

# BSCCP

IN TOUCH WITH

BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE CAREERS PROGRAM

January 2001 Volume 6 Number 1

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## Special Thanks To

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## Mentor Profile: John T. Potts Jr. M.D.

For John T. Potts Jr., M.D., director of research at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and Distinguished Jackson Professor of Clinical Medicine at Harvard Medical School (HMS), the increasing focus on attracting minority students into the biomedical field reflects a blend of “educated altruism and common sense... Our society is changing. More people are non-Caucasian. If we don’t have more minority leaders moving into medicine and science, the fields will be distorted,” he says.

Trained as an endocrinologist, with special focus on calcium and bone disease, Potts graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in 1957. He trained at MGH from 1957–1959, then spent nine years at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, MD, working with Nobel Laureate Christian Anfinsen in protein chemistry. Potts returned to the MGH as chief of the Endocrine Unit in 1968. He served as chairman of the Department of Medicine and physician-in-chief from 1981 to 1996, and director of research from 1995 to the present. In his current role, he is responsible for developing policies and strategies for preserving and strengthening the extensive scientific research effort at MGH.

Potts, who is a BSCP Board member and has served as a mentor at every Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference, has known Joan Y. Reede, M.D., M.P.H., M.S., BSCP president and chair, for a decade. “I first became aware of Joan’s activities when she was working at HMS on minority

faculty development and attracting young minority students into clerkships and different parts of the developing system at Harvard,” he recalls. “I was working on similar programs based at MGH. I have tried to help Joan with the cause of advancing minority development and advancement in medicine and



**John T. Potts Jr. (right) with a student**

science, which she has been so marvelously successful in, but I also came to be a bit of a mentor for Joan.”

Over the years, Potts has also been a mentor for several BSCP students — most of them medical students, Ph.D. candidates or post-doctoral students looking to make career moves. “I’ve helped these people with who to see, who to talk to. I’ve written letters of support. It’s a question of knocking on doors for these young people, who don’t always know who to talk to to get the advice they need,” he says, adding, “and it’s important to keep in touch with them.”

Asked for some general advice, Potts notes, “I’m following the lead Joan gives. Her advice, which I would echo, is ‘try to work diligently

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## Student Profile: Frank Diaz

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Frank Diaz, a Tufts University junior from Puerto Rico majoring in biology and psychology, has known since high school that he wanted to go to medical school. Initially he planned to attend college in Puerto Rico, and then apply to medical schools in the continental U.S. But a high school trip changed all that.

During his senior year, Diaz visited several colleges and universities in the U.S. with a group of students and teachers from his high school. A few of the schools impressed him so much that he applied for admission. "After I was accepted [to Tufts], it was kind of difficult not to come here," he says. "I read about all the possibilities the school offered for research... It had a good pre-med program, [as well as] science and biology."

Diaz's first year in college was full of adjustments. Though he had studied English in school and understood the language perfectly, he says he had trouble with casual conversations because he wasn't used to speaking English outside the classroom. He also found the work to be exceedingly challenging. "I thought I would do lots of extra-curricular activities, like research, but I didn't because there was so much work," he says. "I felt I couldn't do anything else but study."

By his sophomore year, Diaz was feeling more comfortable and began working in a cognitive psychology lab at Tufts. In the spring, a friend who had attended

BSCP conferences invited Diaz to attend the biennial Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference.

"I've always liked research, but I thought it wouldn't be part of my professional life," Diaz states. "At the conference, I was amazed. So many people from such diverse backgrounds are interested in biomedical research."

At the BSCP conference, Diaz also learned about the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Undergraduate Scholarship Program (UGSP) and met Marc Horowitz, director, Office of Loan Repayment and Scholarship at NIH, who talked to him at length about the program and encouraged him to apply. Diaz also met Arlyn Garcia-Perez, assistant director, Office of Intramural Research at NIH (see Sept. 2000 *In Touch With BSCP*). "I got really excited," Diaz notes. "They [NIH] help you out a lot financially. The payback is working there for a summer, and for a year after graduating [for each year of scholarship] – which really isn't a payback at all. I also saw that I could do research not only as an extra-curricular activity but as something I can do in the future."

After the BSCP conference, Diaz traveled to Washington, D.C., for an interview at NIH, and he got

the scholarship. That summer, rather than returning home as he had planned, he stayed in Boston to work with a Tufts professor at the Massachusetts General Hospital, using neuroimaging to try to identify the underlying neurological causes of various anxiety disorders.

