January 2013

The Faculty, Staff & Students of
The Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education
extend to you and yours
our most heartfelt wishes
for peace, health and prosperity
in 2013.

Maurizio Trevisan
Dean

Update on Strategic Planning
The Changing Face of Sophie Davis

The Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education has embarked on a major strategic planning and transformative process to define and determine the course of its future. In 2011, groups of faculty, staff and students were organized to deliberate on administrative, academic and research issues, and issues affecting students—all with the aim of determining how to continue to foster a culture of excellence at Sophie Davis. In the initial phase of this process, an executive steering committee was formed, composed of leaders from the School, the Provost of City College, alumni and other medical and health care leaders, and several community and political leaders.

Many recommendations emerged from these fruitful deliberations. One of the recommendations was to reinforce the desire of many faculty and students to transform the Sophie Davis School from its current program structure into a fully accredited MD degree-granting medical school. This transformation would insure a more seamless transition of our students from the traditional basic science education years to the clinical (clerkship) phase of their training by reducing the stressful process of matching to participating medical schools and by guaranteeing the availability of clinical clerkship slots, while enabling Sophie Davis to further support and maintain its mission of promoting the training of primary care physicians who practice in medically underserved communities.

The School has accepted the challenge of following through on this recommendation. A group of external evaluators were invited to conduct an in-depth review of the School’s operations and our vision for the future. A panel of experts from around the country, composed of leaders in academic medicine and in BA/MD or BS/MD educational programs, participated in a two-day visit to the School, during which they interviewed and spoke with individuals and groups of administrators, faculty, staff and students. This panel, too, concluded that the best approach for Sophie Davis to achieve its goals would be through the path to full accreditation as an MD degree-granting institution.

Edward Gresik, Ph.D. & Susan Richardson
Co-Editors
A second recommendation that has been fully embraced is to begin exploring the process and criteria for accreditation as a medical school, as a valuable process for strengthening our program and operations – regardless of whether or not the program is ultimately able to pursue accreditation. The process of preparing for a “dry run” of an accreditation-type site visit will enable the School to identify gaps that must be filled, to define our strengths and weaknesses, and to prepare to respond accordingly. The School has already begun to act on this recommendation, enlisting as a consultant Dr. David Seiden, Professor Emeritus from UMDNJ, who is an experienced accreditation site reviewer of the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) – the accrediting authority for medical education programs in the United States and Canada. A coordinating committee and several self-study subcommittees have been established, and have begun examining the specific guidelines for fulfilling the criteria and requirements of the LCME. This introspection on Sophie Davis’ operations will ultimately prove extremely beneficial to us for improving our entire program. The process will be intense and is expected to take six to eight months, if not a full year.

Sophie Davis is encouraged and hopeful that at the end of this process of self-examination the School will be better positioned to understand and address its strengths and weaknesses, and to identify where investments must be made to not only continue to survive, but to flourish.

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**Highlights of Faculty Research**

**Dr. Hoau-Yan Wang** was hired in 2001 as an Associate Medical Professor in the Department of Physiology, Pharmacology & Neuroscience. His primary research interest is on identifying the role of altered neuronal signal transduction mechanisms in mediating pathogenesis of neurological and psychiatric diseases with impaired cognitive function such as Alzheimer’s disease (AD) and schizophrenia. In collaboration with both academic laboratories and pharmaceutical industry, Dr. Wang and his team are aspired to find new therapeutic strategies including drugs for treatment and diagnostic biomarkers for early detection of those brain diseases. In addition, these research activities also provide opportunities for in-depth discussion in the classroom.

(A) Studies on Alzheimer’s disease: Alzheimer’s disease is a complex neurological disorder with progressive memory defects resulting from degeneration of neurons in key brain regions. Despite years of research efforts, Alzheimer’s disease is currently not treatable. Dr. Wang and his team’s efforts have led to identify a few possible pathogenic mechanisms that may be responsible for neuronal death and cognitive impairments. Based on these findings, they have developed biomarkers to help identifying Alzheimer’s disease in its early stage and novel therapeutic strategies to halt or better reverse neurodegeneration and cognitive decline.

