

Smoothing the transitions

Dr. David Rogers wins Excellence in Teaching Award

Written by Karen Carlson • Photograph by James Hawker

Filled with a passion for education, David Rogers, M.D., professor of surgery and pediatrics, says early in his career he was well-equipped to be a surgeon but poorly prepared to be a teacher.

Through the Association for Surgical Education, he learned to be an effective teacher and has become a standout member of the SIU Academy for Scholarship in Education, winning the Academy's Excellence in Teaching Award for his exceptional skills as a teacher, educational researcher, and programmer.

Dr. Rogers' interest is in the transitional periods of medical training — be-

tion programs, including the Resident Readiness Elective. The goal of this elective is to ease the transition and enrich the educational opportunities in the senior year.

Building on a national study, Dr. Rogers devised the fourth-year elective curriculum with three components: intense training in the Surgical Skills Lab, mock exercises from nurse educators to introduce management of post-operative situations, and additional experiences in dissection of human cadavers.

Thanks to this elective, Dr. Rogers has gotten feedback from residency program

recognized the program's value.

Praise notwithstanding, Dr. Rogers has taken the extra step: researching his work to generate evidence proving its benefits. He and his collaborative team, which includes nurse educator Maggie Boehler, have published two papers on the program demonstrating that, after completing his elective, students' skills were comparable to a second year surgical resident.

"As professionals, we should always be seeking information for the betterment of our patients." The result shows students that he practices what he preaches. "Be open to innovations, but be careful about adopting them all," he stresses. "See what the evidence is."

Dr. Rogers also redesigned the surgery clerkship for third-year students. "The third year is when students first understand how medicine really works," Dr. Rogers says. "What it means to be on call, exposure to the languages and processes we use that are different from everyday life."

Dr. Rogers has been called "one of the most enthusiastic teachers at the School," one who "makes learning enjoyable even in the intimidating environment like the OR." He has received the Department of Surgery's Excellence in Medical Student Teaching Award every year since 2001.

With accolades in educational research, programming and teaching, Dr. Rogers says each piece enriches the other. "If a student fails part of a course," he says, "as a teacher, that's frustrating. But as a researcher, it's an opportunity. I can study the area, and it can enrich my teaching." As a surgical teacher, Dr. Rogers says "exposure to learners makes me a better practitioner." Teaching at national meetings also is a push to keep learning. "I come back knowing I have to be a better teacher, myself." ●●●



Dr. Rogers spends a moment teaching Melissa Dawson, '09, and surgical resident Alison Wilson, M.D., at his clinic at the St. John's Pavilion.

tween student and resident, and resident to practice. "From my own experience, these were stressful periods, and no one prepared me for the transitions."

At SIU School of Medicine, Dr. Rogers has worked to make sure that students becoming residents, residents becoming attendings and physicians becoming teachers are thoroughly equipped for the awesome responsibilities.

He has redesigned and updated educa-

tion programs, including the Resident Readiness Elective. The goal of this elective is to ease the transition and enrich the educational opportunities in the senior year. The elective is so popular at SIU, there is a waiting list for a spot. Other departments are interested in developing similar electives for their specialties.

Dr. Rogers has presented the program at the American College of Surgeons' meeting, and the AAMC magazine has