This summer, Diaz will work at NIH and hopes to focus on stem-cell research, incorporating investigation of neurological disorders with molecular level stem-cell research. It will be an expansion of work he is doing at Tufts now, learning

molecular techniques and cellular culture. "In the lab, they're teaching me some techniques that will prepare me for NIH," he says.

Diaz still plans to attend medical school, but sees that his career options are far greater than he once imagined. "Because of UGSP, Joan Reede and BSCP, I'll be able to get different perspectives," he says. While Diaz has not decided yet whether to continue his studies locally or in Puerto Rico, he does know that he would like to return home eventually. "I feel like I need to give something back," he says. "I don't see myself staying here after I'm done. But I don't know how many years that will take." ♦



**Frank Diaz**

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## Mentor Profile

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at your studies. Look for someone who will advise you as to how you approach each level of advancement from college through medical or graduate school; how to get into medical school; if you are a Ph.D. candidate, how to pick the best per-

son to work with once you're accepted into a program; if you're a physician, how to get into the kind of academic training program you want as a resident."

Potts is optimistic about the options open to minority students in the biomedical field. "There are great opportunities in science and medicine, at medical schools, in

medical centers and in the biotechnology field," he says. In each area, "they all appreciate and recognize the need to diversify and make careers available for minorities." Those looking for careers need only to "work hard, be open, make connections, follow up, knock on doors and identify a mentor." ♦

# Opportunities for Scholarships and Fellowships

## NIH Undergraduate Scholarship Program

The NIH Undergraduate Scholarship Program offers competitive scholarships to students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are committed to careers in biomedical research. It improves access to education that will lead to research careers for those who have had fewer opportunities than others. The program is designed primarily to provide an incentive for exceptional scholars to pursue biomedical research careers at NIH.

Following are the basic requirements for application:

- The applicant must be a U.S. citizen, permanent resident or U.S. national.
- The applicant must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a full-time student for the 2001-2002 academic year at an accredited undergraduate institution.
- The applicant must be from a disadvantaged background.
- The applicant must have a grade point average of at least 3.5 (on a 4.0 scale) or be within the top five percent of his or her class.

NIH Undergraduate Scholarships pay up to \$20,000 per academic year in tuition, educational expenses and reasonable living expenses. Scholarships are awarded for one year; recipients may reapply for additional years. The deadline for submitting applications for the 2001-2002 awards is March 30, 2001. Award notifications will be made on June 29, 2001.

If you are eligible and committed to pursuing a career in biomedical science, you may request an application by phone, by calling 800-528-7689, or online at <http://ugsp.info.nih.gov>.

## Center for Advancement of Health

The Center for Advancement of Health has received a three-year, \$1.5 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to train a new generation of minority scientists to research causes of health disparities and to develop solutions. The pilot program will award six post-doctoral fellowships to minority scholars at the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, the Harvard Center for Society and Health, and the Morgan State University Center for Urban Health Assessment, Evaluation and Policy.

The scholars will examine the causes of health disparities by race/ethnicity, gender, and income/socioeconomic status; study the mechanisms and pathways by which structural, social, economic, political, environmental and educational inequalities and institutional racism affect health; and develop inter-sectoral public policy options to reduce those health disparities.

For further information and application guidelines, visit the Center for the Advancement of Health website at [www.cfah.org](http://www.cfah.org) or contact Barbara Krimgold, director of the Scholars Program, at [bkrimgold@cfah.org](mailto:bkrimgold@cfah.org). The deadline for receipt of applications is February 1, 2001.

## Ford Foundation Fellowships for Minorities

The National Academy of Sciences has available the Ford Fellowships for Minorities. These are for U.S. citizens or nationals who are members of the following minority groups:

- Alaskan Natives (Eskimo or Aleut)
- Black/African Americans
- Mexican Americans/Chicanas/Chicanos
- Native American Indians

- Native Pacific Islanders (Polynesian/Micronesian)
- Puerto Ricans

Applicants must also be enrolled in or planning to enroll in a research-based Ph.D., Sc.D. or post-doctoral program, in a selected academic discipline, that will lead to a career in teaching and research at the college or university level. At the dissertation level, the fellowships provide \$24,000 for one year. At the post-doctoral level, the fellowships offer \$35,000 for one year plus a \$3,000 travel and relocation allowance, a \$2,000 cost-of-research allowance and a \$2,500 institution allowance (to be matched by institution).