(B) Studies on Schizophrenia: Similar to Alzheimer’s disease, schizophrenia symptoms include severe cognitive impairments which are different from Alzheimer-type memory loss. The intricate molecular underpinning mechanisms responsible for schizophrenic pathogenesis are currently unknown. Dr. Wang and his team’s investigations helped identifying a molecular mechanism responsible for the defected brain excitatory neuronal system, one of the key contributors of schizophrenic symptoms. This discovery suggests that therapeutic strategies aiming at restoring excitatory neuronal activity may be effective in reducing debilitating symptoms of schizophrenia.
Dr Jack Martin joined the faculty of the Department of Physiology, Pharmacology, and Neuroscience in 2009, having moved his laboratory from Columbia University’s Medical School, where he was a faculty member in the Departments of Neuroscience, Psychiatry, and Neurological Surgery for over 20 years. He divides most of his time at Sophie Davis between Neuroscience research and directing the Neuroscience course for 4th year medical students.

His laboratory studies how the brain controls movement from the dual perspectives of development and recovery of mobility after brain or spinal cord injury. His group studies these problems using animal models, with the goal of ultimately explaining how the human motor systems develop and how we can devise new therapies to help cure paralysis. The developmental studies focus on how neurons of the cerebral cortex form connections with the spinal cord. The team studies the interplay between genetic factors that help neurons make the right connections during development, how active the developing neurons are, and the animal’s motor experiences. These studies help to explain how the brain’s circuits for skill come “on-line” during early development, for example, as a baby takes her/his first steps. This research also determined a “use it or lose it” rule for motor development, a rule that helps explain motor impairments in cerebral palsy, a devastating developmental motor disorder. Applications of this rule are being used to develop novel therapeutic approaches to treat cerebral palsy.

The motor recovery studies focus on repair of damaged spinal motor circuits in adult animals. The goal is to tackle a crucial health problem, to devise ways to cure paralysis after a stroke or a spinal cord injury. Two different approaches are taken, which are aimed at repairing the damaged nervous system after two different kinds of injury. One approach uses electrical brain stimulation to strengthen the connections between the cortex and the spinal cord that are spared after injury. By stimulating these remaining connections, they make them stronger connections. Importantly, this leads to improved motor performance in animals after injury. One day this approach could form the basis of a new therapy to promote mobility in humans after brain or spinal injury.

The other approach to repairing the damaged nervous system is aimed to help patients with very severe spinal injuries that leave little or no spared connections. In these patients, the brain is disconnected from the spinal cord. Because the portion of the spinal cord below the injury is usually relatively unharmed, these researchers are developing a neural bridge around the spinal injury that the brain can use to re-establish connections with the part of the spinal cord isolated by the injury.

Dr Martin’s research programs are funded by grants from the National Institutes of Health, as well as private foundations, including the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation and the March of Dimes Research Foundation. Scientists at many different levels train in his laboratory: from Sophie Davis Medical Students, and CUNY Graduate Center students, to postdoctoral fellows. All facets of his research depend on the careful work conducted by several research assistants in the lab. Dr Martin says, “I was very fortunate to have many of my colleagues move with me from Columbia University.” Now many of his coworkers are moving on to start their own independent careers.

