For many a first-generation undergraduate or health sciences student, or for a faculty member who is the first in a family to embark on a career in academic medicine, the halls of academia may appear labyrinthine and bewildering. Expectations may not be clear intuitively, and despite their intellectual readiness, newcomers may feel emotionally stranded or out of place.

The new First-Gen Health Faculty Project has been established to help reduce the sense of isolation that first-generation health sciences faculty members may experience. The First-Gen Health Faculty Project synchronizes with the UC Davis First-Gen project, which has student-centered as well as faculty components.

First-gen medical faculty members can be particularly inspiring to students because they serve as a testament to the attainability of success. Moreover, first-gen faculty can be immensely helpful as mentors because they understand the doubts and fears that first-gen students are experiencing and the obstacles they must overcome. The First-Gen Health Faculty Project is a means through which first-gen faculty can share their stories with others to inspire future generations of academic health faculty members and leaders.

Gerald Kayingo, who emigrated from Uganda and now is an assistant clinical professor in the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing, is emblematic of first-gen faculty members. No one in the village in
About mentoring

“When I became a graduate student at Yale, my faculty mentor introduced me to many people as he showed me around. He told me, ‘in order to succeed, you need to know your orbit.’ In other words, you need to know your circumstances, your environment. Likewise, a person cannot be an effective mentor without understanding the mentee well. If you understand your mentee’s aspirations and the factors that influence the mentee’s thinking, then you are in a better position to guide this mentee well.”

– Gerald Kayingo, First-gen faculty member; Director, Master of Health Services – PA Program, Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing

From a Ugandan village to UC Davis

The field of entomology is not ordinarily viewed as a path to careers in health care, but it served as a steppingstone in a 10,000-mile vision quest for Gerald Kayingo, Ph.D., P.A.-C. After completing a B.Sc. degree with honors from Makerere University in his native Uganda, he was appointed regional district director in charge of controlling tsetse flies along his country’s border with Tanzania.

“That did not give me a chance to put my hands on patients, but at least it gave me an opportunity to prevent disease,” Kayingo said. After Kayingo obtained a Ph.D. degree in microbiology from Orange Free State University in South Africa and postdoctoral training in infectious diseases at Yale University, a fellow scientist urged him to apply for Yale’s physician assistant master’s degree program, from which he graduated in 2007.

“I was finally able to diagnose and treat, and I found myself drawn toward primary care,” Kayingo said. In addition to his clinical practice at the Yale New Haven Primary Care Center, he held a faculty appointment at the Yale School of Medicine, PA program. In 2014, he became an assistant clinical professor in the the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis, for which he is director of the Master of Health Services – Physician Assistant Studies Program. His success is a testament to tenacity and a goal he set in childhood.

“No one in my entire village, or even the entire county, had ever gone to college. There was a lot to overcome,” Kayingo said. He had a spark, though, that his teachers recognized and encouraged. Kayingo, the eldest among 12 siblings, had endured the trauma at age 9 of witnessing his 7-year-old brother die of malaria. “This is not how things should be. From early on, I took it upon myself to make a difference when I grew up. In high school, I gravitated toward subjects that led to the health care field,” Kayingo explained. As he was completing high school, his father died, and his mother died while he was a botany and zoology student at Makerere University, further steeling his resolve to pursue a health-related career.

He credits teachers for recognizing his aptitude for health care. “I’ve been very fortunate in various stages of my life to have the help of individuals who guided me,” Kayingo said. He has received numerous honors, including his 2014 induction into the prestigious Uganda Academy of Sciences.

MARK ROBINSON

Retired clinical social worker continues service as a volunteer

When someone needs help, Mark Robinson cannot stand idly by. As a clinical social worker for the past four decades, Robinson has done all his profession has asked, and more. Straight out of Sacramento State University in 1976 with a master’s degree in social work, he accepted a UC Davis Medical Center position in which he saw a genuine need for compassion — helping families of trauma patients.

“No one had sole responsibility for notifying relatives of a patient’s arrival, and no one did it often enough to become good at it. So I volunteered to make the calls when a code 3 came in,” Robinson said. “I shuttled between the family and the trauma room, providing updates on the patient’s condition, focus of concern, and efforts to diagnose and/or treat injuries.”

Robinson has had a fulfilling career. He also planned and implemented a hospice program at Kaiser Permanente, was on the faculty of the Geriatric Education Center at UC San Francisco, was project coordinator for a UC systemwide palliative care curriculum initiative, led the Education Core for the UC Davis Center for Healthy Aging, and became an associate clinical professor in the UC Davis Department of Internal Medicine, co-facilitating in the doctoring course since its inception. Now retired, he continues to teach in the Doctoring course and performs volunteer work for the Faculty Development and Diversity program’s First-Gen Health Faculty Project, which benefits from his insightful observations.

