

## Future NIH administrative leaders visit NIEHS

By Amy Stull

A group of future NIH administrative, science management, and policy leaders spent Sept. 20 on the NIEHS campus in Research Triangle Park, N.C.

Fourteen Presidential Management Fellows (PMFs) and NIH Management Interns (MIs) traveled from the Washington D.C. area to NIEHS to learn about the Institute and its programs. During the visit, the interns and fellows also had the opportunity to meet a variety of staff and begin conversations about potential intern rotations at NIEHS. The visitors were joined by an MI and a PMF now completing rotations at NIEHS, as well as a PMF who has been assigned to NIEHS for the entirety of her program.

NIH has participated in the government-wide Presidential Management Fellows Program since 1985. PMFs develop rotational assignments across the various NIH institutes and centers (ICs), in a broad range of administrative and programmatic research support areas, including budget and finance, outreach and communications, information technology, grants management, program and management analysis, contracts management, human resources, and general administration. These rotational opportunities provide on-the-job training with exposure to senior leadership.

The NIH Management Intern program was established in 1957 and has trained more than 400. The program offers the opportunity for highly motivated employees to explore different administrative fields, gain invaluable insight into science management, and change careers within NIH.

### Experiencing life at NIEHS

During their visit, the PMFs and MIs were given an overview of environmental health, NIEHS history, and current strategic planning efforts by Kimberly Thigpen Tart, J.D., and Sheila Newton, Ph.D. The visitors then departed on a walking tour of the Institute led by John Schelp of the Office of Science Education and Diversity.

Next, the group had the opportunity to visit the First Environments Early Learning Center, where they were greeted by Executive Director Beth Lake and shown the sustainable operations of the childcare center, including the edible garden and outdoor play spaces filled with reclaimed materials.

The visitors then returned to the Rodbell Auditorium to hear from former PMFs and MIs who are now working at NIEHS, including Liam O'Fallon, Jim Remington, Barbara Gittleman, and Molly Puente, Ph.D., from the Division of Extramural Research and Training, as well as Chris Long from the Office of Management. The panel shared stories about their varied career trajectories and articulated different reasons why they are happy to have found a home at NIEHS.

After lunch and networking with the panelists, the group spent some time talking with Joellen Austin about her role as the Executive Officer and Associate Director for Management, and the opportunities and challenges of leading at NIEHS compared to other NIH ICs.

The day concluded with presentations by senior staff members highlighting a few of the Institute's unique programs, including the National Toxicology Program by Mary Wolfe, Ph.D.; the Clinical Research Unit by Stavros Garantziotis, M.D.; the NIEHS journal Environmental Health Perspectives by Jane Schroeder, D.V.M., Ph.D.; the Sister Study by Dale Sandler, Ph.D.; the Superfund Research Program by Beth Anderson; and the Partnerships for Environmental Public Health by Liam O'Fallon.

(Amy Stull is an NIH Management Intern who recently completed a rotation, from September through November, as a Management Analyst in the NIEHS Office of Management.)

### Positive Outcomes

In an email following the visit, first year PMF David Robinson expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to visit, saying, "It was very rewarding and valuable, and it gave me a great insight into what your institute does and the important mission you are charged with." Second year PMF Laura Damiano expressed similar sentiments. "I truly enjoyed seeing the NIEHS campus and learning more about the great work the institute supports," she wrote.

NIEHS Executive Officer Joellen Austin, who started her federal career as a Presidential Management Fellow, sponsored the trip. She remembers her opportunity to visit NIEHS during her fellowship, and the benefit of learning about the unique mission of NIEHS and how it functions as part of NIH, even though it is located in North Carolina. She believes it is valuable to pass that experience on to the current interns and fellows, in hopes of creating future ambassadors, and maybe recruiting future employees for NIEHS.



*Interns joined their mentors on the NIEHS Building 101 patio. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)*

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