

**NLM/AAHSL Leadership Fellows Program**  
**Evaluation of 2002-2005 Program Years**  
**Executive Summary and Recommendations**  
Prepared by AAHSL Future Leadership Committee

At the recommendation of the National Library of Medicine, the Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries conducted a study to evaluate the initial three years of their jointly sponsored NLM/AAHSL Leadership Fellows Program. The study, supported by funding from NLM, was carried out by consultants from the University of Massachusetts Medical School and overseen by an AAHSL Future Leadership Committee project team. The goals of the study were to assess the effectiveness of the Leadership Fellows Program through collection of qualitative data from key persons involved with the program and to provide recommendations for the program in the future. The structure of the study was linked to the purpose of the program to prepare emerging leaders for director positions in academic health sciences libraries and to stated program goals.

The Leadership Fellows Program pairs five fellows each year with mentors who are academic health sciences library directors. The program combines fellow/mentor and cohort experiences and includes both in-person and virtual learning.

The components of the study were: (1) focus groups for fellows and for mentors, augmented by surveys; (2) focus group and e-mail surveys for supervisors at the fellows' home institutions; and (3) interviews of persons from the sponsoring organizations. All of the mentors from the 2002/2003, 2003/2004, and 2004/2005 classes participated in the study, and 13 of the 15 fellows. Nine supervisors and eight persons involved in initiating and managing the program also participated. The study was conducted in 2006 and early 2007.

The focus groups examined the areas of: expected outcomes, program benefits, program components, mentor/fellow relationship, cohort relationship, supervisor interaction, support system, and impact of program. Fellows pointed to enhanced leadership skills and credibility as a director candidate and gaining a cohort of peers who share career aspirations as outcomes and benefits of the program. Mentors not only contributed to the career development of fellows; they also felt personal and institutional benefit from participation, through the opportunity to reflect on their own leadership and to learn from their fellow and others in the program. Both found that the mix of fellow/mentor pair and cohort interaction in the program met their needs very well.

Most of the fellows and mentors pointed to the site visit as the most significant component of the program. Along with the site visit, the fellows ranked the Capstone and AAMC annual meeting as meeting their needs very well. The mentors recognized the importance of the Capstone in exposing fellows to the external environment and to the interaction of directors with these constituencies and the expression of multiple viewpoints. All appreciated the bonding opportunities of the cohort events, although improvements were suggested for both the Orientation and the Leadership Institute. The

Web-based courses were the least successful aspect of the program. Changes addressing some of these concerns were made to all the components as the program progressed.

The relationship between the fellow and mentor underlies the success of the program. Most found that the pairing met their needs very well, although the mentors and supervisors had suggestions for improving the selection and pairing process. Most fellows and about half the mentors reported continuing a significant longer-term relationship. There was variation in how they approached defining their roles and setting direction, with some pairs more spontaneous and others more structured, reflecting the program's flexibility for different learning and mentoring styles. Some mentors felt the need for more guidance in mentoring skills and practice, although fellows said their mentors were effective in helping them meet their learning development goals.

The support system for the program was praised. Most suggestions pointed to the need for more structure to support the fellow community after graduation, including communication among cohorts, ongoing involvement in AAHSL, and longitudinal follow up and support for fellows.

Although not a formal part of the program, supervisors of the fellows support their participation and are in a position to observe the relationship of the program to the home institutions. In most cases, mentors and supervisors reported minimal contact with one another. However, some supervisors, especially those who had not also been mentors in the program, expressed the need for more involvement in the program, information from their fellows, and application of skills in the current job setting.

Although many fellows have advanced to higher leadership positions, the evaluation also identified other outcomes of the program. Most fellows and mentors said that they mentor others more consciously now and have thought about mentoring behaviors. Most fellows reported they had a broadened perspective and world view or more self-confidence as a leader. The program had caused fellows to re-examine their career goals; those who said they would now seek a director position only if it and the timing were right may reflect the exposure to other environments and heightened appreciation of differences in positions afforded by the program. Supervisors pointed to broadening experience and exposure, network of colleagues, visibility, greater confidence and leadership ability, and self-awareness on the part of fellows.

The other phase of the evaluation consisted of interviews with persons from the sponsoring organizations, NLM and AAHSL. These persons were involved with either or both the origins and ongoing management and support of the program. The interviews examined the areas of: background of the program, individual roles, success factors and challenges in the launch and maintenance of the program, relationship with NLM and the Association of Research Libraries, changes over the course of the program, program outcomes, and lessons and next steps.

The interviewees felt that the program had been successful due to: a documented need and plan, support and commitment from AAHSL and NLM representatives and

their organizations, credible initial collaborators including ARL, sufficient resources, a well-designed program, and the quality and early success of participants. Challenges had included: clarifying the target audience for program participants, defining the role of mentors, recruiting and matching participants, recruiting under-represented minorities and hospital librarians, defining and modifying the roles of partners, enhancing virtual learning and continuity of learning, and sustaining the community over time.