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which he was raised had gone to college, yet he persevered — his story is told in the new “Coffee Break” section on page 2 of this issue of the newsletter. Faculty News will recurrently publish the stories of other first-gen faculty members.

Kayingo is among the first-gen health faculty members who responded to an emailed invitation from the Faculty Development and Diversity Program to share their stories. Two people are conducting those chats — First-Gen Health Faculty Project coordinator Roberta Campbell, who is program analyst for the Mentoring Academy, WIMHS and Faculty Development and Diversity; and Mark Robinson, MSW, a now-retired UC Davis associate clinical professor of internal medicine who performed clinical social work and teaching for more than four decades.

Online first-gen registry
The First-Gen Health Faculty Project correlates with an online registry that the UC Davis main campus established recently (at firstgen.ucdavis.edu/directory.cfm). That site lists more than 350 people who have identified themselves as first-generation faculty members — meaning that their parents do not have a four-year college degree.

While the stories of first-gen faculty members are fascinating and inspiring, the First-Gen Health Faculty Project has a profoundly important mission, as a component of the Diversity DRIVE (discovering, resilience, inclusion, academic vitality, and excellence) initiative that Hendry Ton is advancing in his role as associate dean for Faculty Development and Diversity.

“The cornerstone of Diversity DRIVE is to discover the narratives of faculty members, and through those narratives to determine best practices, and to guide us in developing and refining resources related to resilience. The First-Gen Health Faculty Project is very much integral in that process,” Ton said. “Through these narratives we’re validating the essential functions of mentorship. This research that we are conducting will help us build upon current mentoring resources to better assist faculty who are from first-generation or culturally diverse backgrounds.”

Roberta Campbell finds her conversations with first-gen faculty members energizing. “I love to hear people’s stories, and was very excited to become a part of the First-Gen Health Faculty Project,” Campbell said. “The faculty whom I have had the pleasure of interviewing have been awe inspiring. These individuals all have a personal drive to make a difference for others. Strong families and mentors have been major influences on most of these faculty members.”

Recurrent themes
Among conversations with first-gen faculty members, Mark Robinson has noticed the emergence of several recurrent themes: “Humility, responsibility, caring, altruism and the value of mentors, not just during training but also continuing throughout one’s career.”

Robinson said documenting the experiences of first-gen faculty members appealed to him because of what he has learned from them about setting high personal expectations and making sacrifices to attain goals.

“I realize how the addition of each of these individuals here is an innovative augmentation to the faculty. They are powerful, invaluable role models for the first-generation trainees they

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“The day was filled with leadership lessons in promoting compassionate care for those with differences in sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression,” said conference chair Edward Callahan, professor emeritus of family and community medicine and chair of the Vice Chancellor’s LGBTQ+ Advisory Council.

The conference began with contemplation of how unconscious bias is present in all human beings and how stigmatized groups experience differences in care as a result.

“With that backdrop, the group devoted emphasis to the educational resources that have been developed in LGBTQ+ health to date, and how those discoveries can be infused into healthcare education for different groups of trainees,” Callahan observed.

Presentation sessions at the conference included:
- Michelle Famula, M.D., discussing an undergraduate’s request for hormones and care in making the transition into the female body that expresses her experience of her gender identity; the result was a transformation of the physician’s clinical practice
- Nic Caballero, M.S., describing a social worker’s perspective on intimate partner violence in the LGBTQ+ community
- Michael Upton, M.D., speaking about his work to improve teaching about LGBT health
- Nicholas Bonenfant, a fourth-year medical student and intern in pediatrics, who shared his development of teaching modules and videos
- Jennifer Ingram, who tied the educational mission to how employee groups can help create the atmosphere of the institution and exert powerful influence on the care given and experienced

Consider participating in next year’s conference.

Improving OUTcomes goal: LGBTQ+ health care equity

Just as UC Davis Health was recognized in late March for the seventh consecutive year by the Human Rights Campaign as a Health Equality Index Leader in LGBT Healthcare, the health system fittingly hosted an educational conference titled Improving OUTcomes: Transformative Changes in LGBTQ+ Healthcare.

“Not only first-gen but all new faculty members would benefit from a figurative roadmap to help them navigate the environment and chart their career path. One of my priorities is to improve community building and networking among medical students and faculty. The First-Gen Health Faculty Project will help to do that.”

