

THE
FELLOWSHIP
OFFICE
2002 ANNUAL REPORT
NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE





THE FELLOWSHIP OFFICE

It is with pleasure and renewed purpose that the Fellowship Office presents its 2002 Annual Report. The mission of the Fellowship Office is to serve as a focal point for NCI Fellows and to work, in partnership with existing NCI and NIH components, to ensure that NCI continues to attract and retain the best Postdoctoral Fellows. We do this by increasing the visibility of research training as integral to NCI's overall mission, supporting our Fellows' scientific achievements through improved communication and collaboration, assisting sponsors to prepare Fellows for independence through career development activities and guidance in mentoring, and providing referrals where necessary to resolve work and life issues. As we have evolved with our partners during the past year, we have developed a more seasoned mutual relationship. This report is organized according to the five operational components of our mission as of Calendar Year 2002: Outreach, Inreach, Training and Education, Answers, and Transitions.

The Fellowship Office was established in March 2000 in response to a 1997 recommendation from the Intramural Advisory Board (IAB) and the Intramural Division Directors (IDD) to enhance recruitment of Postdoctoral Fellows and to respond to other issues that affect them in the course of their training. Since then, direct recruiting for individual positions is largely accomplished through other offices of NCI, allowing the Fellowship Office to serve in the more global, complementary roles of academic outreach, networking, and orientation. We, the staff, place emphasis on enhancing the fellowship experience for our Postdoctoral Fellows through programs responsive to their concerns.

We represent a diverse group of backgrounds and skills, reflecting our wide-ranging responsibilities. In brief, Special Assistant Viola Black, who inaugurated the Fellowship Office, has primary responsibility for administrative relations within and without NCI and has significant experience in conflict resolution. Administrative Program Assistant Lee



McPhatter provides program support to all Fellowship Office activities and is lead staff member for communications. Our Director, Dr. Donna Vogel, a medical endocrinologist with a Ph.D. in developmental biology, has over 20 years' experience at NIH in both intramural and extramural research and program management. She has a special interest in training, career development, and programs for underrepresented groups in research.

As difficult as it may seem to offer personal attention to nearly 1,000 Fellows, we believe there is no substitute for human contact, and we work to make all of our constituents aware that our "open door" is a reality, not just a logo.

OUTREACH

Why do Fellows choose NCI? Often they learn about our research opportunities from scientific literature, conferences, or their own clinical or graduate advisors. NCI reaches out to recruit Fellows as well — investigators, labs and branches, the Center for Cancer Research, the Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics, the Office of Diversity and Employment Programs, and the NIH Office of Education are partners with us in this effort. We regularly send mailings to recipients of NIH predoctoral fellowships interested in cancer research, and we send brochures and posters to directors of training programs and career development programs funded by NCI. Continuing the theme of personal contact, we visit with groups of interested potential Fellows at universities and medical centers. At career events and meetings of professional societies, we also promote NCI's fellowship opportunities, with a special emphasis on working with trainee, minority, and women's groups within larger organizations. One of our most important messages is that NIH staff are accessible and are willing and able to help early-stage scientists and clinicians as they look ahead to independent careers.



Our Web site is an important tool for visibility and access to information for Fellow candidates. From 2001 to 2002, the average Web hits per day increased from 2,421 to 4,714. New visitors per month increased from around 1,000 in 2001 to 1,200 in 2002. As a result of seeing our site or announcements, we received hundreds of inquiries by email or telephone, and 14 interested candidates visited the Fellowship Office in person.

In 2001, in response to a request from the Foundation for NIH, an independent charitable organization that works in support of NIH research, we developed the new Sallie Rosen Kaplan Fellowship for women scientists in cancer research. The award is supported by a bequest to the Foundation. Time considerations led us to make the 2002 award as an extension year to one of our existing Fellows, Dr. Carolyn Best. From 2003 on, we will award the Kaplan Fellowships through a nationwide competition to recruit new Postdoctoral Cancer Research Training Award Fellows. The Kaplan award was publicized in journal advertisements, through professional societies, direct mailings to cancer training directors, and through our Web site.

