

▲ A Model Minority Faculty Fellowship Program: Enhancing Minority Faculty in Health Professions and Reducing Inequity in Health Services

Denise Muesch Helm, RDH

Maxine Janis, RDH

R. Cruz Begay, DrPH

John Sciacca, PhD

Northern Arizona University (NAU), College of Health and Human Services model Minority Faculty Fellowship Program (MFFP) supports a minority faculty member and strengthens the College without adding to the workload or placing additional strain on an already limited budget. In 2003, the College was awarded a MFFP through the U.S. Department of Health, Health Resources and Services Administration. The College received a second Fellowship in 2008, the only one funded in the country. This three-year Fellowship is aimed at providing minority individuals with the training and skills necessary to flourish in a tenure-track position. There is a shortage of minority faculty in the health professions. Northern Arizona University and the surrounding communities have diverse populations nonetheless, only a very small percentage of faculty at the University are from diverse backgrounds. Success of the NAU, MFFP is largely due to our ability to draw upon existing structures including the University mission and institutional commitment to serving Native Americans, as well as the promotion and tenure process, faculty support programs, and a long-term relationship with the John and Sophie Ottens Foundation. The progress of the current NAU fellowship can also be attributed to the first Fellow's engagement with her contemporary. *J Allied Health* 2010; 39:e111– e115.

NORTHERN ARIZONA University (NAU), College of Health and Human Services (CHHS), has a model for the Minority Faculty Fellowship Program (MFFP). The Health

Ms. Helm is Associate Dean, College of Health and Human Services, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ; **Ms. Janis** is Minority Faculty Fellow, Department of Dental Hygiene, College of Health and Human Services, Northern Arizona University; **Dr. Begay** is Assistant Professor, Department of Health Sciences, College of Health and Human Services, Northern Arizona University; and **Dr. Sciacca** is Dean, Division of Health Sciences, Cypress College, Cypress, CA, USA.

Financial support by the John and Sophie Ottens Foundation, and Grant No. 08-060 from the Health Resources and Services Administration's Bureau of Health Professions, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

PP964 – Received Jan 29, 2010; accepted Mar 13, 2010.

Address correspondence to Denise Muesch Helm, Northern Arizona University, College of Health and Human Services, Box 15015, Flagstaff, AZ 86011, USA. Tel 928-523-7425, fax 928-523-4315. Denise.Helm@nau.edu.

Journal of Allied Health (Online 1945-404X)

©2010 Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions, www.asahp.org

Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), "Minority Faculty Fellowship Program grants, increase the number of underrepresented minority individuals who are members of the faculty in a health profession school. The grants enable schools to provide a stipend and a training allowance for the faculty fellow."¹ The fellowship program, established in 1998, has had three funding cycles; NAU received awards in two of the three funding cycles.

The MFFP is important because many minority faculty members mentor diverse students, promote cultural understanding, and make positive contributions toward reducing health disparities. There are not very many simple measures that can be taken to reduce health disparities because these disparities are complex and have multiple causes, but the shortage of minority faculty and health service providers is effectively impacted by the MFFP. The Institute of Medicine concluded that, "minorities are less likely than whites to receive needed services, including clinically necessary procedures."² Minority faculty members have the potential to increase culturally appropriate delivery of services to minority populations as well as to increase utilization of preventative and primary care services which reduce the need for costly and clinically necessary interventions.

Although increasing the number of underrepresented minorities is important amid difficult economic times, budgetary and workload considerations are paramount. By drawing on financial support from a philanthropic foundation and incorporating a teaching and services assignment for the Fellow, the workload for other faculty members is reduced and the budget is enhanced. Our MFFP model draws upon existing structures including the University values, institutional commitment to serving American Indians, standing processes, faculty support programs and a long-term relationship with the John and Sophie Ottens Foundation. It also relies on the former Fellow's sense of responsibility to other American Indian faculty.

Grant Requirements

To be eligible to receive funds from HRSA for the MFFP, the institution is required to meet specific criteria and to recruit

and select a “Fellow” who is an underrepresented racial minority in the health professions. This individual is expected to meet the requirements for a teaching, administration, or research position. During the fellowship, he or she is expected to develop the skills necessary for a tenured faculty member and to become prepared for an academic career. The Fellow also provides health care or public health services to rural or medically underserved populations.¹ The Fellowship is available for schools of allopathic and osteopathic medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, optometry, allied health, public health, podiatry, pharmacy, nursing, and graduate programs in behavioral and mental health. In addition, the grant requires a dollar-for-dollar match for every dollar received in federal funds.

