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In this first edition, we introduce the different facets of the activities within the BRET Office. I view the office as a service organization to support faculty, students and postdocs. Our responsibilities in this regard extend from supporting training grant applications, recruiting students and then supporting the various graduate educational programs. In addition we manage the postdoc office, address outcomes and career development issues broadly, as well as support the poster printing service. Finally we provide a home for all of the information technology activities for all aspects of graduate and medical student education within the Office of the Dean of the Medical School.

We welcome Dr. Susan Wente to the overall administration of research and education in her role as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Senior Associate Dean for Biomedical Sciences. In a later newsletter we will highlight Dr. Wente’s long-term goals and plans.

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Message from Roger Chalkley

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Graduate Student Education Programs

The BRET Office administers and provides support for several different education programs. A recruiting mechanism for our graduate programs, the Vanderbilt Summer Science Academy (VSSA) offers research opportunities to undergraduates who want to pursue a career in the biomedical sciences. In the summer of 2009, 57 undergraduates conducted either basic or clinical research and presented their results at a research symposium at the end of the summer.

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Graduate Student Education Programs (continued from page 1)

We aggressively recruit top national candidates for PhD degree-granting programs at Vanderbilt. In 2009, we processed over 1340 applications and coordinated 265 interview visits. Our recruiting efforts are aimed at students attending national and regional scientific conferences, as well as visits directly to individual colleges and universities. We strive to create broad diversity in all our programs. In working with the faculty admissions committees, we help select and admit top candidates to the following programs:

- CPB (Chemical and Physical Biology)
- IGP (Interdisciplinary Graduate Program)
- IMSD (Initiative for Maximizing Student Diversity)
- MSTP (Medical Scientist Training Program)

Once graduate students have arrived in Nashville, we coordinate the new student orientation along with all required training modules (RCR, biosafety, radiation safety, animal care, etc…) for beginning graduate students. In addition, we help organize the first-year Bioregulation course, laboratory rotations, and IMPACT & FOCUS group meetings.

In addition to the traditional PhD-degree granting programs, we coordinate the MLI (Master of Laboratory Investigation) program, designed for full-time VUMC employees. MLI students enroll in graduate-level coursework and complete independent research projects.

BRET Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

The BRET Office of Postdoctoral Affairs is here to assist postdoctoral fellows during their training at Vanderbilt. Our office handles all postdoctoral appointments / reappointments and manages the health insurance for postdoctoral fellows paid by training grants or fellowships. We sponsor several events for postdoctoral fellows, such as introduction to Responsible Conduct in Research, English classes, an annual postdoc family picnic. In 2008, The Scientist Magazine ranked Vanderbilt in the top 35 best places for postdocs to work.

All new postdoctoral fellows are strongly encouraged to attend a personalized orientation within the first two weeks of arriving at Vanderbilt. To arrange an orientation, contact Claudia by phone at 2-8598 or by email at: Claudia.Cottingham@Vanderbilt.edu. To download a handbook for current VUMC Postdoctoral Fellows, visit our website: http://bret.mc.vanderbilt.edu/postdoc/.
Office of Career Development and Outcomes Analysis

The BRET Office of Career Development and Outcomes Analysis offers several career development services for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the biomedical sciences. Recent workshops sponsored by our office include: “Preparing Research Team Leaders” and “Funding Your Training: an Introduction to Individual NRSAs”. A comprehensive list of all previous and upcoming workshops is available at: http://bret.mc.vanderbilt.edu/career_development/html/workshops.htm.

Our weekly E-newsletter includes upcoming events as well as advertisements for postdoc positions and job listings. An archive of previous E-newsletters is available: http://bret.mc.vanderbilt.edu/career_development/html/e_newsletters.html. To schedule a confidential career advising appointment, contact Kim Petrie at 322-6885 or by email: Kim.Petrie@Vanderbilt.edu. Please visit our website for more details: http://bret.mc.vanderbilt.edu/career_development/.

Our office also provides program evaluation and outcomes analysis services for training programs and departments in the biomedical sciences. We use a wide variety of tools from opinion surveys to outcomes metrics to provide feedback to program directors and administrators. Since 2007, our Ph.D. student exit survey has been completed by over 95% of all graduating students. To schedule a consultation or appointment, email Abigail.Brown@Vanderbilt.edu.

