in academic research.

In the afternoon, two workshops built upon the themes that were introduced in the morning workshops and by Dr. Reece. Joanne Lipo Zovic, of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Marquette University Law School, led a Negotiation Skills Workshop in which she introduced the basics of effective negotiation and led interactive exercises for the trainees. The final workshop, “Mentoring Up’:



NRMN-CAN Conference Re-Cap

November 1-3, 2015

"Maximizing Your Relationship with Your Mentor(s)" was led by Dr. Christine Pfund, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Director of the NRMN Mentor Training Core. In this session, the mentor-mentee relationship was examined and strategies were shared for getting the most out of this relationship in order to achieve research and professional goals.

While the trainees were engaged in the afternoon workshops, 20 experienced faculty grantsmanship coaches from the CIC universities had also arrived at the Big Ten Center. Dr. Rick McGee of Northwestern University led the "NIH Grant Writing Group Coaches Training" workshop, in which these faculty members learned about the NRMN group-based grant writing coaching design.

On Tuesday, all of the trainees and faculty coaches came together. First, Dr. McGee led the session, "A Novel Coaching-Group Approach to Developing Grant Writing Skills: In the Trenches Doing It!" which detailed how to tailor a grant application for grant reviewers. Faculty grantsmanship coaches and trainees then broke out into teams to start revising the grant applications that the trainees had drafted, using the NRMN approach they had just learned. The groups will continue to meet on their home campuses over the next few months, until the trainees have submitted their final grant applications.

During the wrap-up session of the conference, "Passport to Success", led by Conference Program co-Chair Dr. Xenia Morin, trainees reflected on their conference experience and wrote down their take-home messages as well as their next steps and action items. This left the trainees with a sense of purpose and a clear action plan going forward. Feedback about the conference has been extremely positive thus far, and the trainees were very appreciative that this program had been organized and that they were able to participate.

This conference was the effort of many people including the NRMN-CAN PIs, Dr. Nancy Schwartz and Ms. Amber Cox, the Conference Program co-Chairs, Ms. Pallavi Eswara and Dr. Xenia Morin, NRMN-CAN Program Coordinator, Dr. Laurie Risner, and NRMN-CAN Committee members from all of the participating CIC institutions, as well as the guest speakers. The NRMN-CAN group is currently planning their next event: a Facilitating Mentor Training Workshop to be held in March, 2016.

NRMN-CAN Conference Re-Cap

November 1-3, 2015



NRMN-CAN Conference Trainees on November 2, 2015.