

AAFP Family Medicine Interest Group Network
2008 Program of Excellence Award Application

**Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine
Student Family Medicine Association**

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The Student Family Medicine Association (SFMA) is located at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine in Richmond, Virginia. Our goal is to stimulate interest in Family Medicine by providing opportunities for medical students to discover and explore the field. We accomplish this goal by sponsoring lunch lectures, offering clinical skills workshops, volunteering in the community, and supplying interaction with family physicians. Our executive board meets once a month with our faculty advisor, Gaynel Olsen, and other interested students to plan events and programs. We sponsor some of the most popular events on campus and almost every medical student has attended at least one of our programs.

Infrastructure

Students from every medical school class are in leadership positions within our group. This allows us to plan events that appeal to all medical students. Additionally, upper classmen who have been actively involved in the AAFP mentor new and underclass students to facilitate the transfer of leadership from one class to the next. To encourage and retain student membership, we often create new positions to utilize every student's skills and strengths. We have successfully encouraged our FMIG members to run for state and national-level office positions. We now have several students who serve the AAFP and VAFP in these positions.

Faculty Advisors:

Dr. Gay Olsen, Associate Professor of Family Medicine: Dr. Olsen has served as the primary faculty advisor for our FMIG for many years. Thanks to her tireless efforts, our organization continues to run smoothly from year to year. Dr. Olsen is instrumental in training new student leaders, scheduling speakers, and soliciting funds for our events. She also attends the Kansas City National Conference for Students and Residents and the Virginia Academy of Family Physicians summer meeting with the group each year.

Dr. Steve Crossman, Associate Professor of Family Medicine: Dr. Crossman is a new addition to the Department of Family Medicine. This year he has served as a physician role model and mentor for SFMA. He has participated in many of our events, including speaking for one of our lunch lecture series, organizing an OB workshop, and opening his home to our group for our holiday party.

Dr. Michelle Whitehurst- Cook, Associate Professor: Dr. Whitehurst- Cook is currently the Dean of Admissions for the medical school and also a physician within the Department of Family Medicine. She is a past president for the VAFP. She serves as a physician role model and mentor for our group. Dr. Whitehurst-Cook participates in and guides our CARITAS and RAM clinic electives. She is also present for many of our lunch lectures series, meetings, and social events.

Dr. Anton Kuzel, Chair of the Department of Family Medicine: Dr. Kuzel is a generous donor to our FMIG group. Dr. Kuzel, through the Department of Family Medicine, provides funding for our lunch lectures, social events, and conference trips. He provided his Wintergreen Ski Lodge as the grand prize of one of our raffles at a former VAFP winter conference.

Fourth Year SFMA Leaders:

Zeina Saliba – Past President, Past VAFP Student Delegate

Michael Layne – CARITAS leader

Third Year SFMA Leaders:

Lesli Brown – Past President

Letitia Lee – Past President

Ryan Joo – Past Recording Secretary

Second Year SFMA Leaders:

Allison Behrle – Co-President

Esther Johnston – Co-President

Monica Velasquez – Recording Secretary

Erica Green – VAFP Student Representative

Alicia Zukas – AAFP Membership Coordinator

First Year SFMA Leaders:

Rishika Kaundal – M-1 Class Representative and Co-Chair of the Student-Run Clinic

Project

Kiila Tollerson – Workshop Coordinator
Sarah Corley – Workshop Coordinator
Michelle Tsai – Guest Speaker Coordinator

Officer Duties:

Past Presidents: The past presidents of our FMIG serve as advisors and leadership developers. Lesli Brown, a current M3, provides advice on starting up a free clinic in the area.

Co-Presidents: The Co-Presidents work with our faculty advisor to ensure that all events and activities run smoothly. They schedule speakers, solicit funding for the group, recruit members, and encourage members to attend the Kansas City National Conference. The Co-Presidents also collaborate with group members to develop innovative events that appeal to all students and provide exposure to the field of Family Medicine.

Recording Secretary: The recording secretary records the minutes from each meeting and converts them into a format suitable for online posting. The secretary is also responsible for sending these minutes and other important announcements to all our FMIG members.

