

LRP Ambassador Program Webinar Transcript

February 15, 2017

Ericka: Good Afternoon everyone. I'd like to thank you all for listening in on today's webinar about the NIH Loan Repayment Program Ambassador program.

I'm Dr. Ericka Boone, the Director of the NIH Division of Loan Repayment (or DLR) and I am joined today by Mr. Omar McCrimmon, DLR Communications Specialist, and two current LRP Ambassadors – Dr. Christopher Carroll, from the Connecticut Children's Medical Center and Dr. Jamie Mitchell, from the University of Michigan.

The focus of today's webinar will be to provide you with information on the newly relaunched LRP Ambassador Program, as well as to provide our two Ambassadors with the opportunity to discuss their experiences as an LRP applicant and as an active LRP Ambassador.

At the Division of Loan Repayment, we know the importance of the Loan Repayment Program in keeping promising young investigators in active biomedical research careers, and we know how important our LRP Ambassadors are in increasing awareness of the NIH Loan Repayment Programs.

Again, thank you all for joining us today. All telephone lines have been muted, so if you have a question, please submit your question via the chat feature. This webinar will be recorded, and made available on the website at a later date. Let's get started!

Ericka: Here is today's agenda. We'll start by giving a brief overview of the NIH loan repayment programs, in general, and then move on to a description of the LRP Ambassador Program, its history and exciting updates to the program. Lastly, we will hear from two current Ambassadors - Dr. Carroll and Dr. Mitchell – about their experiences as Ambassadors.

Ericka: I'm sure that I don't have to tell any of you participating on today's call about educational loan debt. By the time many young investigators pursuing research careers finish their education and training, they have amassed significant student loan debt. Because of this debt, many young researchers are faced with the decision of whether to stay in a career that is fulfilling and contributes significantly to public health or pursue an alternative career, often in private practice, which can pay more.... This is where the NIH Loan Repayment Programs come in.

In exchange for your commitment to conduct research, the NIH will commit to repaying up to \$35,000/year in qualifying educational debt + the taxes that result from getting the award. And by the way, one of the best things about the LRP award is that it is renewable. As a matter of fact, many of our awardees have had their debt paid down significantly, if not all of it over several awards. This all may sound good, but what's the give me for the federal government? Actually, the American public benefits from your service, as many of our awardees are conducting research in areas such as cardiovascular disease, substance abuse, AIDS/HIV and many other areas where your work significantly improve public health not only in this nation, but across the world!

Ericka: There are 5 different extramural NIH loan repayment programs. We'll take a moment and review them here. First, is the Clinical research LRP, which is for researchers focused on patient-

oriented research with humans, or materials from human origin, including tissue, blood or cognitive phenomenon. Next...

Ericka: Now I'll review basic eligibility criteria.

Ericka: Now, let's discuss the LRP Ambassador Program! LRP Ambassadors serve as a personalized link/connection between the NIH LRPs and potential applicants at their home institutions by providing advice and encouragement regarding the LRP application process, their experiences, and more.

Ambassador can include current or former LRP awardees, research mentors or supervisors as well as institutional business officials

Ericka: Now with regards to the role of an LRP Ambassador. It really doesn't take a lot of time to be an Ambassador. Just through day-to-day interactions with colleagues, an Ambassador can identify potential eligible applicants to the LRPs. Once you identify someone interested in learning more about the programs, you can share relevant information about the LRPs in either face-to-face interactions, through email or planned events, for example, coffee breaks. Of course, you'll have to know a little about the LRPs to share information with others...but we'll help you to stay updated about the LRPs, the application process and more so that you can be an informed communicator.

The role of an Ambassador is very easy and doesn't have to take up a great deal of time. Being an Ambassador just means you are creating awareness about the LRPs and sharing your experience as an LRP recipient to other promising researchers. Being an Ambassador is easy, but has great impact.

Ericka: From talking with Ambassadors past and present, we have found that the #1 reason that motivates individuals to participate as Ambassadors is it serves as a way for former awardees to "give back" to their community and to "pay it forward" – to help other young scientists along their path to research independence and to support promising investigators within their research networks and help NIH to help increase the numbers of active researchers within the biomedical research workforce.

Ericka: The LRP Ambassador Program was started in 2010 with the intent to create a cadre of individuals (including LRP awardees, research mentors and institutional business officials) that can help NIH build awareness of the LRPs at their home institutions. LRP Ambassadors are perfectly positioned in higher education and research facilities to come in contact with young, promising biomedical researchers.

Approximately 1600 LRP recipients signed up to become LRP Ambassadors in 2010. Over the past 6 years, many Ambassadors were active in increasing awareness of the LRPs and encouraging young researchers to apply for an LRP, however there was a decline in participation over the years.

