

Wright State University School of Medicine A Proposal for a Mini-Medical School WORKING DRAFT

A profound crisis is facing this nation's biomedical research community. The public is experiencing a declining confidence in, and understanding of, science. . . . One of the reasons behind this decline in public confidence and understanding is that members of the scientific community have not been effective at communicating the significance, complexity, excitement, and hope embodied in their research to the members of the public who pay for it. Ironically, at the same time, I believe the public still has a genuine interest in science, particularly biomedicine. . . .

The philosophy behind Mini-Med School is to encourage this interested, yet uninformed, public and the skeptical, perhaps out-of-touch, scientists to meet together in a fairly intimate setting to help break down barriers. The public is able to participate in an engaging, informative, and fun program that not only gives them specific information on medical topics, but gives them a chance to learn about what the scientists do from the scientists themselves. The scientists learn ways of reaching out to the public and learn the importance and value in doing so."

**Bruce A. Fuchs, Ph.D.,
Director, NIH Office of Science Education**

Background:

Dr. J. John Cohen, M.D., Ph.D., professor of immunology at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, and staff in the Colorado University School of Medicine Office of Public Relations are credited with creating the first mini-medical school in 1988. The UCHSC Mini-Med School has served as a model for the creation of similar programs in academic medical centers across the country. More than 20 percent of the accredited medical schools in the United States have offered mini-medical schools.

Bruce A. Fuchs, Ph.D., director of the Office of Science Education at the National Institutes of Health, was a pioneer in the development of the concept. He first organized a mini-medical school when he was a professor of immunology and pharmacology at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, and then went on to head up the NIH Office of Science Education. In 1994, under Dr. Fuch's direction, the NIH science education office and the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) jointly sponsored an annual "Mini-Medical School on Capital Hill" for congressional staffers and their families.

The majority of mini-med schools take the form of a six- to ten-week series of evening lectures offered to the general public at little or no charge. Emphasis is placed on the biomedical sciences, although many such programs — especially at medical schools affiliated with university hospitals — also include speakers on clinical topics. Most programs allow enrollments of 100 participants or more. The majority report that their programs are extremely popular, consistently drawing more participants than can be accommodated.

Purpose:

To raise awareness about and understanding of the research mission of the School of Medicine by responding to the general public's appetite for information about current developments in medicine and biomedical research.

Goals:

1. To give a lay audience a better understanding of the following:

- **The basic terms and concepts used in the biomedical sciences.** Those who are not minimally competent with the vocabulary and philosophical constructs of modern biomedicine participate less effectively in the health care system as consumers or citizens.
- **The processes involved in science.** To accurately distinguish between science and pseudo-science, individuals need to understand how science is done, or what characterizes the scientific method.
- **The importance of biomedical research to modern society.** When the public understands the accomplishments of and the high level of effort necessary for biomedical research, broad public support will be fostered.

2. To open up dialogue between research scientists and the general public so as to build strong community support for the School of Medicine and its research mission. Strengthening community support for the School of Medicine's research mission would enable faculty to share their expertise with an interested public and help lay a foundation for seeking individual donor support for the future.

3. To raise public awareness about the School of Medicine and position the school as a unique and important partner with the community. Although many in the community are familiar with the education and service missions of the school, our unique research mission is less well known or understood.

Possible Promotional Messages:

Now's your chance to walk in the shoes of a medical student—if only for an afternoon. At Wright State University's first Mini-Medical School, you'll have an opportunity to hear about biomedical science from the scientists themselves.

As part of the School of Medicine's 25th Anniversary celebration, we're inviting you into our state-of-the-art classrooms in the Frederick A. White Health Center on Saturday, May 15, from 1 to 4 p.m.

Our medical school faculty—experienced researchers and teachers—will talk about their specialties, topics typically studied by first- and second-year medical students, such as anatomy, biochemistry, genetics, neuroscience, immunology, and pathology. They'll throw some hard-core science at you, but they'll make it understandable. (Don't worry, there won't be a test!)