BRET Psychological Services

The BRET Psychological Service is unique in providing on-site professional psychological services specifically for postdoctoral research fellows and graduate students within their work and study environment. Darrell Smith, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist who has experience in university settings. To date, 98.5% of previous student and postdoc clients said they would recommend the BRET Psychological Services to their peers.

Dr. Smith is qualified to assist postdoctoral research fellows and graduate students with their personal, family, emotional, academic, behavioral, and adjustment needs. Services provided are strictly confidential. To directly contact Darrell Smith, call 3-0714 (office) or 491-0636 (cell), or email Darrell.Smith@Vanderbilt.edu. Please visit our website for more information: http://bret.mc.vanderbilt.edu/bret/php_files/psychological.php.
Training Grant Administration & Support

The BRET Office provides support for both training grant renewals and resubmissions. We maintain comprehensive databases that contain faculty biosketches and training history, recruiting information, minority outreach and descriptions of coursework offered at Vanderbilt. Faculty can create customized NIH and NSF formatted biosketches, maintain their current and previous trainee table, and use any of our boilerplate text in their applications. Finally, we can provide data tables for training grant applications (both new and renewal) as well as training grant progress reports. We currently administrate or provide support for 37 training grants that support 140 students and 106 postdocs, totaling $11.8 million. In 2008, Vanderbilt was nationally ranked 8th in NIH training grant support. To contact us for a consultation, email Ellen.Carter@Vanderbilt.edu or Katie.Mcmillen-Dickie@Vanderbilt.Edu.

Educational Technology

The Educational Technology group is charged with providing information technology to enhance the education and research operations for all medical and graduate educational programs within the School of Medicine. The group’s strategy is to transform and optimize the School’s processes by leveraging available information technology resources. At its core, the group designs and develops in-house software and databases, and also actively maintains the information systems that support the key operations of the School of Medicine. Available systems that are actively used by faculty, staff, postdocs, graduate students and medical students include the training grant application, the online grading system, the student database, the postdoctoral fellow database, the faculty database, the course management system, the Dean’s Letter system, etc.

Additionally, the group also develops and maintains at least three campus-wide application systems: the Graduate Online Application System, the Medical School Application System and the Faculty Information System. These customizable systems offer considerable cost savings over commercially available services.

Our popular poster printing service housed in 307 Light Hall is available to faculty, postdocs, and students who need to prepare for a conference, seminar, or workshop. To contact us about the poster printing service, call 2-3835 or email: Karen.Pride@Vanderbilt.edu. More information is available on our website: http://bret.mc.vanderbilt.edu/bret/php_files/poster2.php.
340 Light Hall
Phone: 615-343-4611
Fax: 615-343-0749

BRET Website:
http://bret.mc.vanderbilt.edu/bret/

Announcements: Recent Changes to IGP & CPB

IMPACT: A novel program for all IGP and CPB students, IMPACT (Intensive Mentoring Program for Advancement and Career Training) was introduced in 2006. At the beginning of the academic year, students are randomly divided into groups of ten that meet weekly with the same faculty mentor throughout the year. IMPACT sessions may address strategies for effective scientific communication, choosing a rotation mentor, and how to balance coursework and lab research. Student ratings of IMPACT have become increasingly more positive each year, and 95% of students in Spring, 2009 said that IMPACT helped them to adjust to graduate school.

FOCUS: FOCUS (Facilitating Open Communication to Understand Science) is a new course (two credit hours) in Fall 2009. A formal course that is part of Bioregulation, FOCUS replaces the previous “Flextime” Bioregulation paper discussions. In FOCUS, first-year graduate students meet in groups of ten with the same faculty mentor throughout the fall and spring semesters for an in-depth discussion of the scientific literature. Scientific papers are chosen based on their relevance to the corresponding topics covered in the Bioregulation course. Student attendance at FOCUS group meetings is mandatory, and the final grade for the course is based on a combination of (1) weekly submission of a summary narrative of the paper selected for class discussion and (2) participation in class discussion.

Upcoming Events

- October 30, 2009: MSTP Interview Day
- November 2, 2009: Second laboratory rotation begins for IGP & CPB students
- November 18, 2009: Funding Your Training: An Introduction to Individual NRSAs. Advance registration is requested at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=JZaCCwoa84YWeZUg_2fvpZxg_3d_3
- January 6, 2010: Third laboratory rotation begins for IGP & CPB students
- January 25, 2010: Transition to electronic submission NIH applications for institutional training grants & institutional career development programs
- SAVE THE DATE! March 7-10, 2010: School of Medicine Postdoctoral Fellow Recruiting days