

# 2011 Robert J. Glaser Distinguished Teacher Awards



The 2011 AΩA Robert J. Glaser Distinguished Teachers. Left to right: Dr. Thomas Lawley, immediate past-chair of the AAMC, Dr. Richard L. Byyny, Executive Director of Alpha Omega Alpha, Dr. Mark T. O'Connell, Dr. LuAnn Wilkerson, Dr. Dennis H. Novack, Dr. Gerald D. Abrams, and Dr. Darrell Kirch, President of the AAMC.

Each year since 1988, Alpha Omega Alpha, in cooperation with the Association of American Medical Colleges, presents four AΩA Distinguished Teacher Awards to faculty members in American medical schools. Two awards are for accomplishments in teaching the basic sciences and two are for inspired teaching in the clinical sciences. In 1997, AΩA named the award to honor its retiring executive secretary Robert J. Glaser, MD. Nominations for the award are submitted to the AAMC each spring by the deans of medical schools.

Nominations were reviewed by a committee chosen by AΩA and the AAMC. This year's committee members were: Helen C. Davies, PhD; Joel M. Felner, MD; William H. Frishman, MD; Aviad Haramati, PhD; Robert M. Klein, MD; John

(Jack) Nolte, PhD; Jeanette Norden, PhD; James L. Sebastian, MD; Kelley M. Skeff, MD; Jeffrey G. Wiese, MD.

Winners of the award receive \$10,000, their schools receive \$2,500, and active AΩA chapters at those schools receive \$1,000. Schools nominating candidates for the award receive a plaque with the name of the nominee.

Brief summaries of the accomplishments in medical education of the 2011 award recipients follow.

Richard L. Byyny, MD  
*Executive Director*

## **Gerald D. Abrams, MD** **Professor Emeritus of Pathology,** **University of Michigan Medical** **School**

In his more than five-decade career, Dr. Abrams (AΩA, University of Michigan, 1953) has educated nearly 10,000 students on the intricacies of pathology, and has been consistently rated the highest performing basic science faculty teacher at the University of Michigan Medical School. For much of his career, Dr. Abrams has contributed to the oversight, design, and modification of the medical school curriculum. In the 1970s, he developed a series of lectures in general pathology that in the 1990s was made an independent, permanent part of the first-year curriculum. Over the years, Dr. Abrams has adapted his teaching methods to incorporate advances in information technology. He developed an interactive CD-ROM to accompany a histopathology course he developed and later digitized the slides from the course to create a "virtual microscope" format to be used in teaching labs and on the Internet.

**Dennis H. Novack, MD**  
**Professor of Medicine, Associate  
Dean for Medical Education, Drexel  
University College of Medicine**

Dr. Novack (AQA, Drexel University, 2001) has made significant contributions to the way in which academic medicine teaches and assesses physician-patient communications. He was integral to the development of an Internet-based clinical skills curriculum and more recently developed a complementary Internet-based assessment tool. In partnership with the American Academy on Communication in Healthcare and Drexel University, Dr. Novack led the creation of doc.com. Using text and video, doc.com demonstrates basic and advanced interviewing skills through more than forty modules tailored to various learner developmental stages. Dr. Novack also helped develop WebOSCE, which enables students to interview standardized patient-actors through videoconference and provides both immediate feedback from the patient-actor and a video of the interaction for further review, as well as links to doc.com and other sites that help learners enhance their skills. At Drexel, Dr. Novack created and directs the Physician and Patient course, which provides fundamental skills to first-year students, and also directs and teaches the doctoring curriculum for internal medicine residents.

**Mark T. O'Connell, MD**  
**Senior Associate Dean for  
Educational Development, Senior  
Advisor to the Dean, Bernard J.  
Fogel, M.D., Endowed Chair in  
Medical Education, and Associate  
Professor of Medicine, University of  
Miami Leonard M. Miller School of  
Medicine**

For more than a quarter-century, Dr. O'Connell (AQA, University of Miami, 1995) has made numerous contributions in the areas of information technology, curriculum design, program development, and student initiatives. He established the Office of Biomedical Computing, one of the first microcomputer labs at a medical school, which allowed Miller School students to be among the first trained on MEDLINE. He pioneered the use of a controlled vocabulary to index the Miller School's curriculum and then worked with the AAMC to develop the curricular database that was the forerunner of CurrMIT. Described as a consummate program builder, Dr. O'Connell was instrumental in creating a two-year satellite program at Florida Atlantic University. When the program expanded to four years, he helped develop the curriculum and oversaw all aspects of the accreditation process. His influence is felt throughout the Miller School, having been responsible for establishing the Department of Community Service, a student-run nonprofit that consistently achieves nearly one hundred percent participation, the Office of Professional Development and Career Guidance to mentor students, and the Physicianship and Professionalism Advocacy Program.

**LuAnn Wilkerson, EdD**  
**Professor of Medicine, Senior  
Associate Dean for Medical  
Education, University of California,  
Los Angeles David Geffen School of  
Medicine**

Dr. Wilkerson's vision for medical education is one in which engaged learners and passionate teachers implement a coordinated and ever-evolving curriculum. For more than three decades, she has pursued this goal through the design of medical school curricula and enhanced faculty development. To ensure that UCLA's students possess the competencies needed for modern medical practice, Dr. Wilkerson helped pioneer the Doctoring program. She also oversaw the creation of fourth-year "colleges"—learning communities that pair students and faculty to enhance career mentoring. Dr. Wilkerson directs the Center for Educational Development and Research, which helps faculty improve curriculum and fosters teaching skills and the use of technology. She is dedicated to faculty development, particularly as it relates to ambulatory teaching and problem-based learning. Dr. Wilkerson has been described as "a teacher of teachers," whose "accomplishments and contributions to the field of medical education are colossal and profound."