For more information on these fellowships, visit: <http://nationalacademies.org/osep/fo> or contact: Fellowship Programs Office/FF, TJ 2041

National Research Council  
2101 Constitution Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20418  
Telephone: 202-334-2872  
E-mail: [infofell@nas.edu](mailto:infofell@nas.edu)

## The HHMI-NIH Research Scholars

*Attention medical and dental students...*  
The HHMI-NIH Research Scholars Program, sponsored by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, offers an exceptional opportunity for students attending U.S. medical or dental schools to spend a year conducting basic research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland. More than 600 medical students, representing 101 medical schools, have participated in the program since 1985. For more information and online applications, visit the program's website: <http://www.hhmi.org/science/cloister>, e-mail [research\\_scholars@hhmi.org](mailto:research_scholars@hhmi.org) or call 800-424-9924. The application deadline is January 10, 2001. If you miss the deadline, you can get on the mailing list for next year's application.

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## Scholarships

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### PROJECT SUCCESS

Full-time, "hands-on" research positions for students with a strong interest in science and high academic standing. The 2001 summer program will run for 8 weeks, from July through August 2001.

#### Eligible students must:

1. Be a high school student, particularly a student from an underrepresented racial or ethnic background (African American, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific Islander), and/or from a disadvantaged background.
2. Reside in Cambridge or Boston, Massachusetts.
3. Have completed the sophomore, junior or senior year of high school and be at least 16 years old by June 30, 2001.
4. Demonstrate a strong interest and ability in science. Also have interest in pursuing a biomedical science or health-related career and a commitment to attending college.

5. Maintain a grade point average (GPA) of at least B- throughout high school, and have completed biology, chemistry and algebra (completion of calculus is preferred but not required).
6. Commit to completing all required formal oral and written reports, attend all Project Success-sponsored seminars, and maintain excellent attendance and performance on required research projects.
7. Be committed to participating in Project Success for at least one year.
8. Have parental or guardian support and consent.

#### APPLICATION DEADLINE:

All application materials must be received by March 2, 2001, at the Minority Faculty Development Program Office, 164 Longwood Avenue, 2nd Floor, Boston, MA 02115-5815.

*This is a highly competitive program. Early application submission is encouraged.*

For more information about Project Success, call 617-432-4697, or e-mail [faries\\_odom@hms.harvard.edu](mailto:faries_odom@hms.harvard.edu).

## In the News

### *New Center at NIH to Study Diseases that Strike Minority and Rural Populations*

Congress recently passed a bill to create a new center at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that will sponsor research on diseases that disproportionately affect minority groups and people living in rural areas like Appalachia. The bill includes a compromise that would authorize the federal government to repay up to \$35,000 of the educational loans of researchers, regardless of their race, for each year that they conduct studies of the disparities.

Members of racial and ethnic minority groups in the U.S. suffer from disproportionately high rates of a variety of diseases — including cancer, heart disease, AIDS and

diabetes — presenting a major national problem. While the NIH currently conducts research in this area through its 25 existing institutes and centers, the new grant will establish a National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities dedicated to the issue.

With a budget of \$100 million for 2001, the new center will be able to finance promising research that is not already supported by institutes or centers elsewhere within the NIH. The bill also provides authorization for more than \$50 million so that other agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services can conduct research on health disparities and train researchers. ♦

## Save the Dates

### JSHS

The Southern New England Regional Junior Science and Humanities Symposium 2001 for high school science students and teachers.

Harvard Medical School  
March 23 and 24, 2001

For information, please contact the Program Coordinator at 617-432-2725 or visit the website at <http://www.mfdp.med.harvard.edu>.

### EVENING OF HOPE

Fourth Annual  
BSCP Fundraising Dinner  
Tuesday, April 24, 2001  
The Boston Park Plaza Hotel

### THE BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE CAREERS STUDENT CONFERENCE

Friday, March 1, 2002  
and Saturday, March 2, 2002  
The Boston Park Plaza Hotel  
Audience: High school students to post-doctoral level

## ATTENTION ALL STUDENTS

Please send us your e-mail addresses, new permanent and new campus addresses:

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Careers Program  
c/o Minority Faculty  
Development Program  
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164 Longwood Avenue  
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