Treasurer: The treasurer is responsible for all fundraising activities of our group. Thus, the duties of the treasurer include writing grant proposals, soliciting Alumni donations, organizing raffles, and developing new fund raising ideas.

Food Coordinator: The food coordinator organizes food for lunch lectures and workshops. The coordinator works with other officers to plan, organize, and run our lunch lectures. In addition, the coordinator submits paperwork for payments and reimbursements of meals.

Guest Speaker Coordinator: The guest speaker coordinator works to invite guest speakers to our events and also to publicize our events. In addition, this officer is responsible for the introduction of speakers at our lunch lectures.

Lottery Coordinator: The lottery coordinators collect contact information from students interested in our clinical skills workshops and use a computer to randomly select 'lottery winners' who will attend the workshop.

First/Second year representatives: The first and second year representatives work with the Workshop Coordinators and the Guest Speaker Coordinator to manage our workshops and lunch lectures. The representative collects and returns workshop reservation deposits. This person keeps students informed of our FMIG's events and activities through in-class announcements and electronic bulletin board notices.

Program of Excellence Award Writing Workshop

The SFMA officers and advisor planned a Program of Excellence (PoE) award writing workshop, similar to one held in previous years. Attendees were able to peruse last year's

application, ask questions, and make suggestions for this year's application. The planning committee enlisted the help of upperclassmen with AAFP experience and students who attended the 2007 national conference. Responsibility for writing each section was divided amongst the group and input from all classes was incorporated. Using this method, each student feels that the PoE award application is a part of them. We are especially excited about new additions to our Community Outreach in the form of a completely student-run free clinic and a campus-wide health fair. We have also continued to improve our lunch lecture series with new topics, such as telemedicine, and we now offer both a phlebotomy workshop and an OB workshop.

Communication and Publicity

The FMIG utilizes various avenues to disseminate information about our upcoming events and opportunities. Announcements are uploaded to the Electronic Bulletin Board, a forum to which all medical students and faculty have access. Our website, located at <http://www.courses.vcu.edu/MED300FP-gso/sfpa/index.htm>, has officer contact information, volunteer opportunities, meeting minutes, and pictures from our events. Representatives from each class also make announcements during breaks in lectures and/or pass information along through word of mouth. We also use an online RSVP system for our lunch lectures and social events, so we can accurately plan for the number of students attending.

Student Involvement / Student Retention

Two major objectives of our student family medicine interest group are recruiting new members and involving students in issues and events concerning family medicine. We host a variety of social events throughout the academic year to invite students to learn more about our FMIG in a relaxed environment. In order to retain students of all classes, we host clinical skills workshops at the Family Medicine residency programs in the area, and we also invite guest speakers for lunch lectures to talk about topics that will interest medical students on all levels, such as our popular "Business and Medicine" series. The department also provides funding for students to travel to both the VAFP winter conference and the summer national conference each year, which allows the students to find out more about Family Medicine as a specialty and to make close contacts in the field.

Student Lounge

Our FMIG members have access to a student lounge in the Department of Family Medicine. It is a welcoming, relaxing environment for many students. The lounge's location within the department gives our members access to computers, free printing, and a fully stocked kitchen. The lounge also houses a medical library, residency program brochures, and information on family medicine opportunities in the community. This lounge allows our FMIG to hold informal meetings, interact with each other and faculty, and provides a quiet place to study.

Taste of Richmond

The Taste of Richmond is an event, sponsored by the SFMA and the Department of Family Medicine, held each year as a part of the SOM orientation program for new matriculates. Welcoming the students and inviting them to become a part of the SFMA “family” is the theme of the event. The festive affair takes place in the campus’ central courtyard under a large white tent, complete with music from a local D.J. Local family physicians are recruited to participate. They meet and mingle with the new students chatting about the impact that Family Medicine has within the community. Street food vendors, a tradition around the MCV Campus, are invited to come and set up their carts around the tent and serve samples of their food. Varieties include Thai, Caribbean, Mexican, wraps, pizza, and of course the very popular ice cream cart! Students are provided food vouchers to “pay” for the food and the vendors are reimbursed by funds secured for the event. The fifth year of this event, marked by 2008, has gained such popularity by the students and the SOM that funds are now offered to continue this event through the Alumni Association Fund and the SOM Dean’s Office. A good time is had by all!

