

STARS Program Exposes Future Students to Research

For the past eight weeks, the Summer Training in Academic Research and Scholarship (STARS) Program has given Richard Rodriguez, a senior at UCLA, the opportunity to shadow researchers and learn about what it takes to work in and run a research laboratory.

“This experience has truly changed my life,” said Rodriguez in thanking the Office for Multicultural Faculty Careers (OMC) during the program’s closing ceremony this month. “As the first person in my family ever to pursue higher education, this is an experience I will treasure always. It has opened my eyes in a way that I never thought possible. I feel like I came of age in terms of my research goals.”

Rodriguez was one of 10 STARS participants hosted by the OMC, a branch within the Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (CFDD). The program, which began this year, exposes underrepresented minority college juniors, seniors and medical students to basic, clinical and translational research projects under the supervision of BWH faculty advisors. The program also provides training sessions, social networking opportunities, community health center clinic shadowing and weekly roundtables with BWH faculty.

The program was the vision of Barbara Bierer, MD, senior vice president of Research and director for the Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, modeled on the success of the



Barbara Bierer, MD, senior vice president of Research and director for the CFDD, center, and BWH President Gary Gottlieb, MD, MBA, third from right, join participants of the first STARS program.

Four Directions Summer Research Program (FDSRP), a parallel program for Native American college students directed by Thomas Sequist, MD.

“The key to our success this year was having dedicated mentors willing to open up their labs and students with an enormous desire to learn,” said Bierer. “I’m so pleased with the feedback I received from each student, and I’m confident that they are on the path to make a difference in the world of research.”

Elizabeth Ekpo, a second year medical student at the University of Oklahoma, said her experience with STARS reinforced her desire to achieve her ultimate goal: to open clinics in other countries for under-privileged people.

“These high standards that I have set stem from the nurturing provided by my parents, but they are enhanced by opportunities like the STARS program,” said Ekpo, who is originally from Nigeria.