Expansion of WIMS Membership Beyond the Medical School Faculty Enhances Diversity, Professional Development Opportunities and Career Satisfaction


UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE (SOM)*, SCHOOL OF NURSING (SON)** & SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS (SHP)***

BACKGROUND
The KU Women in Medicine and Science (WIMS) program was organized within the School of Medicine in 1999 as WIM. The program focused only on women physicians with the goal of providing the personal and professional tools required to succeed and develop as leaders and managers in the complex world of the academic health sciences center. Subsequently, the program expanded to include the basic science women faculty and the name of the organization changed to WIMS.

When the organization was reinvigorated in 2010, leadership reached out to all women on the KUMC campus, striving to be inclusive and supportive and provide opportunities for career growth. Women faculty in the Schools of Nursing and Health Professions were notified of opportunities to run for office, join educational seminars, participate in social events, and collaborate on research and grant development. The outcomes of this expansion were the development of new, collaborative and supportive relationships among women on the KUMC campus. These relationships build on shared gender experiences, and expand professional and personal perspectives, while also providing role models for students and residents across the sciences and health care professions.

The Mission of the KU Women in Medicine & Science:
The mission of WIMS is to support women faculty in academic medicine and science, nursing and health professions in establishing and advancing their careers. Multiple strategies are used to achieve this mission, including:

• Large and small group training combines professionals and trainees from all three schools.
• Establishing environments that foster exchange of ideas.
• Cross-discipline and inter-school mentorship.
• Collaboration and networking across all 3 schools.

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The Executive Council is composed of the officers and representatives of the WIMS Faculty Organization. To expand our mission the By-Laws were revised to include faculty representatives and trainees from the School of Medicine, School of Nursing and School of Health Professions as voting members on the Executive Council. Each member brings her unique values and perspectives to the discussion.

Our WIMS Officers (President, President-Elect, Secretary, Secretary-Elect) and representatives change on July 1st, following an annual election. Committee chairs are appointed by the WIMS President under whom they serve. All others are volunteer positions.

2013-14 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL POSITIONS

Officers:

• President
• President-Elect
• Immediate Past President
• Secretary
• Secretary-Elect

Trainee Representatives:

• Graduate Student Representative
• MDS/PhD Representative
• Pre-doctoral Representative
• Resident Representative

Ex officio voting members:

• Office of Academic Affairs Representative (1)
• Office of Academic Affairs (Support Staff) Representative (1)
• Office of Academic Affairs (WIMS Treasurer) Representative (1)
• Office of Professional Development & Faculty Affairs Representatives (1)
• Office of Graduate Medical Education Representative (1)
• Office of Student Engagement Representative (1)
• KUMC Office of Endowment Representative (1)

Volunteer Support Personnel:

• Administrative Support for Moms in Medicine & Science (MIMS)
• Administrative Chair for Annual Conference Donation Drive
• Administrative Support for various other committees, circles and projects

WIMS WEBSITE: http://www.kumc.edu/wims.html


VALUE

Opportunities for collaborative research between basic scientists and physician, nursing, and health profession faculty members have expanded through participation in the shared WIMS programs. Program content is intentionally flexible, geared to meet the changing needs of women in the 3 schools and includes information on women’s health as well as career and personal issues. Life management and leadership challenges are a major focus.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Our May, 2013, campus leadership panel discussion on the book Lean In: Women Work, and the Will to Lead, by Sheryl Sandberg, was open to all who were interested on campus. The event generated expanded groups such as Mums in Medicine (MIMS) and other new CIRCLES to address specific needs. An organization of this size needs a strong infrastructure and in times of limited funds, having sufficient financial support and people power is challenging.

One unexpected benefit from the open-campus panel discussion brought forth requests for involvement from non-faculty women. Because they identify with the gender issues and see the value of the organization, several women staff members have attended our leadership programs, developed activities aimed at their own career trajectories, and volunteered their time for the organization. Their support further expands the diversity of WIMS membership and has allowed us to provide administrative support to meet the needs of our growing membership. An example is one woman with silent arthritis who was interested to work on her own time to recruit a team of trainees to help her organize and host our first Annual Silent Auction. The successful auction raised money to support the Annual Professional Development Conference.

INTER-PROFESSIONAL/TRANS-DISCIPLINARY EFFORT

This inter-professional/trans-disciplinary effort has brought together women with different roles and responsibilities to develop new work and social relationships and work together toward mutual goals. Collaboration between the three schools has led to a greater feeling of inclusivity in our organization and has broken down barriers to communication and networking. All women faculty members are treated as equals within WIMS. The first three-school poster session was held this year allowing participants to share the work they already presented at national conferences, but never disseminated to each other on our campus.

Training in leadership skills across all disciplines is provided. Many of the committee members and officers have moved into leadership roles in the institution. Working together on committees allows junior women faculty to learn directly from senior faculty and vice versa; serves as a living example for our trainees; empowers trainees and junior faculty, and inspires senior faculty. Expanding junior faculty to WIMS programming early in their careers helps trainees and junior faculty think critically about both academic and social issues related to women, paves a path for establishing mentoring relationships, and creates career success and satisfaction and retention of our women faculty members.

OUR COMMUNITY TODAY

WIMS is fortunate to have strong support from the executive leaders on the KUMC campus. Our success and effectiveness are significantly greater as the result of so many who believe in our mission.

SUPPORT

WIMS Panel Discussion on “Lean In: A KUMC Leadership of Women, Work and the Will to Lead”

Members of the May 7, 2013 WIMS Panel Discussion on “Lean In: A KUMC Leadership of Women, Work and the Will to Lead”

BENEFITS

The benefits of the reorganized WIMS Program are:

• Development of a community of like-minded women representing a diversity of career paths and experiences in academic medicine and science, nursing and health professions.
• Stimulation of interdisciplinary collaboration and social networking which is especially important for those in departments with few female faculty members.
• Role modeling for our trainees.

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