In addition to having an active research program, Dr Martin has an abiding interest in neuroscience and medical education. He has written a textbook on brain anatomy and function, entitled Neuroanatomy: Text and Atlas, which is going into its Fourth Edition. Prior editions have been translated into several languages (Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Chinese). Along with his colleagues, he created an Interactive Neuroanatomy website to assist in teaching this difficult topic (http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/human_neuroanatomy/). With several colleagues from the United States and Great Britain, he participates in yearly Neuroscience Education Workshops in Africa. This program brings new teaching methodologies, Neuroscience content, and teaching materials to junior faculty at Medical Schools in Africa. The hope is by improving Neuroscience education in the African continent, the stigma of many neurologic and psychiatric diseases will be eliminated and the diagnosis and treatment of these diseases will improve.
Alumni News

Howard Hinestroza, MD

I graduated in 1998 from Sophie and matched into Mt. Sinai Medical School completing my 3rd & 4th year of medical school training. I pursued general pediatrics at the Miami’s Children’s Hospital and completed two years of an Adolescent Medicine Fellowship at Texas Children’s Hospital/Baylor School of Medicine. I worked in a private clinic serving a low-income Hispanic population in Texas and returned to NYC where I gladly fulfilled my two year service commitment in a low-income community in Brooklyn. During this time, I married and have two beautiful sons. I’ve worked in a federally qualified health center initially in the South Bronx, and then Corona, Queens. I recently was recruited by Lutheran Medical Center and am now employed in one of their clinics to develop and direct a formal community teen clinic. Currently, I am a graduate student at the Weill Cornell Medical College obtaining my Master’s in clinical science research. I am very excited for this opportunity and look forward to the challenges and endless possibilities for my professional and personal growth.

Meera S. Beharry, MD, FAAP

I was born on the island of Trinidad in the West Indies. When I was four years old, my family moved to Mt. Vernon, New York. I graduated from the Sophie Davis in 1999, attended and graduated from the SUNY Downstate in 2001, where I also entered and pursued a pediatric residency training program. After completing residency at SUNY Downstate, I was Chief resident in Pediatric at Lenox Hill Hospital until in 2005. I worked for a few months at the Yonkers Family and Community Medical Center, took classes in Tropical Medicine at the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University, participated in a medical mission to Haiti and then performed a few months of locum tenens work in rural Mississippi. In 2006, I began a fellowship in Adolescent Medicine at Children’s Hospital in Los Angeles. After fellowship training, I joined the Adolescent Medicine Division at the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York as an Assistant Professor and worked there from 2009-2012, fulfilling my two year service commitment. I was also able to obtain research experience through funding from an NRSA T32 training grant and a CATCH grant from the American Academy of Pediatrics while at the University of Rochester.

I recently joined the faculty at McLane Children’s Hospital of Scott & White Healthcare in Temple, Texas as the Adolescent Medicine Section Chief. I am also the North American Regional Vice-President of the International Association of Adolescent Health (IAAH) and hope to be elected to a second term at the IAAH.

GOT A STORY TO SHARE?

Sophie Davis is seeking news and announcements for upcoming issues of The SOPHIE PULSE. We’re especially interested in receiving alumni updates—achievements, appointments, awards, publications, and special moments, such as weddings, births, etc.

Please e-mail news and announcements to alumni@med.cuny.edu and write “Sophie Pulse” in the subject line.

You may also mail you news to:

“Sophie Davis Pulse”
Office of the Dean
Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education
160 Convent Avenue-Suite 107-H
New York, NY 10031

For alumni updates, please be sure to include the year of Sophie Davis graduation.
Alumni Mentoring Program

For nearly 13 years, the school has been offering the Alumni Mentoring Program (AMP). This program provides 3rd year Sophie students an opportunity to be mentored by a Sophie Davis Alumnus. Each year Sophie alumni residing in the metropolitan area are recruited to mentor a 3rd year Sophie student, regardless of the Alumni’s medical specialty. 3rd year students are invited to participate, and are assigned to a Sophie alumnus based on the student’s choice of medical specialty and/or location. The goals of the AMP for both the student and the Alumnus are outlined below including a brief description of the structure and duration of the program.

3rd year SBE students:
• To see what being a “real” doctor is like;
• To value alumni as role models displaying competency, sensitivity and success;
• To gain guidance during their extended undergraduate education period and beyond;
• To obtain advice and counsel from an experienced professional with a similar background.

