

The FIRST in CER (Facilitating Independence in Research through the Summer Training in Comparative Effectiveness Research) Diversity Program will provide summer training and mentoring in skills essential to conducting comparative effectiveness research (CER), enhancing the career development of faculty and scientists from diverse backgrounds in basic and applied sciences relevant to heart, lung, blood, and sleep (HLBS) disorders. Recruitment efforts will be targeted at individuals who are under-represented in biomedical research, including those from racial and ethnic minorities, and those with disabilities. Program participants will receive excellent career mentoring, and will also gain expertise in advanced CER methods and experimental approaches that will allow them to compete more effectively for external funding in the biomedical, clinical, behavioral, and social sciences. NHLBI and NIH recognize the urgent need to promote diversity in the research workforce. If our research teams are diverse, we stand to benefit from enrichment of the pool of investigators, broader perspective in research agenda prioritization, greater success in recruiting diverse subjects, and enhanced ability to reduce health disparities. Clearly we cannot achieve the goal of more diverse research teams unless a greater number of under-represented faculty and scientists acquire key skills in research design and analysis. Through the FIRST in CER Diversity Program, young investigators from groups underrepresented in the sciences will learn designs and strategies for CER that will give them the skills to successfully pursue novel research and independent funding opportunities in HLBS science. We will achieve our overarching goal of creating a diverse set of CER experts by meeting the following aims: (1) Build on a successful summer 2009 pilot program (CSRI, the Columbia Summer Research Institute), evolving a new arm (the FIRST Program) with a specific focus on CER methods; (2) Introduce trainees to "landmark" research and current challenges in HLBS disorders, as well as rigorous introduction to CER methods and training in the responsible conduct of research; (3) Design a new, structured mentorship experience, extending from the first into the second year of the FIRST Program, which will enhance trainees' professional skills; (4) Foster interactions with existing diversity programs at Columbia for synergy and mutual support; (5) Hone marketing strategies and selection criteria to attract a competitive applicant pool; and (6) Develop and implement methods for tracking, evaluation, and dissemination that will provide ongoing feedback on program achievements, as well as long-term effects on participants' career trajectories. Columbia University is the perfect setting for building a mentoring program for junior faculty, taking advantage of existing summer training opportunities, an unparalleled cadre of superb mentors, and our location in the ethnically diverse, culturally rich center of New York City. We are poised to contribute substantially to NHLBI's goal of building a more diverse scientific workforce.