

Future NIH administrative leaders visit NIEHS

By Kevin Selenich

A group of future National Institute of Health (NIH) science management, policy, and administrative leaders spent Aug. 28 on the NIEHS campus at Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, learning about NIEHS and its programs. Three NIH Management Interns and two Presidential Management Fellows traveled from Washington, D.C., to tour the institute, meet with scientific staff in both the internal research and grant programs, and discuss potential rotations at NIEHS.

NIH has participated in the government-wide Presidential Management Fellows Program since 1985. Fellows develop rotational assignments across various NIH institutes and centers, in administrative and research support areas such as budget and finance, outreach and communications, information technology, grants management, program and management analyses, contracts management, human resources, and general administration. These 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 staff members. 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

Senior staff members highlighted a few of the Institute's unique programs:

- Sheila Newton, Ph.D. — overview of environmental health and NIEHS history
- Mary Wolfe, Ph.D. — National Toxicology Program (NTP)
- Kris Thayer, Ph.D. — NTP Office of Health Assessment and Translation
- Stavros Garantziotis, M.D. — Clinical Research Unit
- Chip Hughes — Division of Extramural Research and Training (DERT) Worker Education and Training Program
- William Suk, Ph.D. — DERT Superfund Research Program

In addition to hearing from the NIEHS scientific community, the group enjoyed lunch in the cafeteria with leaders from the Office of Management. Afterward, they had a tour of the institute with John Schelp, Special Assistant for Community Engagement and Outreach, which was followed by a discussion with NIEHS Executive Officer Joellen Austin, touching on topics such as the opportunities and challenges of leading at NIEHS compared to other institutes and centers at NIH.

The visitors enjoyed a visit to the First Environments Early Learning Center, with a tour by office manager Kim Graber. They were impressed by the sustainable operations of the childcare center, including the edible gardens and the outdoor play space that was built with reclaimed materials.

At the close of the day, Mark McPherson, chief of staff for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Administration and Resource Management, and Chris Long, deputy associate director for management, NIEHS Office of Management, discussed how the two organizations operate and collaborate on a shared campus.

The visitors also took part in a panel discussion with former fellows and interns, including Long, and, from DERT, Barbara Gittleman, Molly Puente, Ph.D., Jerry Phelps, and Jim Remington. Corey Liles, from the Research Triangle Foundation, provided a perspective on Research Triangle Park as a whole, presenting an overview of the past, present, and future of the Park.

Austin started her federal career as a Presidential Management Fellow and has sponsored the trip since her arrival at the institute in 2011. "I get as much out of this visit as do the interns and fellows," she said. "I enjoy promoting the great work of NIEHS, and the enthusiasm of interns and fellows as they begin their management programs is contagious."

(Kevin Selenich is a Presidential Management Fellow on assignment with the NIH Office of Management.)



Front row, from left, Amanda Garton, Ty Lawson, Austin. Back row, from left, Selenich, Amanda Rogers, Richard Clinkscales, Andrew Nawrot. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

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