

## **AIM PROPOSALS FUNDED IN 2009-2010**

### **1. The Center for the Teaching of America's Western Foundations**

Dr. Will Jordan (Political Science), Dr. Matt Oberrieder (Philosophy), and Dr. Susan Malone (Education) are the co-directors of this project, now in its second year of AIM funding. The Center for the Teaching of America's Western Foundations promotes the teaching and study of the founding principles and values of the American political system and of the Western cultural tradition that grounds it. It addresses a trend of educational neglect of these foundations in an increasingly pluralistic American society. In the past year, the Center has received a donation through the Jack Miller Center of a Liberty Fund library valued at \$18,000 and has been awarded a Wal-Mart Foundation grant of \$167,100. The Wal-Mart grant will fund a three-week summer workshop for forty high school teachers from across the state. These teachers will learn to read and teach the primary texts of our Western political tradition, the books that Jefferson, Madison, and the other founding fathers had in their libraries. They and the Center will also develop lesson plans and teaching strategies that will allow these teachers to incorporate the reading of these primary texts within their history and social studies classes. The Center also sponsors lectures and symposia on campus by leading national scholars throughout the year.

### **2. The Center for the Treatment of Neurodegenerative Diseases**

Dr. Lee Hyer (Medicine) is the principal investigator for this project, which is in its second year of funding. The Center focuses on the treatment and symptomatic relief of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. It takes a broadly interdisciplinary approach to translational clinical trials, monitoring of disease-modifying treatments, and the clinical, psychological, and social context of treatment. In the past year, the Center has established the Mercer University Memory Clinic at the Family Health Center in Macon to provide a point of entry and recruitment for clinical trials. It has received a grant of \$204,000 from the Takeda Pharmaceutical Company for translational drug studies (Dr.

Samuel Shillcutt, Co-PI). An additional \$3 million in grant applications have been submitted and are under review. The Center has secured matching funds from the Georgia Neurological Institute to hire a Ph.D. neuropsychologist as a post-Doctoral Fellow to coordinate the project. In addition, ten students (eight undergraduate students and two medical students) have been recruited to participate in research and application of interventions with persons who are cognitively impaired.

### **3. The Phronesis Project: Exploring Character, Practical Wisdom, and Professional Formation**

Dr. Paul Lewis (Christianity), Professor Mark Jones (Law), and Dr. Kelly Reffitt (Education) are co-directors of this project, which is in its first year of funding. This project grew out a four-year exploration within the University of vocation and professionalism across the professions, which was sponsored by the University's Quality Enhancement Plan. Professional formation has become a timely topic through the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's several reports on the professions, but it has long been a singular concern at Mercer, ranging from the School of Medicine's specific mission of service to the School of Law's unique first-year professionalism courses to the College of Education's and School of Theology's emphasis on character traits or dispositions (Knowing, Doing, *Being*) as prerequisite for practice. The Phronesis Project proposes to deepen and highlight this Mercer distinctive throughout the curriculum, as well as to develop a unique national venue for addressing character development and professional formation through interdisciplinary, case-based workshops, symposia, and conferences on the cultivation of practical wisdom in the professions.

### **4. Faith-Based Palliative-Care Project**

Dr. Linda Streit and Dr. Janet Timms in the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing are co-directors of this project that builds a three-way partnership between the College of Nursing, the McAfee School of Theology and the metro Atlanta faith community. In its initial year, this

project will engage faculty and students in community-based research to gauge interest in and field test materials for an outreach to metro Atlanta faith communities to develop lay health advisor training in palliative and end-of-life care. The opportunity to address culturally sensitive care for chronically and severely ill patients goes to the heart of practical wisdom in the medical and health fields. If successful, the project could become a signature service-learning outreach for nursing, pharmacy, and theology students and help address a growing need in the state for support for palliative care for chronic illnesses and end-of-life.

#### **5. The Mercer Center for Preschool Science, Mathematics and Health Education**

Dr. Robert Lawrence (Education) and Dr. Julie Jones (Nursing) are co-directors of this project. This proposed center, in its first year of funding, will build on a strong existing partnership with a state-wide nonprofit, Sheltering Arms and its Georgia Training Institute, to develop, field test, and assess materials and methods for preschool teachers in the areas of science, mathematics, and health. The proposal is a response to an increasing national mandate for standards for pre-school education, as well as recognizing that inadequate academic preparation and childhood obesity are common variables for many at-risk populations of preschool children. The Center hopes to contribute in a unique way to a rapidly developing national conversation, to attract a newly emerging population of professionals seeking credentialing in pre-school education, and to offer exceptional research opportunities to Ph.D. students in Nursing and Education. Dr. Lawrence has extensive previous experience as director of Special Projects, Research and Accountability for the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and is currently the Principal Investigator for a U.S. Department of Education research grant on the teaching effectiveness of preschool teachers.