



***Wheels in
Motion***

**Academy for Scholarship
in Education inspires,
supports the School's
medical minds**

Written by Karen Carlson • Photography by James Hawker

The wheels of education that have always been in motion at SIU School of Medicine are moving a little faster these days, thanks to the SIU Academy for Scholarship in Education.

The mission of the Academy is “to advance the School to the forefront of the nation in medical education innovation and research.” SIU School of Medicine has always been renowned for its educational efforts, notably the developments in the 1970s and 1980s. The Academy has breathed new life and vitality in the Department of Medical Education and other departments committed to teaching and learning.

The Academy helps the faculty improve their skills and push teaching beyond the everyday, taking SIU’s “lifelong learning” mantra and applying it to the faculty as well as students. Through the Academy, faculty are advancing their skills as educators, researchers and leaders.

“Becoming an academy member shows that the faculty believe in education as an important mission of the School. This is an exciting place to be,” says Debra Klamen, M.D., MHPE, associate dean for education and curriculum who initiated the Academy three years ago. “Faculty are asking new questions, and they’re interested in medical education research as a career or scholarship path.”

Nicole Roberts, Ph.D., associate director of the Academy for Scholarship in Education adds, “We want faculty to feel supported. I want the faculty to really like teaching, not just as part of their job, but something they enjoy, something that brings life to them.” Dr. Roberts offers evaluation and training to whole departments, small groups, and individuals.

It got off to a slow start, says Dr. Klamen, but gradually the Academy has gained speed. Now, it’s rolling so fast it’s tough for Dr. Kla-

men and Dr. Roberts to keep up with it. In just three years, the Academy has grown to 120 faculty members — about a third of SIU School of Medicine’s full- and part-time faculty members — who are excited about developing their teaching skills. Most are clinical faculty, with about two dozen full-time educators, as well as eight basic scientists. Most academies don’t have basic scientists as members, notes Dr. Klamen. “Our basic scientists are committed to education. They make our Academy distinctive.”

Monthly workshops cover a variety of topics from leadership skills, patient safety methods, and much more. One memorable presentation by Ann Woodworth, M.A., from Northwestern University, gave tips to deliver an effective presentation by using acting skills such as timing, vocal delivery, and physical presence.

Speakers at Academy events include SIU School of Medicine faculty as well as other renowned experts from institutions such as McMaster University, the Mayo Clinic, the University of Chicago, University of Wisconsin, University of Kansas, and the University of Texas Health Science Center.

“I go to as many events as I can, and I always walk away with valuable information,”



says Tracey Lower, M.D., associate professor of Pediatrics and medical director of the inpatient unit at St. John's Children's Hospital, who has been a member of the Academy since its beginnings. "I'm into education. That's why I'm here. With the Academy, SIU remains ahead of the curve." Dr. Lower also recognizes the benefits for young faculty and all faculty who attend the Academy events. "As a curriculum director, it helps me to have our faculty in pediatrics get the information. The Academy is a natural for the School."

The Academy also hosts a monthly event called "The XII," a free-flowing, creative get-together open to any interested faculty member. "The XII," which stands for "Xtraordinary Innovative Investigators" focuses on medical education research and curriculum innovation. "There's no agenda, and it's always inspiring with faculty posing questions such as 'What makes a good medical student?'" Dr. Roberts says.

These workshops and events are great for SIU faculty to showcase their research and learn what other institutions are doing. "There's an ongoing need to be exposed to research in medical education," says Dr. Klamen. "The Academy is one way our faculty can do that."

Sparks fly

When the Academy began three years ago, Dr. Klamen said she hoped the effort would "break the isolation of the departments." The result? Educational research collaborations and networking opportunities abound. "SIU is a special culture," notes new Academy member, Amy Arai, Ph.D. "It's small, and we all know each other and we can work together."

Collaborations are a significant part of the Academy experience. Ideas and projects are ongoing among the departments of surgery, medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, and family medicine, as well as departments in Carbondale. A new online master's degree program in connection with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is making medical education a career destination. "Faculty are negotiating for parts of their time to be in the Department of Medical Education so that they can be even more involved in medical education research and innovation," Dr. Klamen says.

The Academy's Brainstorming Research and Development group supports faculty members who are interested in doing research but may not know how to develop it. "We will come to you," says Dr. Roberts, "and help you move from where you are to where you need to be." She encourages faculty to make contact sooner, rather than later. "As soon as you have the spark of an idea, call us.

We can help you plan and execute your research more efficiently." The group helped a neonatologist in pediatrics develop a simple observation about medical students' knowledge into a structured question that led to a poster presentation and a scholarly paper, now under review.