Alumnus:
• To keep in touch with their alma mater;
• To enjoy the energy and stimulation of a young learner;
• To provide guidance, advice and counsel;
• To “give back” to Sophie Davis.

The structure is completely dependent on the alumni practice, medical specialty and resources as well as the duration. Some possibilities include:
• Shadowing in the office, hospital or clinic;
• Meet for coffee/lunch/dinner;
• Participate in professional activities, e.g. attend meetings, grand rounds, workshops, etc.;
• Any other contact methods that “fits”.

This year, the following Sophie Davis Alumni are participating in the AMP:

Dr. Arlen Fleisher, class of 1979
Dr. Janice Lau & Dr. Eric Mandel, class of 1980
Dr. John Sciales, class of 1982
Dr. Richard Charney, class of 1984
Dr. Robert Murayama, class of 1988
Dr. Rajeev Babbar & Dr. Panchali Dhar, class of 1989
Dr. Michael Mesbah class of 1990
Dr. Qi Li Li, class of 1994
Dr. Binh Lam, class of 1997
Dr. Howard Hinestroza, class of 1998
Dr. Omolara Thomas-Uwemedimo class of 2002.

If this program is of interest to you, please contact Ms. Richardson at smr@med.cuny.edu.
12th Annual White Coat Ceremony

The Great Hall was the site for the 12th Annual White Coat Ceremony on Wednesday, September 5, 2012. More than 500 family, friends, faculty and alumni attended. The keynote speaker for this year’s ceremony was Dr. Ramon Gist, Sophie Davis class of 2004. Dr. Gist, a 2006 graduate of SUNY Stony Brook, inspired the students with his personal and professional stories that illustrated the importance of humanism in medicine. He is currently Assistant Professor of Pediatrics in the Division of Pediatric Critical Care at SUNY Downstate Medical Center. Dr. Gist is a role model for students in his engagement of community outside of work. He devotes his time to community service through the New York Urban League Young Professionals as a member of the community service committee and mentor in the Scholar’s Connect program. He also serves as a mentor/volunteer in the Blue Nile Rights of Passage Program of the Abyssinian Baptist Church. It was a pleasure to welcome Dr. Gist back to his alma mater.

Also present at this year’s ceremony were several alumni who welcomed current students into the profession by cloaking the students in their new white coats with the unique Sophie Davis BS/MD patch. Alumni participants this year included Dr. Cristine Espinosa, Class of 2010, Dr. Samuel Anandan, Dr. Ahmed Saleh, & Dr. Fang Zhou, Class of 2008, Dr. Jacob Babu, Class of 2005, and Dr. Nichele Nivens, Class of 2003. We thank them for their participation and invite all interested alumni to participate.

Student Research Highlighted at the Annual Student Research Day

Tuesday, November 13, 2012 was the 3rd Annual Sophie Davis Student Research Day. Twenty-five students presented research posters. Students were supported by the Leonard Davis Community-based Research Fellowship, the Louis & Rachel Rudin Foundation Research Fellowship, the Mack Lipkin Broader Horizons Fellowship, and other fellowship programs. Many posters reflected work done in the labs of faculty here at Sophie Davis.

The Mack Lipkin Broader Horizons Fellowship provides several students the opportunity to spend 6-8 weeks conducting a research project somewhere else in the world. This year, eight students were supported and their projects were carried out in China, France, Greece, India, Italy Taiwan and Trinidad-Tobago. Dr. Mack Lipkin graduated from The City College in 1926. The Mack Lipkin Broader Horizons Fellowship Program was established in his honor with the support of the Sergei S. Zlinkoff Fund for Medical Research and Education, the Ruth W. Dolen Foundation, and Friends and Family of Dr. Mack Lipkin. For the past 3 years, Dr. Raj Maturi, ’91 and his wife have supported one student selected in the Mack Lipkin Program to conduct research in a developing nation. This student designated the Dr. and Mrs. Raj Maturi Scholar of the Mack Lipkin Broader Horizons Fellowship Program traveled to India this year to study socio-demographic differences in oral cancer incidence and diagnosis.
Physician Assistant Students: Jeopardy Champions