Other activities are geared for the whole family. Medical students will offer hands-on health education programs for school-age children and teens, emergency medical workers will demonstrate how they save lives, interactive games will help you understand how your brain functions, and you'll see the learning tools medical students use in the classroom.

When all is said and done, you'll better understand the basic concepts and terms of medical research and how the process of science becomes medical practice. And, most of all, you'll have fun.

Logistics:

Participants will be asked to register in advance in order to ensure admission to the event. This will help us estimate the size of the crowd.

Time and Place:

Saturday, May 15, 1 to 4 p.m., Frederick A White Health Center classrooms, labs and lobby.

Presentations:

Each faculty presentation will be 20-25 minutes followed by questions and answers. Talks will be scheduled at 45-minute intervals in the auditorium (capacity 100).

Other Exhibits, Demonstrations and Activities:

Between attending the four presentations, or as an alternative to one or more, participants could explore the following:

1. The Interdisciplinary Teaching Lab: "High Tech Teaching Tools Used in Medical School." Groups of 30-50 will be able to participate in 20- to 25-minute computer demonstrations of "Beyond Vesalius" and other multimedia teaching tools in the IDTL. Presentations could be made by faculty or students and be offered at 1:30, 2:30 and 3:30 p.m. (Takes place in IDTL computer lab.)

2. Student to Student: Students from this organization would make two to four consecutive short presentations to K-12 youth, such as "How 2 B an M.D.," "Kids-n-Docs," "The Human Body" etc. (Depending on the nature of the presentation and the size of the crowd, some or all of these could take place in the lobby so as to allow adults to observe. Smaller classrooms also are available.)

3. Emergency Care/CPR: Could include display and description of equipment and dummies used in teaching Basic and Advanced Life Support as well as a tour of a well equipped ambulance. (Weather permitting, the ambulance could be set up in the area outside under the canopy, near the front doors. Dummies and equipment like the Automated Early Defibrillator would need to be on display in the area where CPR training takes place.)

4. Brain Awareness: Demonstrations and interactive displays portraying current brain research that were prepared for Brain Awareness Week. (In or near front lobby.)

5. Heart Awareness: Poster displays of SOM research funded by the American Heart Association. (Front lobby.)

6. Information for Prospective Medical Students: Table with materials about how to pursue a medical career, staffed by Admissions staff and Horizons In Medicine (or STREAMS) alumni. Literature about the School of Medicine could include recent copies of *Vital Signs*, admissions catalogs, and Horizons promotional brochures. (Front lobby.)

Medical Schools that Have Offered Mini-Med Schools:

University of Alabama at Birmingham — Birmingham, Alabama

Albany Medical College — Albany, New York

University of Arizona Health Sciences Center — Tucson, Arizona

University of Arkansas College of Medicine — Little Rock, Arkansas

University of Chicago - Pritzker School of Medicine — Chicago, Illinois

Colorado University School of Medicine — Denver, Colorado

University of Connecticut Health Center — Farmington, Connecticut
Eastern Carolina School of Medicine — Greenville, North Carolina
Emory University School of Medicine — Atlanta, Georgia
University of Florida Health Sciences Center — Gainesville, Florida
University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria — Peoria, Illinois
Indiana University School of Medicine — Indianapolis, Indiana
University of Kentucky College of Medicine — Lexington, Kentucky
Loyola University Medical Center — Chicago, Illinois
University of Miami School of Medicine — Miami, Florida
University of Nebraska at Omaha Medical Center — Omaha, Nebraska
University of Nevada School of Medicine — Reno, Nevada
State University of New York at Buffalo — Buffalo, New York
University of North Carolina — Chapel Hill, North Carolina
University of South Florida Health Science Center — Tampa, Florida
University of Tennessee Medical Center — Knoxville, Tennessee
University of Texas at Houston Health Science Center — Houston, Texas
Virginia Commonwealth University Medical College of Virginia —
Richmond, Virginia
Wake Forest University Bowman Gray School of Medicine —
Winston-Salem, North Carolina
Yale University School of Medicine — New Haven, Connecticut