

NRMN-CAN 2nd Annual Professional Development and Grantwriting Conference



NRMN-CAN held its 2nd Annual Professional Development and Grantwriting Conference, *Passport to Success: From Networking to Grantsmanship*, October 30 – November 1, 2016 at the Big Ten Conference Center in Rosemont, IL. The 70 attendees from 15 institutions included 44 postdoctoral and junior faculty trainees (50% from underrepresented backgrounds), 13 faculty grantsmanship coaches (38% UR) and 13 NRMN-CAN presenters and committee members.



The Conference kicked off with a welcome and networking reception on Sunday evening, October 30th, at the Aloft Hotel. Trainees had an opportunity to meet each other and the NRMN-CAN committee in an informal setting as they arrived to the conference. 18% of the NRMN-CAN trainees (8/44) had attended a previous NRMN-CAN event, and so these postdocs also had a chance to reconnect.

On Monday morning, October 31, NRMN-CAN PI, Dr. Nancy Schwartz, University of Chicago, welcomed the trainees to the conference and introduced the NRMN-CAN Conference Co-Chairs, Dr. Xenia Morin, Rutgers University, and Dr. Blessing Enekwe, University of Maryland. Drs. Morin and Enekwe gave a brief overview of the conference agenda and goals, and introduced the opening session, an interactive Improv Communication Workshop led by Second City Works, the well-known Chicago improv comedy group. At this session, participants engaged in

both big and small group activities to learn about different communications styles and to improve their communication skills.



That afternoon, the NRMN-CAN faculty coaches arrived at the Big Ten Conference Center to start their training as grantsmanship coaches with Dr. Rick McGee of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, and the NRMN Professional Development Core. These experienced faculty members were trained to use the NRMN group coaching method to help the trainees to refine their grant applications starting with the Specific Aims. The 13 faculty coaches included 6 returning and 7 new coaches to NRMN-CAN, representing 9 institutions. In addition, 2 coaches who were trained last year will continue to work with NRMN-CAN trainees when they return to their campuses.



Following a break for lunch, Dr. Blessing Enekwe delivered the “5 Secrets of Networking” workshop to the postdocs and junior faculty. At this interactive session, the participants were able to exercise their new communication skills and practice networking to build collaborations using the professional conference setting. Next the junior faculty and postdoc participants split into 2 groups for concurrent professional development sessions. The postdocs attended the workshops: “Applying for an academic job – approach, purpose and format” by Dr. Peter Hitchcock, University of Michigan, and “Talking about your Research at the Job Interview” by Dr. Antonio Nunez, Michigan State University. The 12 junior faculty members in attendance participated in interactive sessions on “Collaborating Effectively”, “Fostering Independence”, “Developing a Research Team”, and “Giving Constructive Feedback” which were led by several members of the NRMN-CAN committee. Day 1 ended with a networking reception for all in attendance.



On Day 2, the program shifted its focus to grantwriting. On Tuesday morning, Dr. Rick McGee, Northwestern University and NRMN Professional Development Core, led the Grant Writing Coaching Groups Kick-off and demonstrated the coached writing group method. After this introductory session, the coaches and trainees broke out into 11 NRMN-CAN grantwriting groups to get to work on the Specific Aims sections that the trainees had prepared. These groups will continue meeting on home campuses or virtually until the trainees' grants are submitted. This year, NRMN-CAN also offered an alternative "Grantwriting 101" informational track for the 4 trainees who were not yet ready to join a grantwriting group.



The NRMN-CAN conference wrapped up with the trainees completing their "Passport to Success" document designed to outline take home messages from the conference and follow up steps for their return to campus. The NRMN-CAN participants overwhelmingly found the communication and professional development workshops, the grantwriting group work, and the networking opportunities very valuable and beneficial to their careers, and many expressed their enthusiasm and gratitude for attending this conference. NRMN-CAN is currently planning their Spring 2017 Conference.

