

2015 Mid-summer Student Evaluation Summary

On Wednesday, July 8 during the **CaRES Career Development Seminar**, **CaRES** Evaluation Director Dr. C. Michael Brooks administered a two-page questionnaire with 8 open-ended questions designed to find out what was going well, and what may not have been going well, with the ongoing **CaRES** internships. Of the 15 summer 2015 **CaRES** students, nine students (60%) were present, with one student absent due to illness, and five other students absent because their **CaRES** projects were based far from campus. All nine students in attendance fully completed the questionnaire on site. The remaining six students were emailed the questionnaire, and all of them completed and returned the questionnaire within a few days.

The aspects of the **CaRES** internships that the students liked **most** were the mentorship, knowledge, and patience shown by the preceptors; the variety of tasks that the students were given; the friendliness and support of members of the research teams; the autonomy and flexibility the students were given; the positive work environment; and the opportunity to learn scientific writing while on the job. What the students liked **least** about their internships were the built-in delays and obstacles experienced when doing their research; having to deal with unexpected changes in research methodology; and having to play catch-up to their fellow research team members who had a lot more background about their projects than they did. When asked how these delays could be minimized, the most common answer was that nothing could be done because the delays were typically due to patient no-shows, IRB approval issues, and necessary changes in research goals consequent to unexpected preliminary results.

Twelve respondents stated that **CaRES** fully met their expectations; while three others stated only partial satisfaction. These three students explained that they were frustrated by unavoidable delays that would make it impossible for them to finish their projects before time ran out this summer.

What was the most important overall outcome or “lesson learned” from the **CaRES** experience? The most common reply was the realization that patience is needed because research can be tedious, and slow progress and delays are unavoidable. Another common response was learning the importance of accurate scientific communication. Several other respondents related a new understanding of the amount of detail required to do research, and the importance of taking ownership of the research that they do. A few respondents were impressed by the opportunity for all members of a research team to exhibit critical thinking and then to propose changes to the research protocol if appropriate.

None of the students requested a private meeting with Dr. Brooks to discuss any immediate concerns that they may have, suggesting that there were no severe on-the-job problems in need of resolution. However one student requested a meeting to discuss how he could take a “gap year” off from medical school to continue doing cancer research, possibly as an entrée to a PhD program.

The final question asking for additional comments or suggestions was answered by only three respondents who thanked the **CaRES** program and faculty and staff for a great summer.