

UConn HEALTH

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

**Group on Women in Medicine and
Science, GWIMS**

*Annual Symposium
and
Recognition of Outstanding Women
Faculty & Students*

Monday, April 30, 2018

Reception: 4:30pm – 5:00pm, Academic Lobby

Seminar: 5:00pm – 6:00pm, Massey Auditorium

Post Reception: 6:00pm – 6:30pm, Academic Lobby

Welcoming Remarks:

Marja Hurley, MD

Professor of Medicine and Orthopedics
Chair, Group on Women in Medicine and Science
Associate Dean, Health Career Opportunity Programs

Greetings on Behalf of UConn School of Medicine:

Bruce Liang, MD, FACC

Dean, UConn School of Medicine
Director, Pat and Jim Calhoun Cardiology Center
Ray Neag Distinguished Professor

Introduction of Speaker:

Liisa Kuhn, PhD

Associate Professor of Reconstructive Sciences,
Center for Regenerative Medicine and Skeletal Development

Keynote Speaker:

Judith D. Singer, PhD

Senior Vice Provost of Faculty Development and Diversity and
James Bryant Conant Professor of Education, Harvard University

Topic of Discussion:

“Lessons Learned in Fostering Faculty Development and Diversity”

Outstanding Faculty Recognition Awards

Basic Scientist Award:

Sandra Weller, PhD
Presented by: Laurinda Jaffe, PhD

Education Faculty Award:

Christine Thatcher, EDD
Presented by: Pamela Taxel, MD

Recognition of Honorees:

Christine Finck, MD - Presented by: Marja Hurley, MD
Samantha Lee - Presented by: Melinda Sanders, MD

Closing Remarks:

Marja Hurley, MD

Keynote Speaker



Judith D. Singer, PhD is Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity and James Bryant Conant Professor of Education at Harvard University. An internationally renowned statistician and social scientist, Singer's scholarship focuses on improving the quantitative methods used in social, educational, and behavioral research. Her contributions on multilevel modeling, survival analysis, and individual growth modeling have made these and related statistical methods accessible to empirical researchers. Her publications include numerous papers and book chapters as well as three co-authored books: *By Design: Planning Better Research in Higher Education*, *Who Will Teach: Policies that Matter*, and *Applied Longitudinal Data Analysis: Modeling Change and Event Occurrence*. Dr. Singer was the first woman to be both elected a member of the National Academy of Education and as a Fellow of the American Statistical Association. She is also a fellow of the American Educational Research Association. Dr. Singer has also been honored with a fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. In 2012, her nomination by President Obama to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Board of Education Sciences was confirmed by the US Senate; she was re-nominated by the President to the Board in 2014. In 2014, Dr. Singer received the Janet L. Norwood Award for Outstanding Achievement by a Woman in the Statistical Sciences. She is also a founding Board member of the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness. Appointed Assistant Professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) in 1984, Dr. Singer was promoted to Associate Professor in 1988 and Professor in 1993. She was named the James Bryant Conant Professor of Education in 2001. From 1999 to 2004 Dr. Singer served as Academic Dean of HGSE and acting Dean from 2001 to 2002. Dr. Singer received her B.A. in Mathematics, summa cum laude, from the State University of New York at Albany in 1976 and her Ph.D. in Statistics from Harvard University in 1983.

GWIMS Recognition of Outstanding School of Medicine Women Faculty

2018 Outstanding Basic Scientist Faculty Award Recipient



Sandra Weller, PhD serves as Chair of the Department of Molecular Biology and Biophysics (MB&B) and she also holds the title of Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor, which only three other faculty at UConn Health have been awarded. Dr. Weller has made exceptional contributions in the areas of research, education, and service. She has been a leader in all of these areas, often serving as the initiator and prime driver of new programs and initiatives. Dr. Weller received her B.S. degree in Biology from Stanford University, where she had received the Fox award as the outstanding undergraduate major in the Biological Sciences. She has performed her graduate work at the University of Wisconsin, working in the laboratory of Nobel Laureate Dr. Howard Temin, where she became interested in the field of virology. Dr. Weller had continued her training in virology during her postdoctoral with Dr. Priscilla Schaffer at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute/Harvard Medical School. It was with Dr. Schaffer that she began to work on Herpes viruses, the major research focus of her long career. She came to the Health Center as an Assistant Professor of Microbiology, and quickly moved through the ranks, ultimately becoming chair of the new Department of Molecular, Microbial, and Structural Biology (now MB&B) that was formed through the merger of the Biochemistry and Microbiology departments. While at UConn Health, Dr. Weller has become a world leader in research on Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV) biology, particularly in the area of viral DNA replication. A number of her studies have illuminated the ongoing war between virus and host upon virus infection. Dr. Weller's research program has grown over the course of her career from molecular genetics and virology to now include approaches such as live cell imaging, electron microscopy, protein purification, protein chemistry, and most recently, protein structural biology. Her achievements in research and her scientific standing have been recognized in many ways, including service on multiple federal study sections and panels, and election to membership in the American Academy of Microbiology and to the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering, where she served as President. Dr. Weller's research achievements, along with her educational and service contributions, also led to Dr. Weller being named a University of Connecticut Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor.