On October 20th, 2012 The City College of New York /Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education Physician Assistant Program at Harlem Hospital Center became the 2012 New York State Society of Physician Assistants (NYSSPA) Medical Jeopardy Challenge champions. The annual conference was held at the Tarrytown Doubletree Hotel in Tarrytown, NY. Ten Physician Assistant Programs competed against each other in order to claim their spot as the Medical Jeopardy Champions, including SUNY Albany, Stony Brook University and the 2011 champions, Hofstra University. The conference helps students to socialize, recognizing that although not all PA programs are the same, the dedication and sacrifices they have made as students are equally appreciated and rewarded.

The Harlem Jeopardy Team was comprised of Ms. Patricia Mompoint (Class of 2014), Mr. Daniel Haycook (Class of 2013), and Mr. Mohamed Algamoos (Class of 2013). Their alternates consisted of Ms. Michelle Twito (Class of 2013), Mr. Cheyne Charles (Class of 2013) and Mr. Darrell Hercules (Class of 2014). The team was coached by Mr. David Lau, PA-C, PA Program Didactic Coordinator. To effectively prepare for the challenge the team and the alternates met every Friday for four weeks leading up to the conference. Students were strategically selected by the faculty members of the program. When given the news that she was selected, Ms. Patricia Mompoint stated she was “excited and scared at the same time.” She felt pressure to do well and believed that the practice sessions with Mr. Lau helped solidify her knowledge and boost her confidence not only as a participant in the challenge, but as a student and as a future Physician Assistant.

The NYSSPA Medical Jeopardy Challenge directly resembles the game show we have seen on TV. In this version, the participants are presented with symptoms or conditions and must answer with the diagnosis in a form of a question. The competition included all areas of medicine pertaining to PA education. The auditorium was full of PA students as well as alumni from all of the different programs. Everyone was ready to support their teams and some of them brought posters of encouragement. When our victory was announced, our PA students, faculty, and alumni stood up and cheered as they made their way towards the stage to congratulate their team.

The City College of New York/ SDBE Physician Assistant Program at Harlem Hospital Center won the first Medical Jeopardy Challenge in 1990. Former Assistant Dean & Program Director, Ms. Gemina Gates, MPA, PA-C was a member of that team. In 1991 that team also won the first National Medical Jeopardy Challenge presented by the American Association of Physician Assistants (AAPA) in San Francisco, CA. The Harlem PA Program continued to win six NYSSPA Medical Jeopardy championships and is now tied with Stony Brook University with most championships won. Mr. Lau wishes to break that tie by winning next year’s competition as well. On behalf of the City College of New York and The Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education, we would like to congratulate our faculty and students for such a triumphant accomplishment.
Save the Dates

39th Commencement Ceremony
The Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education
Physician Assistant Program at Harlem Hospital
January 25, 2013
Keynote speaker
Annie Brown, PA-C, Inaugural class of 1973 & Outstanding Clinician

40th Anniversary
The Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education will celebrate its 40th anniversary next year. Among the events, we are planning a gala for October 3, 2013. We are finalizing the venue and will release more information in the coming weeks. Please put this on your calendar and make plans to help us celebrate your alma mater!

We hope to engage several graduates to help us launch this memorable event. We will be looking for ambassadors from each graduating class to contact their colleagues to encourage participation and to buy a table or two. We also hope to launch a robust social media presence to organize and communicate about this event – so if you are on Facebook keep an eye out for that as well.

Graduates of this unique program have gone on to wonderful, distinguished careers, many as recognized leaders in their respective fields. We could not be more proud and look forward to celebrate with as many graduates as possible. If you are willing to be an ambassador for your graduating class please respond at alumni@med.cuny.edu.