Student Organizations Fair

Each year during M1 orientation week, student organizations are invited to set up tables in the courtyard and introduce new students to their goals and activities. The SFMA table is one of the most popular at this event. SFMA student officers man the table and invite new students to join. We tell M1s and current upperclassmen about our social activities, community service, and opportunities to meet residents and faculty. As a bonus, students who sign up for our FMIG at the fair are given tickets for free ice cream which can be redeemed at the cart across from ours. Additionally, new student members are automatically made members of Virginia Academy of Family Physicians (VAFP) and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Membership is sponsored by the VAFP. The free ice cream and subscription to the AAFP journal/ membership are proven strategies that increase our numbers. Each year about 150 new students join our SFMA.

Mexican Party

The first meeting of our FMIG is always a Mexican-themed party at our advisors house. We invite the new members of our group to meet the existing members and the rest of the Family Medicine Department. The delicious Mexican food and relaxed atmosphere provides a perfect opportunity for new students to ask questions, express concerns, and learn about all the resources and support that are available to them through the Family Medicine Department.

Wintergreen Retreat

This year’s fourth annual Family Medicine retreat was held at the Wintergreen Resort on February 1-3, 2008. The purpose of this retreat was to provide first- and second-year medical students with one-on-one training that concentrated on improving physical exam skills, and also to provide a relaxed atmosphere in which the students and residents could interact. Over 10 Family Medicine residents and community physicians from two VCU-affiliated programs, St. Francis and Chesterfield Family Medicine, attended the retreat

with the students. The event was a great success, with 22 students attending. Each student was able to practice the majority of the physical exams they had learned thus far, and some of the first year students were able to learn new ones! The weekend provided students with a comfortable environment to meet and work with VCU faculty, residents, and fellow classmates. Students were also able to ski and enjoy the Wintergreen Spa during their allotted free time throughout the weekend.

In addition, this year we were fortunate to have the Wintergreen Retreat coincide with the VAFP's 60th annual conference. Students were able to speak with Virginia family physicians regarding the practice of family medicine today; moreover, students were also given the opportunity to attend any of the lectures being given at the conference. Some particular topics of interest included Fibromyalgia, current strategies for smoking cessation, and standards of care for Diabetic patients and the Elderly.

Holiday Party

The annual Holiday Party is one of our biggest hits of the year! SFMA members, faculty advisors, and family physicians from the Richmond community were invited to our physician advisor's home for good food, conversation, and a cookie exchange. Also in attendance this year was the School of Medicine's Associate Dean for Admissions and the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education. The event was catered by Croaker's Spot, a celebrated soul food restaurant in Richmond's historic Jackson Ward area. Attendees feasted on fried fish, potatoes, peppers and onions. The night ended with a cookie exchange, which gave the party-goers a variety of desserts to choose from as well as many to take home. This was a wonderful opportunity for students to converse with physicians and faculty in a casual, relaxed atmosphere. The Holiday Party was the perfect event to enjoy with each other before the close of the semester.

Ice Cream Social

I scream, you scream, we all scream for ICE CREAM! On January 28th, we invited the physicians of the Family Medicine Department to meet and greet students interested in learning more about Family Medicine. Over ice cream sundaes, students were able to ask questions about family medicine ranging from residencies to alternative practice models.

End of Year Picnic

The annual SFMA picnic is held at the end of every school year on Brown's Island. The island is a quiet retreat in the heart of downtown Richmond. Students of all years eat lunch together while enjoying the views of the James River and the Richmond skyline. During this time we reflect on all that we have accomplished during the year and hold elections for the new officers. Our faculty advisor organizes and sponsors the event for us each year. This year the picnic will be held in mid-May and will provide a nice break from end-of-the-year studying. We hope to have a great time talking, eating, and resting in the shade.

Family Medicine Advocacy

Our family medicine advocacy programs focus on forging relationships between medical students and family medicine residents and physicians. We hold our most popular events, the clinical skills workshops, at family medicine residency programs affiliated with our medical school. This allows many medical students to visit and explore family medicine early in their medical training. We also sponsor trips to VAFP and AAFP conferences for any student interested in attending. Throughout the year, we hold many lunch lectures dedicated to showing students all the possibilities of family medicine.