I NREACH

One of the most important components of our work is having a physical presence at NCI. While our door is open, we know that Fellows are busy, so we do not necessarily expect them to find time to see us in Building 31. Instead, we come to them — on the main Bethesda campus, in Frederick, at the Bethesda Naval Hospital, in Rockville, and in Gaithersburg. Usually we will invite Fellows to a bagel brunch or a pizza lunch. Sometimes the meeting is specifically to welcome and orient new Fellows, particularly for the clinical programs that welcome new groups each July. At other times, we invite all the Fellows in a lab or branch, or a group within a building, to come see us. After a brief introduction to our Office and our work, we learn about the attendees, listen to their concerns and suggestions, and encourage them to contact us personally if they would like a confidential conversation. Whenever possible, we implement the ideas they express. Examples



include the Quick-Start orientation guides, the Career Development Calendar, and several workshop suggestions. The number of laboratories and branches we visited increased from 17 in 2001 to 28 in 2002, and included Frederick, Bethesda Navy, Key West, the ATC building, and all buildings on the Bethesda campus with NCI labs.

We put our philosophy into action by offering Fellows visibility and experience through opportunities to speak at workshops and to serve as nominators or reviewers for the Outstanding Mentor Awards. Fellowship Office staff are liaison members of the CCR Fellows and Young Investigators Association, a trainee assembly that plans scientific and social events and serves as a sounding board for many of our initiatives.

During 2002, the Fellowship Office participated in six major NCI research events with oral or poster presentations, and in the NIH Research Festival and NIH Hispanic Scientist Day. We use print media, email, listservers, and our Web site to announce activities, events, and news.

Additions to our Web site in 2002 included links to the NIH special interest groups, the Fellows' Editorial Board, clinical training programs, and the National Library of Medicine Bioinformatics Consultation Service.

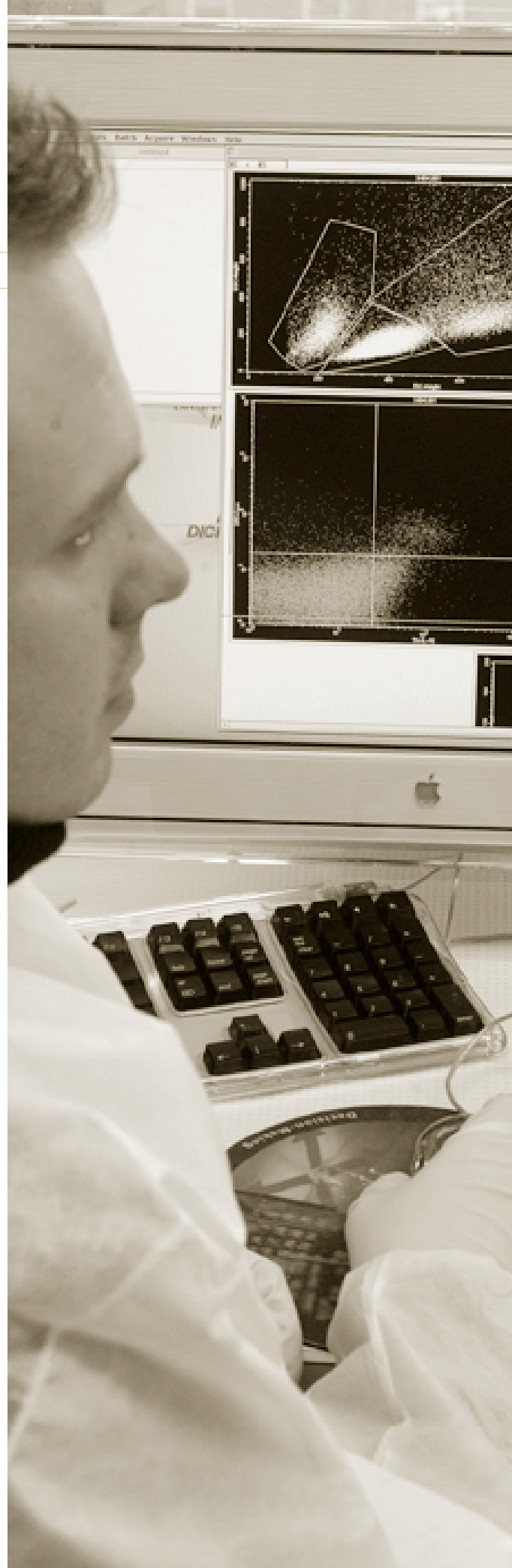
TRAINING & EDUCATION

Many organizations at NIH offer seminars, courses, and workshops in addition to numerous scientific lectures and symposia. There are, however, topics of interest to Fellows that are not covered, or are given too infrequently or in locations inconvenient to them. We aim to fill the gaps by presenting material that has been previously overlooked or by making it more easily available. The Fellows' own suggestions form the basis for many of these workshops and seminars.

In April 2002, we co-sponsored a half-day symposium, "Moving From the Bench Into Business: Entrepreneurship in Science." We worked closely with the lead organizers from NCI's Office of Technology and Industrial Relations in crafting the program and choosing speakers. The event was highly successful, attracting well over 400 registrants.

