

History of the Professional Development and Education Fund (PDEF)

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In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Technologist Section was working diligently to define the curriculum for entry-level technologists. The profession had matured and was poised to move onto the next phase: research, advanced education, and professional development. It was an exciting time, and one development to come from these discussions was the establishment of the Professional Development and Education Fund (PDEF) in 2002. Establishment of this fund was a bold step, but it was the next step for the coming of age of nuclear medicine technology as an independent, self-regulating profession.

In 2000, the leadership of the SNM-TS recognized the need for funds to support the strategic initiatives of the Technologist Section. The SNM's development fund at the time, the Education and Research Fund, offered only limited scholarships for entry-level technologist students. The board of directors of the SNM that same year passed a motion allowing the SNM-TS to provide grants, awards, and scholarships for research, establishment of educational programs, individuals pursuing higher degrees, and any SNM-TS research or education project.

The foundation raised funds from industry and members. In 2002, the national council under the Technologist Section president Mickey Clarke named this new fund the Professional Development and Research Fund. A task force was assembled to develop the guidelines and governance structure for the new fund. The task force members were I, Lynne Roy, Mickey Clarke, Martha Pickett, and Marcia Boyd. The national council also allocated \$10,000 to hire a consultant to assist the task force in establishing the fund and begin fundraising.

The task force codified the goals of the PDEF as being the advancement of the practice of nuclear medicine technology. The PDEF's strategic objectives were to:

- Ensure an adequate supply of qualified nuclear medicine technologists.
- Encourage research studies, publications, and papers in nuclear medicine technology that promote the development of best-practice techniques.
- Advance the educational background of clinical nuclear medicine instructors, practicing nuclear medicine technologists, and those just entering the field.

- Support the education and research programs of the SNM-TS.

The task force held its first fundraising event at the Radiological Society of North America meeting in 2002. It was a luncheon and besides an over spicy tortilla soup and the SNM past president being hit by a cab the night before, the launch was a tremendous success. We raised over \$160,000—that is, \$10,000 per year, with an initial 2-y commitment. The companies that signed on as partners in our future were Siemens Medical, Capintec, IDEC Pharmaceuticals, MDS Nordion, GE Healthcare, Amersham Health, Bristol Myers Squibb, and Alliance Imaging. These visionaries were designated corporate friends. The Technologist Section president at the time, Mickey Clarke, commented, “We are thrilled at the early support for the programmatic goals of the PDEF.”

The task force then established an executive council, which consisted of:

- Four members of the Technologist Section of the SNM-TS.
- Three members of the SNM, including physicians or scientists.
- Two members representing the nuclear medicine industry.
- Other appropriate members from either the SNM, the SNMTS, or the corporate friends, up to a maximum of 12 members of the council.

The first meeting of the executive council of the PDEF was held at the 2003 midwinter meeting in Hollywood, FL. At that meeting, 3 programs were established. The first was the Mickey Williams Scholarship for entry-level minority students. The second pilot project was the establishment of research grants for technologists to develop best practices in radiation protection and safety. The third was to award professional development scholarships to employed nuclear medicine technologists pursuing advanced degrees.

So far, the Mickey Williams Scholarship has been awarded to 32 individuals and the Professional Development Scholarship to 12 individuals. The research grants have been awarded to 2 individuals and have been applied to produce a podium presentation and a journal article. In 2007, the board expanded the awards from the PDEF to include travel grants for technologists and nuclear medicine technology students to attend the annual meeting.