Women in Medicine and Health Sciences (WIMHS)

UC Davis Health System
“We now have many generations of women in medicine. Listening to all of our voices is like hearing an orchestra – with each of us contributing a different sound to create a beautiful symphony.”

Julie Freischlag, M.D.
Vice Chancellor for Human Health Sciences
Dean, UC Davis School of Medicine
Women in Medicine and Health Sciences (WIMHS) was founded in 2000 by Drs. Amparo Villablanca and Lydia Howell. The program serves a vibrant community of more than 300 female scientists and clinical faculty, and hundreds of more women, including students, residents, and postdoctoral scholars on the Sacramento and Davis campuses.

WIMHS has helped double the percentage of women faculty within the health system and has five strategic priorities:

- Recruitment of mid- and later-career faculty
- Retention of early-career faculty
- An institutional environment that helps promote women’s careers
- Creating a pipeline and pathways to leadership
- Scientific scholarship in the field

**Developing women’s careers in health sciences**

The program is dedicated to promoting policies, practices and programs that advance women’s participation and success by:

- Advocating for women's advancement and leadership in education, research, clinical practice, and administration
- Promoting sustainable strategies to enhance an institutional climate of inclusion, equity and opportunity
- Collecting, analyzing, and applying data to inform institutional and individual decisions and actions
- Developing and disseminating initiatives, resources, and mentoring and professional career development programs
- Recognizing women's accomplishments
- Serving as content experts and providing guidance to health system leadership and other stakeholders
- Working with AAMC and other academic and professional health organizations to advance women in health and science nationally
- Providing mentoring and a welcoming community for women

The UC Davis Women in Medicine and Health Sciences program helps ensure the full participation and success of women in all roles within academia.
Creating a community of learning and networking

The annual Faculty Welcome Reception is our most popular event, introducing new women faculty to other women and to health system leadership. Our Speaker Series features inspiring women leaders from across the country who share best practices, engage in spirited dialogue, stimulate ideas and provide mentoring models. The schedule of yearly events is posted on our website (ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/wimhs), and shared through a dedicated listserv.

Partnerships and collaborations

To increase programmatic reach and impact, WIMHS has forged multiple and valuable partnerships and collaborations within the university and beyond, including:

- Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis
- School of Medicine Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- UC Davis Clinical and Translational Science Center
- NIH-sponsored Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health program
- Mentoring Academy
- American Medical Women’s Association
- Association of American Medical College's Group on Women in Medicine and Science
- American Women in Science
- Research Network for Women in Science Careers

We provide a number of important resources to support the careers of women in health sciences and promote a flexible and inclusive environment, including the following:

- Dedicated brochure summarizing the health system’s family-friendly and career-flexibility policies for work/life balance to help faculty with caregiving, family care and other extracurricular demands
- Blog to share perspective and topics of interest to our faculty and students and trainees (blog.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/wimhs)
- Facebook page to share opportunities, national topics of interest to women in health sciences, and celebrate the successes of our women in health sciences
- AAMC Tool Kits and other helpful resources
“Today’s complex health problems cannot be solved through a single discipline. Multiple perspectives from many disciplines – including nursing, medicine, life sciences, public health and social sciences – are essential to the complex study of health and illness experiences. WIMHS offers an opportunity for women scientists to work together to find creative solutions.”

Heather M. Young, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N.
Associate Vice Chancellor for Nursing and Founding Dean, Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis
WIMHS offers wonderful opportunities to connect with other women across UC Davis, where we can network and learn from each other in a friendly, comfortable and safe space. I’ve made connections that have helped me personally and professionally that never could have happened without WIMHS.”

Ulfat Shaikh, M.D.
Associate Professor, Pediatrics
2015-2016 WIMHS Career Development Scholar
Recognizing women’s accomplishments and training leaders of the future

Making room for women leaders requires system change, succession planning and creating a pipeline and pathways to leadership. Through our annual speaker series, and in our 2009 book Under the Plane Tree – Celebrating Our Founding Women in Medicine, we’re able to offer models of leadership for the next generation, inspire future leaders and honor pioneering women who came before us. Plus, we also provide support for promising women to attend career development and leadership programs including:

- AAMC’s Early Career Women's Professional Development Seminar
- AAMC’s Mid-Career Women's Professional Development Seminar
- Drexel’s Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine Program
- The UC Health Sciences Leadership Development Conference

Additionally, our Career Development Scholar Program provides a rotating, competitive immersion experience in leadership development and mentoring.

Research and scholarship

The causal factors impacting women’s careers in biomedical sciences are becoming better understood, but there are continuing knowledge gaps about effective interventions for stemming attrition. In 2014, WIMHS was featured in the journal Academic Medicine as a model for other institutions. Our researchers studied the impact of family-friendly options and career flexibility as part of a NIH ROI grant focusing on women’s careers in biomedical sciences. We also investigated the consequences of face-time bias as part of an award from the ACE/Sloan Foundation. Research that addresses issues facing women in academic medicine is an important way to further advance the professional development of women faculty.
“By advancing women in the health sciences, we advance the excellence and diversity that is so vital to achieving our academic mission while fostering a satisfied work force and inclusive culture.”

Amparo Villablanca, M.D.
Director, Women in Medicine and Health Sciences

UC Davis
HEALTH SYSTEM

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