Clinical Skills Workshops

Every year, the first- and second-year medical students look forward to the clinical skills workshops offered by our FMIG. These workshops provide a unique opportunity to learn and practice some of the basic skills that are invaluable to any clinician's practice. The students' enthusiasm is evidenced by the large number of RSVPs as well as the long waiting lists that have accompanied the announcement of every workshop. This year, workshops for suturing, injections, casting and splinting, as well as obstetrics-gynecology were offered. The Chesterfield, St. Francis, and Fairfax family medicine residency programs generously host these workshops. It is always clear that each physician, resident, and nurse is very passionate in teaching students; the staff of each of the residencies is invaluable. Dinner is provided at each of the workshops. All of the workshops are very hands-on – during the suturing workshop, for example, students practice on pigs' feet while exploring various suturing techniques, such as the cross stitch and the purse string. Moreover, technology in medicine is often integrated – during the injection workshop, not only do students practice subcutaneous injections and PPDs on each other (and sometimes on the physicians!), but they are also fortunate to have the opportunity to perform intramuscular injections on simulated shoulders and knees. This year, even a phlebotomy component was included in the injection workshop, which made it all that more interesting! SFMA's clinical skills workshops truly showcase the goal of the group --- to stimulate interest in family medicine and to provide opportunities to explore this interest.

National Primary Care Week

Our FMIG usually organizes about three lunch lectures during National Primary Care Week, held annually in October. This year, we had three lectures scheduled. The first, given by Dr. Lawrence, a faculty member in the department, focused on the future of the specialty of Family Medicine and what family physicians do on a daily basis. Our second lecture featured Dr. Steve Crossman, a VCU School of Medicine graduate, family practitioner, and current pre-doctoral education program director. He discussed his decision to practice in rural Virginia and shared vignettes about his practice and the community. He also provided some insight into the loan repayment programs available. Our last informative event was scheduled to be presented by Dr. Azhar Rafiq, a faculty member very involved with the use of technology in medicine. Due to extenuating circumstances, he was unable to present as scheduled, but we were lucky to have him agree to speak again during our Business in Medicine series.

Business in Medicine

Now an annual tradition, the Business in Medicine lunch lecture series not only provides students the opportunity to learn about the “real world” of medicine, but also the chance to interact with physicians who are eager to convey the realities in practicing medicine today. Physicians speak on various topics regarding business in medicine, whether it is loan repayment, group versus private practice, or practice management. Dr. James Anderson, a family physician who practices locally in Richmond, spoke on training medical assistants and physician assistants in obtaining the HPI so as to save valuable time for the physician and also to increase efficiency in practice. Dr. Anderson demonstrated the validity of this theory with financial profiles of his own family medicine group practice. The students were intrigued by this innovative system and by the rapid evolution of family medicine in practice. Continuing with the theme of business in medicine, Dr. Azhar Rafiq spoke on the integration of technology with medicine. An expert in the arena of telemedicine and robotics surgery, Dr. Rafiq demonstrated just how fast-paced the world of technology in medicine is evolving today. Students listened in rapt attention as Dr. Rafiq recounted various examples of the effectiveness of telemedicine, including how telemedicine is being used at VCU Health Systems in conjunction with the Department of Corrections. Closing this year’s business in medicine lecture series is Dr. Susan Miller, a family physician who will be speaking on the new technologies that are available to physicians in community practices. Students will learn about various aspects of technology in family medicine, including electronic health records, new dictation software, as well as computer diagnosis programs. This year’s lectures have indeed enlightened students in what it truly means to be in family medicine today.

Family Medicine National Conference for Residents and Students

About 10 members of VCU Student Family Medicine Association and faculty attended the 2007 National Conference for Family Medicine Residents and Students in Kansas City in early August. At the opening session, we were elated to receive the Program of Excellence Award in Family Medicine Advocacy/Relationship with Residents. Receipt of this award served as a motivation to continue and step up our efforts in this arena, as well as to become more active in other areas. In addition, we had a few of our members receive scholarships to attend the conference. The VCU Department of Family Medicine offered support to other SFMA members attending the conference. Our group members tackled different workshops and courses in order to experience as much of the conference as possible. We have begun to implement some of the leadership strategies shared with us during the conference. The exhibit hall was one of the most exciting components of the conference. It was interesting to see how the residencies differed from each other and how unique they all were. By the end of the trip, we had learned about topics that were not regularly taught in our classrooms, expressed our ideas through resolution writing and leadership development sessions, met several residents and fellow students and best of all, had our bags filled with information for future reference and goodies from the exhibition hall!