How to participate
- Contact Roberta Campbell
  Email: rcampbell@ucdavis.edu
  Phone: 916-703-9109
- Learn more: firstgen.ucdavis.edu

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mentor,” said Robinson, who began his career in 1976 by working with the family members of trauma patients at UC Davis Medical Center.

“I’d like the series of articles that will be published in Faculty News to raise consciousness, to open people’s eyes and to increase the appreciation for the wealth of experience, knowledge and sensitivity each first-gen member of the faculty brings to the table.”

While the Faculty Development team has only begun exploring the dimensions of first-gen faculty members, the trend among undergraduate students is revealing. In fall 2016, about 2,300 (41 percent) of new freshmen and about 1,875 (more than 53 percent) of transfer students identified themselves as the first among their families to enroll in a four-year college; overall, more than 44 percent of entering undergraduates at UC Davis are first-generation college students. A high proportion of first-gen students come from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and from rural areas.

“Our first-year medical school class is incredibly diverse, with over 50 percent coming from a disadvantaged background, and quite a number of students who are first-generation medical students,” Ton said. Numerous first-generation health sciences faculty members likened their higher education experiences and entry into academe to taking a road trip without a map.

“Not only first-gen but all new faculty members would benefit from a figurative roadmap to help them navigate the environment and chart their career path. One of my priorities is to improve community building and networking among medical students and faculty. The First-Gen Health Faculty Project will help to do that.”
Ling Chen, M.D., M.S., an assistant professor in the Department of Medicine’s Section of Transplant Nephrology, specializes in treatment of patients who have undergone kidney transplantation, and evaluates potential kidney recipients and living kidney donors.

Caroline Giroux, M.D., an associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, has expertise in the ways trauma throughout the lifespan affects all body systems. She is an attending at the Behavioral Health Clinic and supervisor for third-year residents.

Sungjin Kim, Ph.D., an associate professor of medical microbiology and immunology in the Center for Comparative Medicine, is investigating immune responses to viral infection and malignancy, and development of natural killer cells in humans and animal models.

David E. Leshikar, M.D., an assistant professor in the Division of Trauma, Acute Care Surgery and Surgical Critical Care, specializes in hernia repair and biliary disease. He is the General Surgery Residency Program associate director.

Rex Pillai, M.D., an assistant clinical professor of radiology, provides minimally invasive image-guided therapy for adult and pediatric patients. He has expertise in tumor-directed arterial therapy, tumor ablation, irreversible electroporation, high-intensity focused ultrasound and image-guided interventions.

Prabhu Shankar, M.D., M.S., an adjunct assistant professor and clinical informatician of public health sciences, conducts research that includes use of electronic health record data to advance clinical, translational and public health research and mobile health.

Kit W. Tam, M.D., an assistant professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology, participates in clinical trials pertaining to gastrointestinal malignancies, and researches relationships between the p16 tumor suppressor protein and smoke exposure in non-small-cell lung cancer.
The Joys of Teaching

By Mark Servis
Vice Dean for Medical Education

The School of Medicine commencement exercises on May 19 this year offered a tangible reminder of the joys I derive from teaching. For those of us in academic medicine, conferring degrees to students is analogous to attaining good outcomes for our patients. The transformation of medical students into accomplished health care professionals over the course of a few short years is both amazing and gratifying.

Although guiding them on that course is no small task, I am grateful for the privilege. The challenges as a clinical teacher are particularly daunting. Clinical teachers perform the clinical work of diagnosing the patient while simultaneously diagnosing the learner, and then teaching and providing feedback that is both reinforcing and corrective.

Teaching techniques vary, but all great teachers have one important characteristic in common – a real presence in their teaching, an engagement that flows from a deep connection to students and residents. They communicate what they are passionate about, and their teaching demonstrates they truly care about the success of their learners.

Parker Palmer’s book *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life* is one of my favorite books about teaching. Parker makes a compelling case that we teach who we are, that good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher. We need to connect to our sense of purpose in teaching, finding joy in what we do as teachers. When I experience the joys of teaching, it is because I see transformation in my students, I enjoy being part of a learning community, and I take up the challenge from students who compel me to continue to grow and develop.

As health care practitioners, we often think about the differences we make in the lives of our own individual patients. As a teacher of physicians that impact is multiplied many times over, in our graduating students who go into medical practice and serve thousands of patients. That is a meaningful and profound outcome as a teacher, and is one of the many joys of teaching. ♦