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# SEEKING NATIONAL APPROVAL FOR CYTOGENETIC TRAINING

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Summer stipends are intended to provide us with the opportunity to explore ways to enhance the curriculum and revitalize our professionalism. However, while preparing the application for a summer stipend, the thought at the back of our minds may very well be: "What flexibility this grant will give me if I'm not tied down to the classroom!" Professionally, being awarded a summer stipend meant fulfilling my long-dormant intention to seek approval for the cytogenetic technology program within the Department of Biology. Personally, it meant that I would be able to spend the entire summer with my husband.

But this article is not about those subconscious intentions and secret desires for freedom that a summer grant allows. It is about the student, the department and the college and what this approval means for them.

A little background is in order. In 1987, Kennesaw State College became the second college in the United States to offer a program for the academic and clinical education of cytogenetic technologists (CT). These professionals play a critical role in the diagnosis and management of specific genetic disorders through their jobs as expert laboratory analysts.

Following graduation, these students are both clinically (6 month internship) and academically (B.S. Biology) prepared to sit for the National Certifying Agency (NCA) exam. This makes them very employable and very attractive to the many world-wide laboratories who are constantly seeking certified technologists. The National Accrediting Agency of Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS) has adopted a protocol for the approval of cytogenetic programs and has encouraged institutions, such as KSC, to submit application before 1995. This motivated me to apply for a summer stipend in order to proceed with compiling the information necessary for submission of an applications to NAACLS by September 1993.

## Worth the Challenge

Although compilation of the information and preparation of the application was a challenge, it provided an opportunity to gain insight into where the program has been, how it has evolved and what future directions it should take. This experience has allowed me to modify, refine and perfect the program. The cytogenetic technology program has come a long way since accepting its first student in 1985, but along the way the trials, tribulations and hard

work have led to a program which is characterized by excellence. The benefits of this hard work will ultimately be shared by the students, the department and the college.

## Benefits

### What does all this mean to the student and to the college?

- In the future, NCA certification will only be open to those individuals who have completed a NAACLS-approved educational program. No NAACLS approval, no certification for our students.
- NAACLS may eventually develop an accreditation process for CT programs. All the better (and hopefully easier!) for me to prepare such an application when the time comes.
- KSC's program presently uses two local clinical laboratories for the internship component of the program. To accommodate the growing number of interested students, more laboratory sites are needed. Laboratories with strict regulations governing the handling of samples will only consider affiliation with an **approved** program.
- More internship sites will certainly benefit the students by allowing them to complete their internships in a timely manner. The availability of different clinical labs also provides a greater variety of clinical experiences for the students.
- For the college, approval means being the only institution in the Southeast with an approved baccalaureate level cytogenetic program. This can only serve to support Kennesaw's role as a leader in the academic and scientific communities.
- Approval for KSC will also serve to attract more science majors to the program, especially those who are looking for a profession with immediate employment opportunities upon graduation.

*NOTE: Detailed information on the approval process, as well as a copy of the final application, are available for viewing in my office. (Biology Annex 137; Ext 6162)*