Virginia Academy of Family Physicians (VAFP) Winter Meeting

Close to 20 FMIG members attended the winter meeting of Virginia's Family Physicians (VAFP). The three day conference took place from February 1-3, 2008, in Wintergreen, Virginia. The conference activities included talks on a huge array of key issues in current clinical practice, including everything from treatment for diabetes mellitus and cardiovascular disease to identifying autism spectrum disorders in the pediatric population. Students were invited to join all of the conference sessions, which were offered from Friday night through Sunday afternoon. FMIG members included M2 student and VAFP Student Representative Erica Green, who represented our FMIG at a VAFP Board Meeting held at the conference on Saturday. Students were excited to have the opportunity to stay together in two cabins rented by the Department of Family Medicine and share meals and conversation with a number of residents from VCU Family Medicine training programs.

Relationships with Residents

The Resident Physicians in the Richmond community are truly invaluable to SFMA's success in offering students valuable opportunities to discover and explore the field family medicine. Residents from local family medicine practices participate in our monthly meetings as well as our social gatherings, whether it is the annual Mexican Party or the ice cream social where they talked to students candidly about the realities of residency. They are also an invaluable part of our clinical skills workshops, as many of them lead these workshops in small groups with students. Moreover, the residents serve as mentors to the students and act as a precious source of support in the students' busy and stressful lives. They have also attended the Wintergreen Retreat in Wintergreen, VA with the students this semester. At the retreat, the residents socialized with the students and taught clinical examination skills throughout the weekend, which the students found vastly helpful.

Community Outreach

Student-Run Free Clinic Initiative

Our FMIG is currently working on establishing the foundation for a VCU student-organized free clinic. As our group is the founding entity, this spring we have been working on the logistics of undertaking such a large and involved project. We recently received the donation of several rooms from the Centenary United Methodist Church to operate an after-hours clinic in the heart of downtown Richmond, where there is a great need for health care. The student members of SFMA have formed subgroups to divide the various tasks associated with starting a free clinic. One subgroup is working with the school's deans and legal counsel to gain support and funding for the project. Another subgroup is working with other established organizations and free clinics in the Richmond area to get advice and research for the development of a needs assessment. Other members are working with the church and local leaders to determine logistics. Students, faculty, staff, and community leaders are all extremely excited at the prospect of a VCU student-organized clinic. We hope to open the clinic in January of 2009.

CARITAS Clinic: Congregations Around Richmond Involved To Assure Shelter

CARITAS Clinic, sponsored and supported by the department of Family Medicine is a collaboration of churches in the Richmond area providing shelter, food, and medical services to the homeless. Once a month a team of medical students and one attending physician/resident from a local residency travel to the various churches in Richmond to provide free blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose screens, pulmonary function testing, and body mass index calculations, along with nutritional and medical patient education for the homeless.

At the beginning of the school year, we hold a CARITAS interest meeting, which is advertised to the entire student body. At this meeting, we discuss the workflow of the clinic, including the services that we as students will offer, the various locations of the clinics, and the dynamics of the patient population. We also hold training sessions on the proper use of glucose and cholesterol meters, refresher courses on the proper way to attain a blood pressure, and a workshop on how to counsel patients regarding personal hygiene. Afterwards, we pass out sign up sheets where students are able to sign up to participate in as many clinics as they would like.

Although there is an attending physician/resident who volunteers to supervise the medical team, the health clinics are entirely student lead. The student leaders are current fourth year medical students, many of whom were former FMIG leaders, who have an interest in serving indigent populations. They are responsible for designating health stations, answering questions students may have, assigning medical students to various duties, and assuring that we have all the necessary supplies and equipment to run the clinic smoothly.