Fellows were given the opportunity to obtain training in negotiating skills and mentoring at no or reduced cost through our co-sponsorship of courses given by the NIH Training and Development Branch. In addition, we held some workshops of our own on childcare and tax issues for Fellows.

The Career Development Calendar, mentioned under Inreach, was created in response to repeated questions from Fellows as to whether a single site, similar to the NIH Calendar of Events for scientific presentations, listed all the NIH career-related seminars, workshops, and courses.



Finding none, we implemented a weekly listing of activities on our “What’s Happening?” page. Ranging from the “Survival Skills” series to community adult education classes in English for Speakers of Other Languages, activity listings came from a number of sources inside and outside NIH.

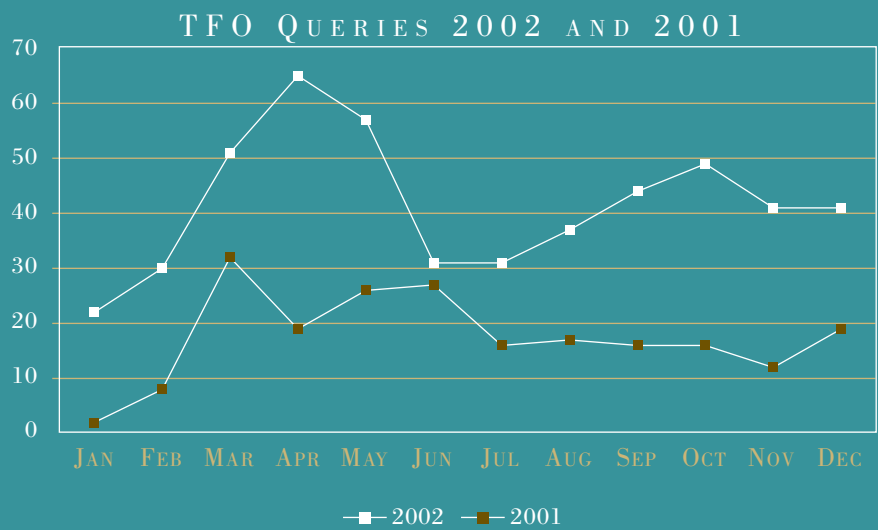
Through recognition and guidance, we continued to promote quality mentoring. A major activity was the first in a series of seminars, “But I Don’t Have Time for This: Integrating Research and Mentorship at NCI.” The program featured a keynote address by Dr. Michael Gottesman, NIH Deputy Director for Intramural Research, followed by interactive panel discussions. Participants heard from investigators, current and former Fellows, and other members of the NIH and NCI leadership, including the NIH Ombudsman, Dr. Howard Gadlin.

We also continued the Outstanding Mentor Award program, begun in 2001. Once again, many fellows and other recipients of noteworthy mentoring nominated NCI investigators for this honor. A committee of Fellows reviewed the nominations, and we presented three Awards and ten Mentor of Merit certificates. NCI is proud to see our Outstanding Mentors recognized inside and outside NIH.

