

The University of Rochester Dean's Professor of Surgery and Oncology

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I was selected as an ELAM Fellow completed my fellowship during the 2017/2018 academic year.

I was nominated by Dr. Friedberg and supported and mentored by Dr. David Linehan, Dr. Gary Morrow and a senior NCI Official Dr. Lori Minasian, Deputy Chief of the NCI Division of Cancer Prevention. I had just become Co-Director of our \$30 million dollar University of Rochester Cancer Center NCI Community Oncology Research Program Research Base; this is a huge cancer clinical trial network spanning the entire United States and comprised of over 600 community oncology practices and more than 3000 oncology providers.

My ELAM project was to help the UR by helping Wilmot Cancer Institute achieve designation as an NCI Designated Cancer Center. My project involved doing more than 40 interviews with leaders across the University of Rochester where I listened and learned about their roles at the University and how I could help; I also shared our vision of becoming an NCI designated cancer center and garnered input on our goal. I interviewed Cancer Center Directors, Associate Directors and investigators from other NCI designated cancer centers to gain insight and mentorship about the process and what was needed to become designated. During this time, I also worked with my colleague Dr. Supriya Mohile and we established the Wilmot Cancer Prevention and Control Research Program-a network of scientists across the University conducting cancer prevention and control research. We worked with Dr. Friedberg to strategically award pilot grants to investigators and to bolster our cancer prevention and control research in areas where we were not as strong. We began mentoring more and more faculty across the medical center who were interested in cancer and helped with several other high level key recruits. I Chaired the search committee to find and hire our Inaugural Wilmot Associate Director for Community Outreach and Engagement. I provided resources and guidance to help develop the Wilmot Human Biophysiology Shared Resource for investigators. Along the way, in my role I devoted many hours to providing input and help to develop all aspects of Wilmot that we needed to build and reorganize in order to become a designated center (e.g., Education and Outreach, Developmental Pilot Funds, Community Engagement, Clinical Trials, Basic Science Research Programs, Cores and Shared Resources, Membership, etc.). In 2023 I was promoted to Associate Director of Population Science for Wilmot, and I wrote my section of our grant along with Dr. Mohile. Our entire team of leaders and investigators prepared our grant and submitted it the first time; we scored well and were encouraged to resubmit. We resubmitted in January of 2024 and had our NCI site visit in May of 2024. We should know sometime this fall in 2024 if we accomplished our goal and we are awarded designation and the accompanying grant from NCI. While some may think that the only reason to obtain this grant is because of the prestige it bestows upon our institution (it is the highest recognition a cancer center can get in my opinion), it does far more than that. In the last 7 years of working on my ELAM project with Dr. Friedberg and colleagues, I have seen Wilmot and URMC and the UR grow into a place where world class researchers are excited to work together to tackle cancer's toughest challenges. I have seen tremendous culture change to not only be more inclusive but to be more celebratory of diversity and all the wonderful strengths it adds to our professional culture and the culture of

caring for our patients and their families and friends. We are more engaged with the community, and we understand their needs better and we can find innovative ways in our research to meet their needs as it relates to cancer. Our scientists and clinicians are celebrated across the globe for their groundbreaking research and patient care. I am optimistic that we will indeed achieve our goal of becoming an NCI designated cancer center in the fall of 2024. It will have taken 8 years to see my project through to completion and to do my part in helping our institution. I am truly grateful for my ELAM experience and thank all my mentors.