Additionally, the fourth year students gather data from the patients and store it in a laptop computer as to have a quasi “medical record” that can follow the patient from clinic to clinic throughout the course of the year as well as be transferred to an emergency room if they should see a patient that may need emergent care. This data is also compiled and presented in a student lead debriefing at the end of the school year in an effort to reflect upon our accomplishments in the clinic as well as identify any potential areas that we can possibly improve upon for the next academic year.

To date, our CARITAS volunteers have seen over four hundred homeless individuals. A grant award of \$3000.00 from the Arnold Gold Foundation was received to support the purchase of supplies for the clinics.

Freedom House

Freedom House is an agency in Richmond which provides far more than food and shelter. The organization helps people overcome the very circumstances that led them to homelessness in the first place. “When help is provided to those in need to obtain and maintain the life skills and support they need to succeed, the crisis of homelessness are not only addressed at its very core, provisions for a real opportunity for change occur”, stated Christy Ellis, Freedom House Volunteer Coordinator, at a recent SFMA meeting. We were sold! The group decided to “adopt” the Freedom House as a new project.

Associated with Freedom House, The Conrad Center is a state of the art nutrition center that feeds 2000 people in need daily. SFMA students have volunteered to serve food at the center. This opportunity was also extended to our protégés in our Mentorship in Medicine program. One of the needs of the Freedom House is toilet paper, so the students are organizing a toilet paper drive at the SOM this spring. This will certainly be different than the food drives we've organized!

Food Drive for the Central Virginia Food Bank

After learning of a recent break-in at the Central Virginia Food Bank, our group has decided to organize an end-of-the-year food drive to replenish some of the stolen food. We will be making it into a class competition to see which class can collect the most canned goods. We are hopeful that we will be very successful.

RAM Clinic at the Wise County Fairgrounds

The Remote Area Medical (RAM) Clinic is an annual free clinic that is designed to give medical and dental care to those who cannot afford it in the rural areas surrounding Wise, Va. RAM Wise is a three day clinic that provides care for over three thousand patients from rural Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. For one weekend each summer the Wise County Fairgrounds are transformed into a living, breathing health care animal. This hive of medical activity in the most rural of areas gives students and faculty a chance to see a different side of medicine than is present at the Richmond campus.

Each year the Family Medicine Department at VCU sends physicians and students to volunteer at this massive clinic. VCU brought twenty students to the RAM clinic last summer. Specially designed T-shirts were provided to the students so they could be identified as VCU medical students. The students are encouraged to experience every aspect of the clinic from intake and patient registration, to assisting with minor surgeries, interviewing patients and assisting our accompanying family physicians with physical examinations. Also, the students had an opportunity to work with, and learn from, dentists, dental students, dermatologists, a plastic surgeon, opticians, OB/GYN physicians, as well as medical students from other schools in Virginia such as Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine and the University of Virginia.

One of the offerings of our students was pulmonary function testing to patients under the supervision of their faculty advisor, who is a licensed respiratory therapist. Also in conjunction with the pulmonary function testing, students worked with on the pulmonary truck learning to take and read chest x-rays under the supervision of a local physician as he saw patients.

Eastern Shore Mission of Mercy

This year, one of our third year students worked with our physician advisor to organize a small contingent of medical students to travel to the Eastern Shore of Virginia with the large Dental Mission of Mercy that travels there every spring. Missions of Mercy are organized by the Dental School at VCU and the Virginia Dental Association, and they have three huge trips each year to the rural areas of the state where many people go without dental care. About 8 medical students were able to go and help out with taking

blood pressures, dispensing medications, and translating for the dentists. They were also able to observe the work that the dentists and dental students and help out where possible. This was a great interdisciplinary experience for our students, and it also allowed students to see the importance of dental care in overall health care. The hope is that next year we will be able to do more, such as check glucose and cholesterol as well as blood pressure.

School Outreach

A fourth-year SFMA member developed a school outreach project targeting a local urban elementary school's fourth grade class. She designed the program from the Standards of Learning guidelines to include four sessions composed of Anti-Smoking, Dental health, Exercise and Nutrition. For the Anti-Smoking session, she used the Tar Wars curriculum; for the Dental health, she partnered with two dental students to demonstrate proper dental hygiene and tooth brushes were distributed to the class; for the Exercise session, she provided each student with a pedometer to track the number of steps taken daily; and the Nutrition session was focused on how to make simple, nutritious after-school snacks. The school was so impressed with the curriculum she designed that they asked if they could integrate this into their curriculum! Pre and post tests were given to the students to measure outcomes from the sessions. Her findings will be presented to the SFMA in May.