NAU Model Minority Faculty Fellowship

During a recent site visit, the HRSA team members closed by stating that NAU has a model MFFP. The model we developed for the Fellowship meets the goals set forth by HRSA and has a positive impact on the College budget and faculty workload. The NAU MFFP development plan is designed to build and enhance a minority faculty within the health professions and to reduce the inequity in health services while not significantly impacting stressed academic resources.

The Development Plan

The NAU MFFP development plan requires that the Fellow has 60% workload “protected” for training and learning during the first year. During the second year, 45% workload is allotted to scholarly activity. In the third and final year, the Fellow is expected to assume 70% (30% protected) faculty workload. This gradual decrease in “protected” time is designed to prepare the Fellow for the 100% workload that is expected of tenure-track faculty.

The plan has provision for faculty mentors, regular counseling meetings with an oversight committee, mentored training in classroom instruction, grant writing and administration, and community service in rural communities. Some academic coursework toward the completion of the fellow’s professional and academic goals are included in the fellowship program as well. In addition, it includes formal coursework and training in teaching methodology, pedagogy, and curriculum development. The plan also has collaborative classroom teaching with a senior faculty person who has over 30 years of teaching experience. The Fellow receives advising and student mentor training by shadowing an academic advisor.

The objectives for our MFFP are constructed to address Healthy People 2010 Goal 2: “To eliminate health disparities among segments of the population, including differences that occur by gender, race or ethnicity, education or income, disability, geographic location, or sexual orientation.”³ This methodology is based on specific, measurable objectives and learning activities that provide the Fellow with competencies in essential areas required for the successful progression to a

tenure-track faculty member. As such, the plan includes five areas in which objectives and learning activities are designed as follows: 1) instruction/teaching; 2) student advising and mentoring; 3) scholarly activity; 4) professional and university service; and 5) community service. These objectives are met by utilizing structures and programs that are already in place at the University.

A five-person oversight committee meets at least once per semester to review the Fellow’s progress. The committee assures that the Fellow is gaining the skills and competencies needed to secure a tenure-track position at NAU. Their goal is to corroborate that the Fellow is gaining meaningful experiences in teaching, community and professional service, and scholarship. The committee members, including the previous Fellow, are faculty in the CHHS. These faculty members also act as mentors and were selected because of their demonstrated strength in one of the five objective areas. The Fellow is assigned a mentor for teaching and academic advising as well as for grant writing and administration. The Fellow presents a strong community service portfolio, therefore, a mentor was not designated in this area. Instead, the Fellow collaborates with the former Fellow in learning activities that are designed to meet the community service objective.

Institutional Commitment to American Indians

The MFFP model at NAU is founded in the institution’s commitment to diversity and more specifically its engagement with American Indian tribes. Although the MFFP is intended for any minority group, our model focuses on American Indians due to the University’s geographic location. The mountain campus is located in northern Arizona’s Coconino County with a population that is more than 28% American Indians.⁴ In two of the bordering counties, Navajo and Apache, from which the University attracts students, American Indians are the majority population.

The University’s mission is to provide an outstanding undergraduate residential education strengthened by research, graduate and professional programs, and sophisticated methods of distance delivery. Diversity is valued and is central to achieving multiculturalism as a priority of educational and civic life. Consequently, NAU is one of the top universities in the nation for American Indian enrollment. Current American Indian undergraduate enrollment in the College of Health and Human Services is 8.4 %.⁵

To further the commitment and to strengthen the relationship with tribes, the University President appointed a special assistant on American Indian affairs. The special assistant is an NAU faculty member with a tribal affiliation. The Fellow was invited to serve as a member of the committee that selected the special assistant. Her role on the committee is one of the learning activities related to the university service objective in the development plan.

To further the University’s pledge to American Indians, the Provost agreed to offer the Fellow a tenure-track position in her home department upon the successful conclusion of

the MFFP. The agreement was an integral part of the grant application. Because of the institution's deep commitment to American Indians, many faculty and staff become a part of NAU. In fact, the current Fellow came to NAU due to the institution's engagement with indigenous populations. Many structures have been built and programs initiated due to the institution's pledge to American Indian education.

The College, which holds the same commitment as the institution and also has a long history of educating American Indian students, prepares students to assume professional responsibility as providers of health and human services. Professional education is offered in Dental Hygiene, Athletic Training, Communication Science Disorders, Health Sciences, Physical Therapy and Nursing. Our goal is to be the premier institution for educating American Indian health professionals. The Department of Dental Hygiene, in which the Fellow teaches, demonstrates a strong commitment to the success of minority faculty and students. Accordingly, the University, College and the Dental Hygiene Department has built a structure and constructed avenues to achieve this goal.

