Heart Center Receives Support

VCU’s Heart Center Campaign has just ended, raising $8.2 million—over $1.5 million above the original goal. These new funds are earmarked for education, research, and clinical teaching, including new professorships to help retain and recruit new faculty. A major highlight of the campaign was a $1 million gift from the Theresa Thomas Memorial Foundation to support recruitment and retention of nursing and non-physician professionals in cardiovascular disease services. The fund will provide resources to award, through education and training, the extraordinary group of persons who support the cardiac center mission. These funds come at an opportune time given the significant nursing shortages which exist.

The endowment was presented by Ms. Leslie Reed and Mr. James C. Roberts, trustees of the Theresa A. Thomas Foundation. Mr. Roberts is also co-chairman of the Heart Center.

Dr. George Vetrovec, Chairman of the Division of Cardiology and director of the Heart Center, notes, “This is a critically important gift to support these individuals who are so important to the activities of the Heart Center.” Overall, the success of the campaign has been “most gratifying,” according to Dr. Vetrovec.

“This is a tribute to Dr. Vetrovec and the entire Division of Cardiology and the excellent care they have provided for years.”

—Dr. Richard Wenzel

Faculty Publications


Internal Medicine M3 Clerkship Rated Highly by Class of 2000

154 members of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine graduating class of 2000 completed the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) graduation questionnaire, a lengthy survey administered to all graduating seniors in U.S. medical schools. Topics covered included rating of curriculum and clinical experiences, areas of curricular deficiency, and overall rating of educational experience.

The VCU Internal Medicine clerkship was the highest rated clerkship by our students, with a composite score of 1.4 (scale 1=excellent to 4=poor). This also compared favorably to the national rating of all Internal Medicine clerkships of 1.6 and was an improvement from our 1999 score of 1.5. Ratings for other clerkships at VCU were: Family Medicine 1.5 (national 1.8), Psychiatry 1.9 (national 2.2), Pediatrics 2.0 (national 1.9), Surgery 2.1 (national 1.9), OB/GYN 2.3 (national 2.3), and Neurology 2.4 (national 2.3). Breakdown of rankings for the Internal Medicine clerkship were: excellent 66.9%, good 25.2%, fair 8%, and poor 0%.

Judy Brannen, M.D., M.B.A., director of the MIII Internal Medicine clerkship since 1995, credits the dedication, teaching efforts, and student mentoring by the faculty and housestaff, as well as the dedication and skill of the Clerkship Coordinator, Gilda Harris-Howard, in achieving this level of student appreciation for the Clerkship. VCU has also sent many talented students on in-cameras in Internal Medicine, both here at VCU and at other prestigious institutions. “I have been impressed in talking to the students about career choice, that the single most important factor swaying students toward Internal Medicine has been role modeling and mentoring by faculty and housestaff,” says Dr. Brannen. Keep up the good work!

Faculty Promotions

Surely the highest accolade in the Department of Internal Medicine is promotion through the Academic ranks from Assistant to Associate to full Professor. Such distinction is not lightly conferred. Instead, after years of time in rank, candidates must undergo a rigorous process and demonstrate extraordinary skills as teachers, clinicians, or investigators. Innovation and national recognition are requirements for tenure, and even the non-tenured faculty are expected to show some scholarship. Each year, the “bar is raised,” and in our excellent department increasing levels of accomplishments are part of our future.

Special congratulations are due to those who were successfully promoted this year. We are proud of you, and because there is increasing rigor for success, each one can be proud of this special accolade in our Department of Medicine.

Rudolph P. Wenzel, M.D.
William Branch Porter Professor and Chairman

Housestaff Awards 2001

On Thursday, May 31st, the annual housestaff awards ceremony was held during Grand Rounds. Each year, we celebrate the accomplishments of a remarkable group of young physicians. This year, in recognition of the depth of excellence we have in our medicine residency program, specially designed certificates were presented to the finalists for each award, broadening the recognition of these outstanding residents. Two new awards were inaugurated this year as well. Through a generous donation from the Bristol Myers Squibb company, an award for Excellence in Physical Examination will be conferred each year. And a special annual award to a resident selected directly by the Department of Internal Medicine faculty, the Outstanding Physician in the Residency, was also inaugurated this year.

The Riffert Award for the outstanding intern went to Sarah Hellewell, M.D., with Drs. Dennis Wixted and Anne Winter as the finalists. The Outstanding Junior Resident Award went to Jeff Skat, M.D., and Colleen Cahill, M.D. The Scholars Prize for Excellence in Scholarship During the Residency went to Abhijeet Bhatia, M.D., with finalists Drs. Leanne Yanni, Ryan Mine, and David Salley. The Outstanding Clinician Award went to co-recipients Ryan Mine, M.D., and John Dashail. M.D., where the Arthur Klein, M.D., Memorial Award went to Robin Chenchin, M.D., with finalists Drs. Colleen Cahill and Jeff Skat. And the new Department of Medicine Faculty Award to the Outstanding Physician as the Residency went to Heather Ambrose, M.D., with finalists Drs. Leanne Yanni, John Dashail, Alan Dow, and Karen Elmore.

The medicine housestaff also honored four faculty members as Best Attending Physicians: Drs. Paul Fairman, Berry Fowler, Cesar Kanamori, and Curt Sessler. The Orthman Mun, M.D., Award for the Best Teaching Fellow went to Tammy Wickman, M.D., of the pulmonary division. A special award from the medicine housestaff was presented to Dr. Michael Edmond, in recognition of his extraordinary work as program director for the internal medicine residency from 1995 to 2001.

Congratulations and best wishes to these outstanding physicians, and to all our graduating residents.