They identified important outcomes of the program: in the development of the individual, contributions to the quality of leadership in the profession, and enhanced visibility of succession planning and leadership development for AAHSL. They recognized the value of leadership development in its own right, with benefit to the individual, their library, AAHSL, and the profession as a whole.

### **Recommendations**

These recommendations from the AAHSL Future Leadership Committee are based on the findings and recommendations in the evaluation report, in the context of ongoing modifications to the program and our perspective on the program.

The evaluation confirms the success of the basic design and goals of the program. During and since the three program years included in the evaluation, changes have also been made in response to input from participants and goals of program managers. The Future Leadership Committee, with its partners, has worked toward improved program curriculum, changes in roles of partners and AAHSL responsibility, and building a community of fellow and mentors. The committee has also continued to evaluate its approach to recruitment and matching, as the best program cannot succeed without excellent fellows and mentors.

The Web-based courses are being replaced in the 2006-2007 year with a program of regular courses and journal clubs, with topics identified as significant by past participants. The content will be geared to academic health sciences libraries, and the schedule will provide more continuity between in-person events. The content and structure of the cohort events have also evolved during the first three years and subsequently. For example, the Leadership Institute is now focused on career guidance and has been more relevant and interesting for participants. Although scheduling conflicts with the Orientation have continued in some years, the committee expects mentors to commit to attendance at all events.

The committee recognizes the importance of the support of supervisors of fellows, beginning with the significant weight it assigns to their recommendations in making the selection decision. Supervisors also contribute to the program through the commitment of time and other resources required for participation by the fellow. In a number of cases, mentors have made visits to their fellow at his or her home institution, adding to their understanding of the fellow. However, involvement of the supervisor in the program must be balanced by the need for confidentiality and the desire to build relationships between the fellow and mentor and among cohort members within the

limited timeframe of the program, outside of the normal work life of the fellow. Individual circumstances also will affect the interaction of all those involved. Although most fellows already share and apply what they learn through the program with their supervisor and colleagues, the program can address this more formally and prepare fellows for transition at the conclusion of the year. The committee also acknowledges that it needs to communicate more effectively with supervisors.

Over the course of the program, AAHSL has assumed primary responsibility for management. In 2006, it hired consultants to help plan and provide content and facilitation, especially for cohort events. This arrangement replaced the contract with ARL for program management, reflecting both the clarification of the appropriate role for AAHSL and change in ARL strategic priorities.

The committee makes the following recommendations for the future:

—NLM and AAHSL continue their investment in the NLM/AAHSL Leadership Fellows Program. The organizations recognize the value and contribution of their investment in the development of the individual and to the quality of leadership in the profession. They should continue to find the necessary funding and to reach out to find the best fellows and mentors. Based on the success of the program to date, they should continue to make modifications in curriculum and management to achieve the goals of the program.

—Continue to improve selection and matching process.

—Continue to enhance mentor preparation and guidance. Continue to improve the structure for ongoing review of fellow learning goals.

—Examine communication with home supervisors. Explore expectations and suggestions for fellows and supervisors in sharing experience and integrating learning in the home institution.

—Evaluate the revised curriculum on an ongoing basis, with modification of technology and content as needed.

—Continue to encourage the development of a network of fellows and mentors. Examine strategies for supporting individual and career development of fellows beyond their completion of the program.

—Continue to implement succession planning for program management.

—Continue to examine the range of AAHSL leadership programs in order to strengthen their continuity in support along career paths.

NLM and AAHSL have agreed to support the Leadership Fellows Program through the 2007-2008 program year and to discuss the future of the program, taking into

consideration the results of this study, with a possible proposal for renewed funding. As the study suggests, it will be important to monitor the ongoing interest in the program. To date, the quality of fellow candidates has been high and the response from AAHSL members as potential mentors has been extraordinary. In addition, the end result of fellows moving into director positions has begun to take off. At this writing, four fellows have assumed director positions and two are in interim appointments; ten of the fifteen fellows from the first three classes have been promoted.

In addition to evaluating demand for the existing program, AAHSL and NLM should consider the potential of extending efforts to persons in other stages of their careers. AAHSL has already done this for new directors, and the study notes the need and possible role for leadership development among other groups.

AAHSL thanks NLM for encouraging and supporting this evaluation. It is exciting to be able to document the achievements and challenges of the program and to have data to guide modifications to it. The study also had an unanticipated effect of bringing together communities of fellows and mentors across cohort lines and giving all study participants the opportunity to reflect on their experience. AAHSL is grateful as well for the time and thoughtful contributions of the participants.