Institutional Structures

The institution has several structures in place, some specific to American Indians and some open to all faculty, of which the Fellowship makes use. The Commission for Native Americans, an existing structure, considers, evaluates and analyzes all matters pertaining to American Indians at NAU. The Commission establishes goals and priorities, engages American Indian faculty/staff/students, and most of all, advises the President on these matters. Recognizing the health disparities that exist on many reservations in the surrounding region, the Commission for Native Americans is very much in support of increasing minority faculty in the health professions' school, thereby reducing the barriers in the delivery of culturally competent health care within rural areas. To meet the university service objective, the Fellow is involved with the Commission. She attends the regular meeting and acts as a consultant.

Additional existing University structures that the Fellowship uses are the Information Systems Technology Training online tutorials and workshops. These tutorials teach faculty how to use the registration system to support student academic advisement. To support the academic advisement objective, the Fellow attends the online tutorials prior to the one-on-one mentoring and observation of advising.

Another structure is the Office of Grant and Contract Services (OCGS) that conducts workshops on grant writing and preparing manuscripts for publication. In preparation for authoring grant proposal, the OCGS assist faculty in identifying eligibility requirements, guidelines for submission, and the submission process. The Fellow attends workshops on grant writing and submission through this office to meet the scholarly activity objective. The Fellow utilizes the online notification system to prepare and submit letters of intent and grant proposals.

NAU has established programs, although not specific to American Indians, that our model MFFP utilizes. To obtain formal training in classroom instruction and to complete coursework toward a doctoral degree, the Fellow applied to a Doctorate in Education, available through the NAU College of Education. This program allows the Fellow to take courses while continuing with the other requirements of the Fellowship. It also requires coursework in curriculum development, teaching methodology and pedagogy, as outlined in the Fellowship.

The Fellowship also uses the Faculty Development Program at NAU. It is a multifaceted resource and networking center that assists faculty in achieving their full potential as teachers, scholars, and productive members of the University and external communities. The program promotes innovation, collaboration, collegiality, and love of learning. The Faculty Development Program was created specifically to assist faculty at all points in their career. The Fellow attends workshops and utilizes resources in teaching pedagogy, scholarship, and professional service through the Faculty Development Program as one of the learning activities to meet the teaching and instruction objective.

The College of Health and Human Services also has existing programs to promote the success of American Indian students and faculty. Once such program is a grant-funded academic success program designed to attract and retain American Indian students and create a culturally competent environment within the College. The success program aims to enhance American Indian students' personal resilience by fostering relationships. Family, cultural, community, and college are interrelated and influence the academic achievements of American Indian students, thus, focus is place on relationships in academic success program.^{6,7} Program activities support cultural identity as a source of strength and seek to create a positive learning environment for all students. Cultural identity and a positive environment are created through faculty and peer mentoring, emergency financial support for American Indian students, and monthly gatherings including traditional blessing ceremonies and meals. To meet the service objective, the Fellow attends the monthly gatherings and acts as a faculty mentor to American Indian students. She also assists with the development of the program's guidelines and criteria for emergency funds.

An existing structure in the College that the Fellowships accesses is the American Indian Faculty Academy. Academy members offer cultural expertise to the Executive Dean and faculty, guide the academic success program and mentor indigenous students in the College. Members, appointed by the Executive Dean, meet once a month, as a group, attend the monthly gatherings and meet as often as once a week with the American Indian students who they are mentoring. The Fellow is a founding member of the American Indian Faculty Academy, which also meets the objective for service.

Likewise, the Fellowship utilizes a current grant-funded community service project, Visionary Interprofessional Health Sciences Training in Arizona, to meet the community service as well as the teaching and instruction objective. The Fellow collaborates with the former Fellow to develop training materials to instruct students in culturally competent health care and act as a faculty trainer for one interprofessional student team in the field.

Individual units in the CHHS also have programs and projects specifically for American Indian students and experiences that expose all students to indigenous cultures that the Fellowship uses. For example, the Dental Hygiene Department has implemented grant-funded, clinical-enrichment experiences. Students travel to nearby reservations to provide education and preventive oral health care at Indian Health Services and Tribal facilities. One of these experiences includes the students living on the reservation for one week for a cultural immersion while providing dental hygiene services. The Fellow meets the college and community service objective by assisting with the project. Because she is the former director of this clinical enrichment project, she consults with the current instructor regarding meaningful cultural activities. She also facilitates communication between the health center and the department.

The application for entrance to the Dental Hygiene program is another structure on which the Fellowships draws to meet its objectives. The criteria of entrance was revised to reduce the emphasis placed on overall grades and increase the weight on personal characteristics in an attempt to increase the number of diverse students.⁸ Six essay questions, designed to measure the personal characteristics that have been identified as predictors of success for medical students, were added to the written application.⁹ The Fellow meets part of the service objective by scoring the Dental Hygiene candidates' applications for entrance.

