Third Annual Teaching Excellence Awards Presentation

VCU’s School of Medicine, Medical College of Virginia Campus, invites all SOM faculty, staff, students, and housestaff to our 3rd Annual Teaching Excellence Awards Presentation. The awards ceremony will be held Monday, October 22, 2001, at 12:15 p.m. in the Medical Sciences Building Auditorium. We will honor teachers for Faculty Teaching Excellence, Whitty Award for Clinical Teaching, Distinguished Mentor, Educational Research/Educational Innovation, Outstanding Teacher Awards for Medical Student Education, and Outstanding Departmental Teacher Awards in Health Sciences Education. Award presentations will be made by Dr. H.H. Newsome, Jr., Dean, School of Medicine, and Dr. James Messmer, Senior Associate Dean, Medical Education.

Come join us in honoring our exceptional teachers in the School of Medicine with a luncheon reception immediately following on the Plaza. For more information, please contact Debbie Stewart, Office of Faculty and Instructional Development, at 828-6591.

Promotion and Tenure in the Department of Medicine

Promotion and tenure of faculty in the Department of Medicine is a rigorous process that begins in January each year and is not formally completed until June of the following year. The initial step is a discussion between potential faculty candidates and their division chiefs regarding the appropriateness of seeking promotion in the next review cycle. A recommendation for promotion is forwarded by the division chief to Dr. Richard Wenzel, the chairman of the department, and a departmental ad hoc committee reviews the candidate’s credentials and forwards a recommendation to Dr. Wenzel. Individual committees, consisting of five tenured faculty and a non-voting student, then research and review in painstaking detail all candidates’ accomplishments, letters of recommendation, teaching savings, publications, etc. This rigorous committee review is the heart of the promotion and tenure process, and ultimately results in a formal recommendation regarding the candidate to the School of Medicine Promotion and Tenure Committee.

Additional scrutiny is provided by the Dean of the School of Medicine, the Vice-President of the Health Sciences campus, the Board of Visitors of the University, and, finally, the President of the University.

All faculty are now reviewed under the Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure that were approved in July 1997 for the entire university. The central element of these guidelines is a careful review of the candidate’s performance in three areas – scholarship, teaching, and service. Specifically, the successful candidate must be rated Excellent in either scholarship or teaching, Very Good in one other category, and Satisfactory in all categories. These requirements pertain to both tenure track and collateral track faculty.

Critical to the success of this process is the dedication of members of the Department of Medicine Promotion and Tenure Committee (Drs. Clore, Hillner, Feldman, W. Smith, Heuman, and Bechard) and the many faculty of the School of Medicine and Allied Health Schools who volunteer to serve on individual faculty committees. This is a time-consuming process requiring careful investigation of faculty performance in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and research, as well as multiple meetings to review this information with other committee members.

Questions regarding the promotion and tenure process can be directed to Dr. David F. Gardner, who chairs the Department of Medicine’s Promotion and Tenure Committee.

Contributed by David F. Gardner, M.D.
Preparing for Promotion

1. Regarding yourself, know your expectations and know what is expected of you. You should be aware of the time clock regarding promotion. Do not be suddenly blind-sided by the recommendation or requirement for promotion. In fact, promotion and tenure issues should be an integral part of the faculty annual evaluation process. Know whether tenure is going to be a factor—promotion in the tenure track is a far more rigid process. If tenure is not going to be an issue, do not forget that scholarship remains a critical part of the evaluation process irrespective of the tenure or non-tenure tracks. Be sure to take care of this part of your preparation for promotion.

2. Your curriculum vitae must be as comprehensive as possible. It needs to be up to date, to include ALL references and publications (including abstracts, posters, reviews, book chapters, etc.), to include ALL moneys raised for research from ALL sources (federal, regional, local, society, industry, endowments), including co-investigation, collaboration, consultation, and including total and annual amounts; to include all invitations and appointments to participate in national meetings, including committee appointments, abstract reviews, session chairs, and other forms of participation; to include all teaching responsibilities and awards, and to include all items of divisional, departmental, and school activities, and service including committee appointments.

3. Do not be afraid to ask for assistance or advice. There are several members of the Department of Medicine with substantial experience in the process of promotion and tenure. Furthermore, Carol Hampton, Associate Dean for Faculty and Instructional Development (828-7438), in addition to providing the University Regulatory Documents regarding Promotion and Tenure, has an Advisory Document on Promotion and Tenure that was prepared specifically to assist the faculty in the process.

Contributed by Ian Nixon, M.D.

A Patient’s Gratitude

In early May, Mrs. Regina Fisher experienced the sudden onset of upper chest pain. She was admitted urgently to an area hospital where a trained vascular surgeon discovered Mrs. Fisher had developed a dissecting aortic aneurysm of the ascending aorta. The surgeon rushed her to surgery, and, after six hours of surgery, the aneurysm was successfully repaired. Within a few days, Mrs. Fisher was moved to the progressive care unit of the area hospital where her hospital course began to decline. Mysteriously, the oxygen level in her blood began to deteriorate. This was followed very soon by significant shortness of breath. Many physician consultants were called to the bedside to evaluate Mrs. Fisher. However, the family soon lost faith in the physicians and the hospital, and the patient was transferred to the Internal Medicine service at VCUHS where Dr. Berry Fowler took over her care.

Upon admission to VCU, Mrs. Fisher was breathless even with minimal exertion, needing six liters of oxygen per minute to maintain acceptable oxygen tensions. Great efforts were made to delineate the cause of her problem. To lower her work of breathing and to prevent an ICU admission, Dr. Fowler immediately removed a total of three liters of inflammatory fluid from around both lungs. By ECHO cathetergram, massive amounts of fluid were also discovered around Mrs. Fisher’s heart. Within two days following her admission to VCUHS, Dr. Fowler discovered that her problem was a rare post-operative complication of open heart or vascular thoracic surgery called Dressler’s Syndrome.

Therapy for Dressler’s Syndrome was started immediately, and Mrs. Fisher began to improve. Within two days, she was ambulatory and off nasal oxygen. Within four days, she was discharged from MCV Hospitals significantly improved. Recently, in appreciation many members of the Fisher family presented an expression of their appreciation and thanks by giving checks totaling $2,000 to the Orbahn Munro Professorship. Dr. Fowler is shown in the photos at left receiving the Fisher family gift from Mr. Bernard Fisher. Mr. Fisher is a long-time VCU Department of Internal Medicine faculty member assigned to the Pulmonary/Critical Care Division where he is Director of Technical Operations for basic research.

Contributed by Ian Nixon, M.D.

Promotion in the Department of Internal Medicine

Dear Colleagues:
The highest accolade that the Department of Internal Medicine can confer is promotion in rank from Assistant to Associate to Full Professor. It is not offered lightly, nor is it automatically conferred for time in rank or good citizenship alone. Instead, it is a measure of sustained academic excellence.

Our scientists are expected to show excellence both in acquiring funding for their research and in demonstrating scholarship. The clinicians are expected to be high-volume physicians with excellent patient outcomes, to have awards or testimony supporting their clinical acumen, and/or to have published case histories or case series. In these areas of the academic mission and in administration, a defining goal is innovation.

It is fair to say that each year the bar is raised and expectations for higher quality and innovation are increased. We are becoming more and more elite compared to ourselves historically and to our peers. As we stand in front of the classroom, or next to the bench in a laboratory, or by the bed of a patient, we can feel special pride in any promotion in our Department. The high standards were achieved, and we now join the ranks of the special academic physicians who sought unusually distinguished careers.

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

A Patient’s Gratitude (continued from previous page)