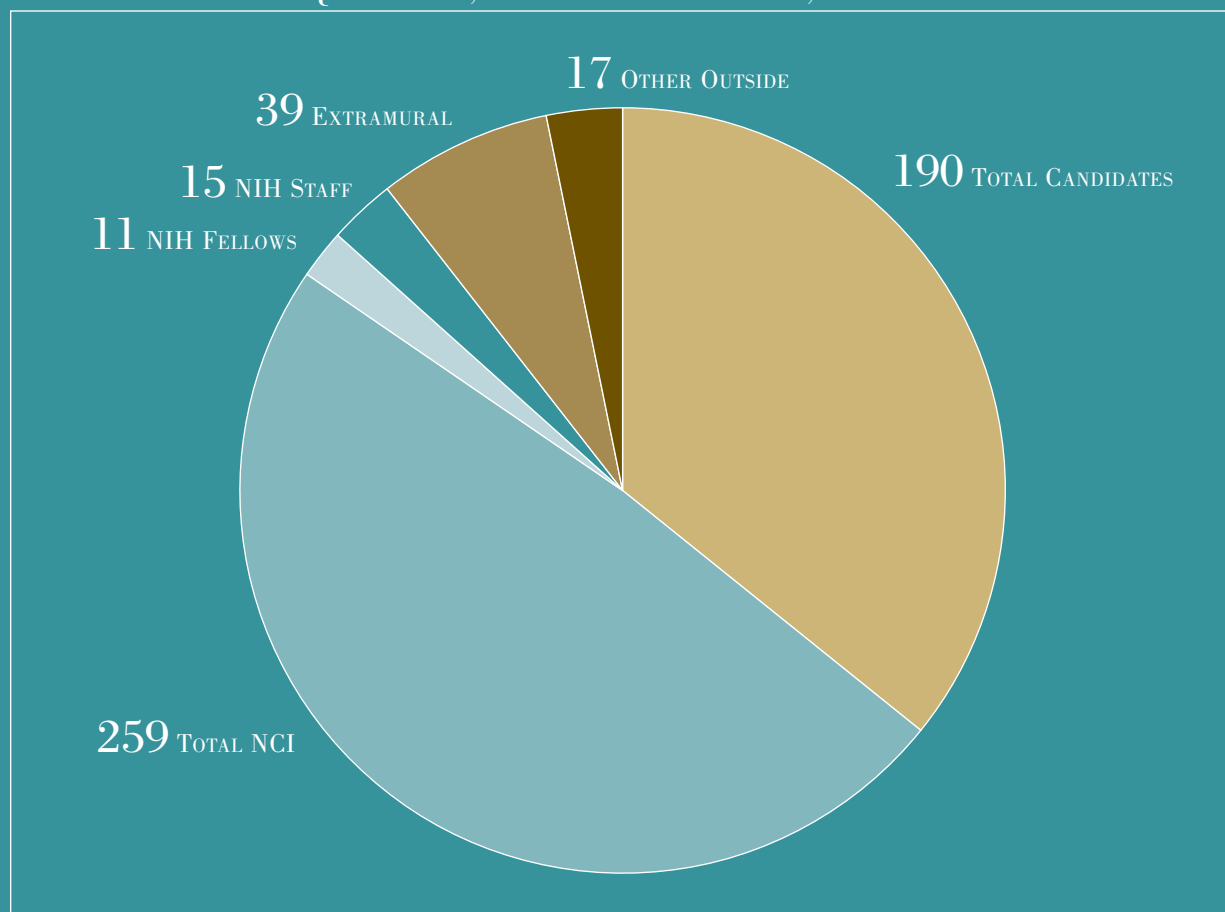
ANSWERS

As we are a focal point for questions from and about Fellows, we welcome their questions as well as those from prospective Fellows or other interested parties. One of our most important messages is that we are available via phone, email, and in person, and confidential inquiries remain so. We will do our best to give prompt and thorough answers, getting input from other sources when necessary. In addition, our Web site provides information on many topics, including links to numerous partners at NCI and NIH.

From January 2001 through December 2002, we logged 717 queries. At the end of calendar year 2002, we were answering over 40 inquiries per month, compared to 19 per month one year earlier. Roughly one-half were from within NCI, one-third from prospective Fellows, and the remainder divided among Fellows and employees in other Institutes and Centers, extramural scientists, and individuals outside NIH.



TFO QUERIES, CALENDAR 2002, BY SOURCE





T RANSITIONS

A postdoctoral fellowship should be a fluid experience, a transition rather than a static event. Our role is to help position that experience in the career trajectory of our developing scientists.

TRANSITIONING IN: Last year, our first tangible product was a “Quick-Start” guide for new Fellows, with a few essential phone numbers and Web sites they would need when beginning at NCI. This year we created and distributed a special version with information for NCI–Frederick. Through access to better data, we contacted 124 new incoming Fellows and provided them with orientation packets. We continued to conduct individual and group orientation and welcoming sessions.

NCI Fellows have needs that are not entirely met by the NIH Fellows Handbook, which concentrates on the Bethesda campus. In order to reach beyond Bethesda while offering more NCI-specific information to new and incoming Fellows, we began writing a new Fellowship Handbook. This is a joint project with the CCR–FYI, along with input from DCEG, NCI–Frederick, and NCI’s Office of Health Promotion/Office of Education and Special Initiatives.

TRANSITIONING ON: We are available for group or individual discussions on life after NCI and on topics such as job seeking, careers in science, and grants. In 2002, we had 23 individual career-related discussions, compared to 14 in 2001. We work closely with partners such as the Work/Life Center, with referrals in both directions depending on the interests and needs of the individual.

This coming year we aim to grow our alumni network. We have conducted confidential “exit learning” sessions with Fellows as they conclude their training. These are not formal exit interviews, but rather opportunities for us to get their feedback about the fellowship experience and enlist their help in the future. We look to our alumni to help NCI reach new prospective Fellows, to assist Fellows looking for employment, and to participate as speakers in future workshops and seminars.





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