

2013 Mid-summer Student Evaluation Summary

At our annual **CaRES** Career Development Seminar held each July, we conduct a short mid-summer evaluation of student satisfaction with the program to that point in time. From each student we want to know what is going well, and what is not going well, with their summer experience. We want to identify problems with individual projects or with individual preceptors so that remedial actions can be taken promptly before the summer ends; and we want to solicit suggestions from students regarding how the **CaRES** program can be improved. We consider all suggestions seriously, and we take appropriate steps to make **CaRES** more satisfying for our current students and future students.

In summer 2013, 41 students completed the mid-summer evaluation form. Virtually all were quite pleased with how their **CaRES** project was going, with 39 of 41 students (95%) stating that their expectations had been met and that they were learning what they had expected to learn during the summer. They were happy with the quality of their mentorship, becoming a part of the research team, learning new skills, and with the increasing independence granted to them by their preceptors. When asked to state their concerns or complaints, no major themes emerged, with a few students stating concerns such as having too much work, too little work, extended work hours, and inadequate communication with other members of the research team. Several students complained about difficulties parking on campus, but unfortunately **CaRES** has no control over parking availability or costs.

About one-third of respondents made suggestions for improving **CaRES**. Several students asked that we do a better job communicating times and places where **CaRES** students could present their research on campus or at off-campus professional conferences. We think this is a great suggestion and we have now included more specific information about on-campus conference venues on our **CaRES** home page.

The most frequent suggestion made by 2013 **CaRES** interns relates to the timetable of allocating the 40 **CaRES** internship slots each year. Eleven of the 41 students suggested that we award all **CaRES** positions on the same day in the spring (similar to internship “match day”) rather than using the “rolling decision” approach that we now use, whereby each of the 40 positions is awarded as soon as a student and a faculty preceptor agree to work together. **CaRES** used the “match day” approach in the early years of the program, but because many students complained about it, we changed to the “rolling decision” approach. The down-side of awarding all 40 positions on a given day (say, on March 1) is that it keeps all student applicants on edge and “up in the air” until decision day, and may motivate them to needlessly interview for other summer research programs as a back-up in case **CaRES** does not accept them. Our experience has been that the rolling decision approach is better because by mid-February typically all 40 **CaRES** slots have been awarded, with those 40 students knowing how they will spend their summer. Our rolling decision process does suggest that interested students should interview for **CaRES** positions without delay and should try to nail down a position before all 40 slots have been taken.