Institutional Processes

Our model MFFP applies the existing promotion, tenure, and annual review process to outline the expectations and evaluate the Fellow's success. Like most universities, NAU already has a thorough plan for evaluating faculty performance. To prepare the Fellow for a tenure-track faculty position she participates in the annual review process. In the spring of each semester, the Fellow drafts a statement of expectation that outlines her goals in the areas of scholarship, service, and student-related activities including teaching, advising, and mentoring for the upcoming academic year. The Fellow compiles a dossier containing a self-evaluation and evidence that the goals outlined in the statement of expectations were achieved. In the fall of the following year, an annual review committee, made up of the Fellow's peers, uses established criteria to evaluate her achievements. This committee reviews the accomplishments of all benefit-eligible faculty in their respective departments. The goals and evaluation process are used to evaluate the overall success of the MFFP. This review

process does not add appreciably to the workload of the committee because they are reviewing other faculty members' accomplishments at the same time.

John and Sophie Ottens Foundation

The University and the College have a long-term relationship with the John and Sophie Ottens Foundation, which has made our MFFP possible. The Foundation is devoted to recruiting Native Americans into health professions. The American Indian programs in the College that were mentioned above are funded through grants from the Ottens Foundation. More importantly, the John and Sophie Ottens Foundation provide a large portion of the required matching funds for the MFFP.

Contributions of the Previous Minority Faculty Fellow

The faculty member who was the 2003-2005 Fellow is compelled to mentor the current Fellow. Similarly, the current Fellow is eager to support a future Fellow if the opportunity arises. The former Fellow has expertise in grant writing and administration and is working closely with the current Fellow on developing a grant portfolio. In order to meet the objective for scholarship, the current Fellow submitted and was awarded grant funding during the second year of the MFFP.

Conclusion

The Model Minority Faculty Fellowship at Northern Arizona University, College of Health and Human Services, can be modified and reproduced at other Colleges of Allied Health across the country. This model is a reflection of the University and College mission, values and dedication to American Indian education. Success of our model is dependant on existing structures and a commitment to the underrepresented minorities as well as a strong relationship with a philanthropic foundation, such as the John and Sophie Ottens Foundation. Another key element in our MFFP is the support from the former Fellow.

We would like to posthumously acknowledge the contributions of Mr. Stuart Weiss; without his guidance, the Minority Faculty Fellowship at NAU would not be possible. Thank you to the Program Administrators at HRSA: Dr. Madeleine Hess, Ms. Violet Woo and Sara Rue for your invaluable assistance. Finally, thank you to the John and Sophie Ottens Foundation for the financial support and to Northern Arizona University's Provost Liz Grobsmith for your commitment to American Indian education.

REFERENCES

1. U.S. Department of Health, Health Resources and Services Administration: Minority Faculty Fellowship Program: Program Guidance. 2007. Available from: <https://grants.hrsa.gov/webexternal/FundingOppDetails.asp?FundingCycleId=74576F12-84ED-4702-A2D6-9C3C43EAC7B1&ViewMode=EU&GoBack=&PrintMode=&OnlineAvailabilityFlag=True&pageNumber=1>. Accessed Jan 2008.
2. Smedley BD, Stith AY, Nelson AR. Unequal treatment: Confronting racial and ethnic disparities in health care. Institute of Medicine (IMO).

2002. Available from: <http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?isbn=030908265X>. Accessed Jan 2009.
3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Healthy People 2010. vol 2/21 oral health. 2002. Available from: <http://www.health.gov/healthypeople/>. Accessed Jan 2009.
 4. U.S. Census Bureau: Fast facts for Congress, Census 2000 demographic profile highlights Coconino County, Arizona fact sheet. 2007. Available from: <http://fastfacts.census.gov/home/cws/main.html>. Accessed Dec 2009.
 5. Northern Arizona University: Planning and institutional effectiveness, institutional data and analysis. 2009. Available from: <http://www4.nau.edu/pair/Institution.asp>. Accessed Dec 2009.
 6. HeavyRunner I, DeCelles R. Family education model: meeting the student retention challenge. *J Am Indian Educ.* 2002; 41:29.
 7. HeavyRunner I, Morris JS. Traditional native culture and resilience. *Research Practice.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI), College of Education and Human Development. 1997; 5:1. Available from: <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/CAREI/Reports/Rpractice/Spring97/traditional.html>. Accessed Dec 2009.
 8. Helm DM, Grabarek ES, Reveal M. Increasing dental hygiene student diversity: life-performance questions as alternative admissions criteria. *J Allied Health* 2003; 32:279-284.
 9. Sedlacek WE, Prieto DO. Predicting minority students' success in medical school. *Academic Medicine.* 1990; 65:161-66.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.