

for TUFTS MEDICINE

Grant to fund development of global health curriculum

Jeffrey K. Griffiths, M.D., M.P.H., director of global health and associate professor of public health and family medicine, has secured a three-year, \$125,000 grant from the NIH to establish a global health curriculum across all Tufts' schools. With the funding, Griffiths and his colleagues will develop a concentration in global health within the public health program and also create a core global health course open to all Tufts students. Griffiths and his team collaborated with their colleagues at the Fletcher School and will pilot the global health course in spring 2006.

The funding will support efforts to link up with global health programs and colleagues in Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia and sites around the world by building on the Tufts University Sciences Knowledgebase (TUSK), widely regarded as the nation's most advanced and comprehensive online educational database in the health sciences. The grant will support student exchanges, bringing foreign students to Tufts and sending Tufts students abroad. There are also plans for twice-yearly global health workshops at Tufts.

Tufts faculty members **Paul Kirshen**, research professor of civil and environmental engineering; **Abraham Sonenshein**, Ph.D., professor of microbiology; **Michael L. Bennish**, M.D., associate professor of public health and family medicine; and **Christine A. Wanke**, M.D., of the Nutrition/Infection Unit assisted with the grant application.

A blueprint for the next decade

The School of Medicine's strategic plan is now available online. The document, "Focused Excellence," is accessible through a link on the strategic planning homepage (<http://www.tufts.edu/med/strategicPlan/index.html>).

The text "is labeled as a draft because this is a living document," Dean **Michael Rosenblatt**, M.D., said. "It will be refined and modified over time as the environment and our circumstances change."

At the faculty meeting on October 17, Rosenblatt thanked the more than 75 faculty and staff from the school and its affiliated hospitals who worked to develop the strategy. A blueprint for the next decade, the strategic plan outlines the school's goals and established priorities under the headings: excellence, integrity, collaboration, compassion, leadership, creativity, diversity, community and lifelong learning.

Strategic planning process updates will be posted periodically on <http://www.tufts.edu/med/strategicPlan/current.html>.

HERE & THERE

Seth Flagg, M06, has been elected to the board of directors of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP). As a student member, Flagg will represent the interests and opinions of the National Congress of Student Members to the AAFP. Flagg became a student member of AAFP in 2002 and also has taken leadership roles in family practice organizations on the state and university levels. He served for two years as a volunteer in the AmeriCorps Volunteer In Service To America (VISTA) program, teaching reading and providing health education to underserved communities in Boston.

Rajendra Kumar-Singh, Ph.D., an assistant professor of ophthalmology and visual sciences and of human genetics at the University of Utah, will be joining the faculty of Tufts School of Medicine. He works on developing gene-based therapies for retinosis pigmentosa (RP) and age-related macular degeneration. RP is one of the most common causes of inherited blindness in the United States. Using viral and non-viral gene vectors, Kumar-Singh and his colleagues have corrected the genetic defect responsible for RP and slowed down retinal degeneration in animal models. He also seeks to design viruses that infect photoreceptor and other nervous system cells more efficiently. Such novel viral vectors could be used to treat glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and other diseases of the central nervous system.

HONORS FROM NIH

John M. Coffin, Ph.D., professor of microbiology, is the recipient of a prestigious award from the National Institutes of Health that is given to fewer than 5 percent of NIH researchers. The MERIT (Method to Extend Research in Time) grant provides long-term support to accomplished scientists. Coffin, who also is director of the HIV Drug Resistance Program at the National Cancer Institute, investigates interactions between retroviruses and their host cells and organisms. The MERIT award will support Coffin's project on "Retrovirus Evolution."

ON THE RUN

On Monday, October 10, the Tufts Health Plan sponsored its annual 10K for Women. **Sharon Freeman**, assistant to **Mary Lee**, M.D., in the Office of Educational Affairs at the School of Medicine, coordinated a team of Tufts students, faculty and staff to run or walk the event. Freeman reports that nine students and 11 faculty and staff members participated in the event. Tufts folks who participated in the 6.2-mile race included medical students **Alyssa Bishop**, **Jonathan Flug**, **Jon Kerr**, **Megan Noe**, **Lisa Opanasets**, **Sarah Rosenberg** and **Helen Yeung**; medical school staff **Sharon Freeman**, **Mary Lee**, **Kathleen Lowney** and **Minhthe Nguyen**; **Cecily Bean**, **Carol Marshall** and **Gisela Velasquez** of the School of Dental Medicine; Friedman School students **Christine McDonald** and **Charlotte Vallaes**; **Mary Kate Keyes** of the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts; **Lisa Freeman** of the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine; and **Suna Grassi** and **Thuy Nguyen** from the office of the provost.

Outstanding service to patients

The National Network of Libraries of Medicine has highlighted Tufts' SPIRAL (Selected Patient Information Resources in Asian Languages) program as one of the three "most outstanding" projects in New England. The recognition comes in celebration of National Medical Librarians Month in October.

The SPIRAL website (<http://spiral.tufts.edu>) provides detailed medical information in seven Asian languages: Cambodian, Thai, Korean, Hmong, Chinese, Laotian and Vietnamese. The information is also presented in English, helping to eliminate potential language barriers between health-care providers and their Asian-American patients.

"By providing these resources, selected from respected health sites, the Health Sciences Library is helping these populations become better informed and, hopefully, healthier," said Health Sciences Library Director **Eric Albright**, M.A.

Grants from the NNLM helped fund SPIRAL, as did support from the South Cove Community Health Center. Soon after its April 2005 launch, SPIRAL recorded some 4,000 hits and 77 non-Tufts page links to the site.

New chief

Linda Specht, M.D., Ph.D., has been appointed chief of the Division of Pediatric Neurology at the Floating Hospital for Children.

A graduate of Cornell University Medical College, Specht completed her pediatric residency at the Floating, followed by a pediatric neurology residency at Massachusetts General Hospital. Formerly director of the Neuromuscular Disease Clinic at Children's Hospital, Specht comes to Tufts from Franciscan Hospital for Children, where she was director of neurology and vice president of medical services and where she will continue to hold a part-time appointment.

Tufts will continue to work with the Department of Neurology at Children's Hospital, which provides coverage for inpatient consultations.

FEEDBACK

The *Dean's Letter for Tufts Medicine* is published nine times a year by the Office of the Dean of Tufts University School of Medicine. We welcome comments and story ideas. Contact Editor Jacqueline Mitchell at jacqueline.mitchell@tufts.edu or 617.636.3602.

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