In 2015, we conducted an assessment of the Ambassador program, which included reaching out to Ambassadors, and conducting interviews to better understand:

- How the Ambassadors characterized their roles and responsibilities
- What motivated them to become an Ambassador, and
- What kind of activities they were conducting on behalf of the LRPs
- What would help them in their role as an Ambassador

Findings from the interviews (including the need for greater resources and support from NIH) provided strategic direction in enhancing the Ambassador Program. On January 25, 2017, we officially relaunched the program, providing greater resources and access to information. Already, since January, 450 individuals from 40 states have recommitted to becoming LRP Ambassadors!

Ericka: Now that I've provided more general information about the Ambassador Program, I'll turn it over to Omar McCrimmon, DLR Communications Specialist, who will talk more about the available Ambassador Program resources, including the new website, directory and other tools.

Omar: Thank you, Dr. Boone.

To brand the Program, we've developed an LRP Ambassador graphic identifier that you see on the lower right corner of this slide. As a reminder, you can download this badge as many times as you like from the resources section of the Ambassador Program website. Please feel free to post this LRP Ambassador graphic on your Facebook/LinkedIn pages, emails, and other sites. This graphic signifies your commitment to helping others succeed in their research careers.

We developed other resources, including the Ambassador Program website, directory of active Ambassadors, Ambassador toolkit, and FAQs. I'll have more to say about each of them in the upcoming slides.

Omar: We built a nice/shiny new website for the LRP Ambassador Program that provides electronic access to the Ambassador Directory, a place to sign up, Ambassador Program Toolkit, and other resources.

On this slide is the landing page for the Ambassador Program resources. You can access this website via the clickable button on the top right of the main LRP website.

Omar: One of the new features that we provide on the LRP Ambassador website is the Ambassador Directory, which helps support networking by sharing Ambassadors contact information. The directory is organized by state and institution. Individuals can use the directory to find Ambassadors in their own institution or by geographic region. You can also find information such as Ambassador research interests on the directory.

I want to point out that Ambassadors have control over the amount of professional information they provide for the Directory.

Omar: LRP Ambassador resources can help you understand your role as an LRP Ambassador, as well as provide tools to support your outreach efforts. This part of the website is password protected. When you sign-up to be an Ambassador, you will receive a password to access the resources.

The Ambassador Toolkit provides tips, resources, and materials designed to help you educate and inform potential LRP applicants about the LRPs. These tools include:

- An Ambassador Program Overview that describes the Ambassador program and your roles as an Ambassador.
- Sample Outreach Materials that contains sample emails to use to inform potential applicants about the LRPs

- An event planning guide that can be used to plan small or larger group meetings about the LRPs
- An Applicant Counseling Guide that provides guidance on how to counsel LRP applicants
- A Social Media Guide that has helpful information on how you can use social media to help spread information about the LRPs..and finally
- A Frequently Asked Questions document that addresses common questions about being an LRP Ambassador

Omar: As a reminder, You can order up to 2 copies of the 13” x17” poster (shown here) from my office, to post in your institution.

Omar: Dr. Christopher Carroll and Dr. Jamie Mitchell have graciously agreed to be a part of this webinar to tell you about their experiences of how they spread the word of the LRPs.

Thanks to both of you for agreeing to share your information.

Omar: Now we will hear from our LRP Ambassadors. Up first is Dr. Christopher Carroll. Dr. Carroll comes to us from the University of Connecticut. His research interests are severe respiratory diseases in children, particularly asthma and bronchiolitis. Dr. Carroll received his Pediatric Research LRP in 2006 and has been an active supporter of the LRPs since. Dr. Carroll please tell us about your experience as an Ambassador.

Omar: Thank you, Dr. Carroll for your interest in the LRP Ambassador Program and for your innovative ways of reaching prospective LRP applicants.

I’d like to introduce Dr. Jamie Mitchell. Dr. Mitchell is an assistant Professor of Social Work at the University of Michigan. In 2016, she received a Health Disparities Research LRP. Her research focus is on social determinants of health, specifically African American men's health; cancer health disparities, patient-provider communication; psychosocial well-being and family support.

Dr. Mitchell, please tell us about your experience as an LRP Ambassador.

Omar: Thank you, Dr. Mitchell for your active involvement within your community and engagement of individuals about the LRP Ambassador Program.

Omar: As we wrap up, I’d like to point out important contact information for the Ambassador Program and the LRPs in general. Feel free to contact us via email, phone, also feel free to interact with us Facebook, or Twitter.

So now we will take a moment to stop here and see if there are any questions.

Ericka: Thank you all again for participating in today’s call and your support of the NIH Loan Repayment Programs. Also, thank you to those that have already signed up to become an LRP Ambassador, as well as to those of you who have been serving as Ambassadors in an unofficial capacity over the years. We sincerely appreciate the time and effort you take to build awareness of the LRPs with your colleagues.

Please contact us with any questions you may have about the LRPs or the Ambassador Program.

We will be in touch very soon with an Ambassador Program quarterly newsletter, on Facebook, and Twitter. Have a great rest of the day.