Opportunities for collaborations are what drew surgeon David Rogers, M.D., to SIU. "The Department of Surgery is known for its educational innovations, and there are tremendous resources here. The collaborative teams make the work possible, he says. "I'd much rather work in a group and celebrate successes as a group."

He acknowledges that it can be difficult for physicians and researchers to collaborate effectively across disciplines. The Academy's collaborative effort and recognition, he says, is great for young faculty new to academics to see that excellence in education is rewarded here. "As a medical school, we need to draw attention to teaching and show them that it's a valuable contribution," says the professor of surgery and pediatrics. "The Academy is a way to show it's an area we appreciate."

The collaborative effort also has helped Dr. Lower, who says it's difficult to find time for educational research, and the task can be daunting. "The Academy has taken the mystique out of it," she says. She has worked with Dr. Roberts and Elizabeth Dawson, Ph.D., in the Department of Medical Education, on a project evaluating students' perception of readiness for residency. "Nicole and Beth have the skills that I don't have: analysis of data, asking stimulating questions, even helping me with the human subjects' paperwork. They've helped keep me going." She has submitted her project for presentation to the Association of American Medical Colleges.

Leslie Smith, M.D., a third-year surgical resident, has collaborated on many research projects with Academy members. "Being around people who approach problems in the same way and who are interested in exploring new ways of dealing with surgical problems stimulates thinking and broadens horizons, helping me grow as an educator."

Membership in the Academy is both inclusive and exclusive. Any faculty member with teaching responsibilities can become an Academy member. A second tier of the group, called "Academy Scholars," rewards faculty who have proven results in one of four areas: Teaching and Evaluation, Educational Research, Educational Leadership, and Production of Enduring Materials.

Since the Academy began, 11 faculty members have made it through the intensive review to achieve Scholar status.

“We want to recognize and honor extraordinary work,” Dr. Roberts says. The five-year designation gives Scholars access to funds to attend educational conferences and receive assistance with promotion, tenure, research and teaching projects.

The Academy also formally recognizes and rewards exceptional teaching. Each year, Excellence in Teaching Awards are given to faculty who demonstrate exceptional skill and commitment. This year, Amy Arai, Ph.D., and David Rogers, M.D., professor of pediatric surgery, received the honors (see pages 18-19). They will be eligible to be deemed Scholars later this year.

According to Dr. Klamen, “Dr. Arai has a drive to improve education, looks at reasons for why she does what she does, and exemplifies the best in basic science in a place where basic science education already is exemplary.

“Dr. Rogers is an educator with a capital ‘E’. He has a master’s degree in education and has taught locally and nationally,” Dr. Klamen says. “He could get a teaching award anywhere.”

Dr. Rogers sees the Academy as a mechanism to share information. “Bringing in national people draws positive attention to SIU and the work we’re doing here. I want to promote the Academy and draw attention to the fact that that you can have a rewarding career as a scholar.”

Dr. Arai says basic scientists often feel undervalued as educators. “Medical students aren’t as interested in basic science, so we often feel like the ‘bad guys.’ This award shows that if you do your teaching well, people will appreciate your work. I hope it will encourage more basic scientists to participate in teaching.”

Minds At Work

As the Academy keeps rolling, Dr. Klamen is planning expansion efforts, possibly endorsing a master educator within each department of the School of Medicine with a cross-appointment in the Department of Medical Education. “The educators would specialize in different areas, such as assessment or leadership,” Dr. Klamen explains. “That person would be the faculty developer in that area for the whole School.” The goal, she says, is to “integrate continuous faculty learning.” In the future, the Academy will offer continuing medical education credit for some of the workshops.

The Academy has kept SIU School of Medicine’s reputation at the forefront of medical education and is attracting new faculty. Dr. Roberts and Dr. Klamen have created a faculty development series for new faculty, including basic scientists, who have teaching or education

responsibilities. “There’s always a need for new faculty to learn how to teach, especially in a clinical setting,” Dr. Klamen explains. “We want the new faculty to get immersed into SIU’s culture of education right away.”

The Academy has reinvigorated the education-dedicated faculty, who are asking new questions, pursuing educational research scholarship as a career path. “The Academy shows that SIU is continuing the educational innovation for which we’ve always been known,” Dr. Klamen says. “It’s our opportunity to continue the legacy.”

“The Academy has pulled people together,” Dr. Roberts adds. “This is an exciting place to be.”

Dr. Roberts continues to prowl around the SIU School of Medicine departments searching for the next great master educator. “There’s a tremendous wealth of people who need to be recognized for their talents outside of their departments, and we need them to be models for others.”

So look out. The wheels are turning with medical minds at work. ●●●



Academy members attend a seminar on negotiation skills.