First Annual VCU/MCV Campus Community Health Fair

This year, all of the health profession schools on campus (Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Nursing, Public Health, and Allied Health) organized a huge campus-wide health fair to be held on April 19th at a large convention center in downtown Richmond. The hope is that many people in the greater Richmond community who may or may not have access to health care will be able to attend. Our FMIG will have a table at the event where we will be taking blood pressure, checking glucose and cholesterol levels, and calculating BMI. We are also hoping to perform pulmonary function tests for the community members who come. It should be a great success!

Mentorship in Medicine

The Mentorship in Medicine program seeks to establish communication between undergraduate health career-interested students in partnership with the VCU School of Medicine's SFMA. In its third year, it is designed to provide an outlet for undergraduate college students in which questions and concerns about professional school can be addressed. The students are linked with medical students who serve as peer mentors. The ultimate goal is to introduce these students to various careers in medicine and guide them through the necessary steps to achieve this goal.

Following an introductory meeting, students will maintain contact via email, phone, and in person in order to foster the mentor – protégés relationship. This year, the SFMA targeted VCU undergraduate students. We signed up over fifty students at a health career expo that was hosted by the VCU academic campus. Activities for the protégés included assembling patient care bags for the CARITAS Clinics, a question and answer session

with other medical students and a BLS CPR class. We will close the academic year by inviting the protégés to our annual SFMA end of the year picnic.

Categorical Award Submission: Community Outreach/Patient Advocacy

This year our most valuable programs have been in relation to community outreach and patient advocacy. We take pride in our work in the community, and we have incorporated many new outreach ideas into our group's activities.

First, we have continued to be integrally involved in the CARITAS Clinic (Congregations Around Richmond Involved To Assure Shelter), which serves the homeless population in Richmond. Once a month a team of medical students and one attending physician/resident from a local residency travel to the various churches in Richmond to provide free blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose screens, pulmonary function testing, and body mass index calculations, along with nutritional and medical patient education for the homeless. The service we provide has proved to be very beneficial to this specific community, as their access to health care is typically very limited. We give them wallet-sized cards on which to keep a record of their glucose and blood pressure readings so that the next time we see them we can provide some sort of continuity of care. We also gather this data ourselves so that we have a record as well.

Also related to serving the homeless, our group decided to "adopt" the Freedom House as a new project this year. Freedom House is an agency in Richmond which provides far more than food and shelter. The organization helps people overcome the very circumstances that led them to homelessness in the first place, thus helping them to get back on their feet. We will be helping them with any of their needs, including organizing a toilet paper drive. The Conrad Center is a nutrition center associated with the Freedom House that serves over 2000 people in need each day. Members of our group have helped to serve meals there multiple times this year, thus providing a basic service to the homeless population.

Our group has been involved in two rural clinics this year – one at Wise, VA during the summer, and one at the Eastern Shore of VA this spring. Both clinics have proven valuable to the individual communities as well as been great learning experiences for the students who were able to participate. RAM Wise is a three day clinic that provides care for over three thousand patients from rural Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. There are many different areas in which the students can help volunteer, including intake and patient registration, assisting with minor surgeries, and interviewing patients and assisting our accompanying family physicians with physical examinations. The patients that are seen in rural southwest Virginia have limited access to medical services, and so this health fair provides much needed medical and dental care. At the Eastern Shore of VA, about eight medical students assisted with triage of patients and taking blood pressures and other vital signs. This two-day dental clinic is smaller, but over 18 hours about 900 patients were treated for various dental problems. The medical students also helped in dispensing the medications to the patients. This area is also underserved, and so the services provided were of great benefit to the greater community.

Finally, our major project this spring has been to begin the development of our own student-run free clinic. Though we are only in the planning stages, we have secured a space for an after-hours clinic in the heart of downtown Richmond, and we have begun contacting various agencies that will be able to help us get up and running by January

2009. This is a huge undertaking, but we see the need for such a clinic in the downtown community, and we are very committed to seeing this project through.