GWIMS Recognition of Outstanding School of Medicine Women Faculty

2018 Outstanding Education Faculty Award Recipient



Christine Thatcher, EDD is an Assistant Professor of Family Medicine and Associate Dean for Medical Education and Assessment. Dr. Thatcher has accomplished much in her six years at UConn, especially her efforts related to curricular reform and creating faculty opportunities in education. She has chaired a committee through the reform process related to the assessment of the curriculum. Dr. Thatcher, along with these committee members, designed the new Learning and Enhancement Assessment Period (LEAP) that now occurs after every 10-week block in the MDelta curriculum. Through this innovation, students are given the opportunity to enhance content gaps directly after the learning block, rather than waiting until summer to remediate, which is hugely beneficial to our students. The results include a more individualized approach to learning, and more students having the ability to take part in summer research after their first year. Additionally, through this design, students receive feedback from their assessments within 2 days, as compared to weeks in the Legacy curriculum. This increased efficiency in grading and feedback now occur thanks to Dr. Thatcher's leadership. Dr. Thatcher also created and oversees the new Academic Coaching program for the SOM that benefits the MDelta students, which provides exciting opportunities for faculty to be involved directly with students in a mentoring capacity. This program provides scaffolding to the new curriculum by creating relationships between students and faculty, supporting both scholarship and peer evaluations, and making sure that each student is more actively monitored throughout their program, thereby enhancing their success. Dr. Thatcher has oversight of educational FTE distribution and tracking for close to 550 faculty across the School of Medicine and works directly with faculty, course directors and chairs in providing educational opportunities in the curriculum.

Recipient of Women of Innovation Award from the Connecticut Technology Council

Research Innovation and Leadership Award Winner



Christine Finck, MD is the chief of pediatric surgery at Connecticut Children's Medical Center as well as an Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Surgery at UConn Health. Her research is focused on identifying and developing new treatments to treat a variety of pediatric and neonatal diseases that affect the lungs, esophagus and brain. She has served as the associate director of academic affairs at CT Children's as well as a mentor for many new pediatric research investigators starting their labs at UConn Health. She has built a research environment that provides new investigators with many of the resources they need to be successful. This pipeline of new pediatric investigators continues to grow, which has led to increased extramural funding as well as the development of a pediatric regenerative research group that meets regularly to help support and expand upon CT Children's research endeavors. Dr. Finck and her research group have also teamed up with a bioengineering company to develop a patient-specific bioengineered esophageal scaffold that can be used to treat congenital defects and severe disease requiring surgery. Her research group continues to expand while focusing on the need for new treatments for patient's she sees regularly in the clinical setting. Dr. Finck has created a team of pediatric research investigators that are focused on identifying new therapeutic and regenerative approaches to treating a variety of diseases and congenital defects that effect children. She continues to drive research efforts that develop new innovative devices, therapies and approaches to studying and treating pediatric diseases. She mentors female investigators in the laboratory and in the clinical setting she serves as a mentor to new female residents just beginning their medical training as well as surgical fellows who are working towards their career path as attending physicians. During their training she provides these residents and fellows the opportunity to take part in her research and see for themselves the importance of advancing research that improves care for pediatric patients.

GWIMS Recognition of Outstanding School of Medicine Women Medical Students

Recipient of the UCONN Provost 2018 Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award



Samantha Lee has produced an outstanding academic and extracurricular record during her four years as a student in the School of Medicine. Her academic accomplishments are truly outstanding. She graduates with honors in all of her third year clinical rotations and an additional honors award in recognition of her contributions as a leader within the institution and the broader community. Her leadership activities include coordinating activities for Second Look Weekend, the Migrant Farms Clinics, and service activities in celebration of MLK Day. She has also served on the Admissions Committee, the 3rd year Clerkship Committee, and as student representative to the CT section of ACOG. She has been the recipient of numerous awards including: the Outstanding Student Teaching Award, the Sr. Associate Dean's Appreciation Award (twice), Community Service Award and was chosen by her peers for induction into the Gold Humanism Honor Society. Simply put, Sam is a star. She looks forward to a very promising career in Ob/Gyn.

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