



# **BIRCWH: Innovations, Success in Mentoring Women's Health Researchers**

National Leadership Workshop on  
Mentoring Women in Biomedical Careers

Models of Successful Mentoring Panel

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# National BIRCWH Program

- Effective mentoring
- Interdisciplinary research, training during and after BIRCWH funding
- Outcome: Independent scientific careers
- Goal: Scientific advances in women's health and sex/gender research
- 50 BIRCWH awards since 2000
- 26 active centers across the US

# National BIRCWH Program

- 4+ scholars per institution
- \$75,000 each for mandated 75% effort over 2-3 yrs
- Half MD, half PhD scholars
- Intensive mentored, interdisciplinary experience
- Didactic curriculum with leadership, advocacy experiences
- Partnerships encouraged





# UC Davis BIRCWH Program

- Awarded 2006 (Dean, EAD as PIs)
- Focus on neurosciences, nutrition, cardiovascular, lifespan biology
- Shared MD-PhD leadership (Co-PIs and Co-PDs)
- Internal recruitment, selection committees
- Internal, external advisory boards



# UC Davis BIRCWH Program

- Six scholars
- Core curriculum
- Special experiences – seminars, etc.
- Joint initiatives with K-30, Howard Hughes, stem cell training grants
- Close collaboration with CTSC
- Annual retreat for Northern Calif. programs
- Coordination with campus Women in Medicine and Life Sciences Series

# BIRCWH Keys to Success

- Good mentor-scholar matches
- Tailored didactic experiences
- Protected time
- Interdisciplinary perspectives
- Leveraging institutional resources
- Focus on evaluation
- National network of BIRCWH programs
- Impact on institutional culture



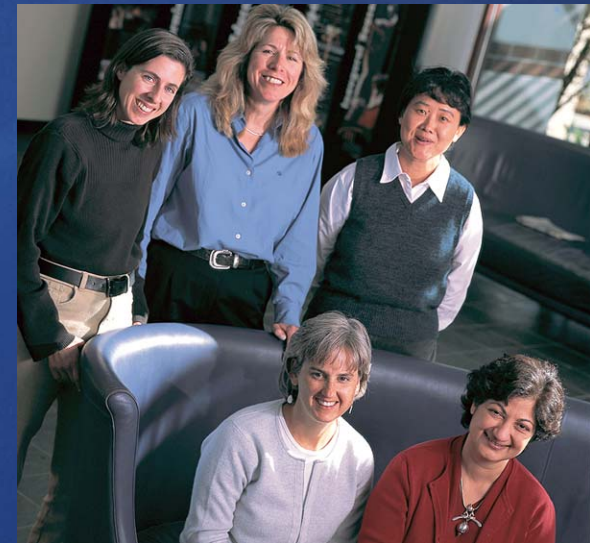
# Good Mentor-Scholar Matches

- NIH/ORWH require matching scholars with at least two mentors
- Best practices
  - 'Buy-in' from institutional leaders
  - Formal approaches to approving, identifying mentor-mentee matches
  - Written mentor-mentee contracts
  - Scholar training on mentors' expectations
  - Mentor development opportunities



# Good Mentor-Scholar Matches con't

- More BIRCWH best practices
  - Informal feedback from mentors, program directors
  - Scheduled formal written feedback (e.g. quarterly)
  - National venues to present, network
  - Experienced scholars become 'junior mentors' to new scholars
  - Create 'culture of mentoring'





# UC Davis' Culture of Mentoring

- Annual meeting of junior faculty, chairs, faculty development officers
- School-wide faculty mentoring program
  - Faculty Development helps match assistant professors with mentors
  - Department-specific mentoring programs (Acad. Psych. 31:5, 2007)
  - Annual 'Excellence in Mentoring' awards
  - Junior, mid and senior development programs

# Tailored Didactic Curriculum

- NIH/ORWH recognize need for complementary didactic experiences
- Best practices
  - ORWH organized Legislative Day to expose scholars to DC politics
  - Other advocacy experiences
  - Leadership training programs
  - Courses in grant writing, manuscript preparation, public speaking, etc.

# Protected Time

- NIH/ORWH mandate at least 75% time on BIRCWH activities
- Best practices
  - Written agreements; program directors' formal assessment of scholar's time; feedback to chairs, mentors
  - Defined benchmarks for scholar achievements





# Interdisciplinary Perspectives

- NIH/ORWH focus on interdisciplinary research
- Best practices
  - Mentors from 2 or more fields
  - Non-traditional mentors, e.g., sociology, business
  - Lectures, seminars, social events to meet mentors, scholars from other disciplines



# Leveraging Institutional Resources

- NIH/ORWH promote interactions with other faculty development programs
- Best practices
  - Partnering with other institutional programs, e.g., CTSA, K-12, K-30, MD-PhD, Howard Hughes, stem cell training
  - Facilitating scholar interactions with institutional resources, e.g., CTSA, biostatisticians, cores
  - Joint leadership training with business schools (Entrepreneurship Institute)

# Focus on Evaluation

- NIH/ORWH want evaluation, tracking; provide Web site for data input
- Best practices
  - Experts in program evaluation (backgrounds in outcomes evaluation, educational research, etc.)
  - Scholar vs. program evaluation
  - Interdisciplinary internal advisory groups
  - External advisory board





# National / Regional Networks

- NIH/ORWH support sharing of information
- Best practices
  - ORWH's annual meeting of all programs includes scholars, program directors
    - PIs share lessons learned; scholars present posters to be published in *Journal of Women's Health*
  - Regional BIRCWH meetings
  - Veteran BIRCWH PIs on external boards for new programs



# Impact on Institutional Culture

- BIRCWH raises profile of women's health and sex/gender research
- Best practices
  - Communication of successes in multiple venues at BIRCWH institutions
  - Training a cadre of women's health/sex/gender researchers
  - National meetings like today!



# Lessons Learned

- Communication with institutional leaders key to scholar recruitment, program awareness



- Scholar responsibilities explicitly defined for all; documented on regular basis
- Institutional research infrastructure key to BIRCWH program success
- Leverage institutional resources



# Lessons Learned

- Networking with other institutional training programs effective
- Regional, national networking among programs
- Formal evaluation programs essential; input from evaluation experts recommended
- Personal attention and interactions with NIH/ORWH leadership has big impact



# In Her Own Words





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# Closing Thought

*“Alone we can do so little...  
Together we can do so much.”*

— Helen Keller (1880-1968)



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# Helpful Web Sites

- National BIRCWH:

[http://orwh.od.nih.gov/interdisciplinary/  
bircwhmenu.html](http://orwh.od.nih.gov/interdisciplinary/bircwhmenu.html)

- UC Davis BIRCWH:

[www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/bircwh](http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/bircwh)