

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction: The Informal AAHM Student Association</i>	2
<i>The AAHM Ad Hoc Committee for Student Affairs</i>	2
<i>Part A: Relationship to the American Association for the History of Medicine</i>	
<i>Results</i>	4
<i>Discussion</i>	6
<i>Part B: Is There a Need for a Graduate Student Association in the AAHM?</i>	
<i>Results</i>	8
<i>Discussion</i>	9
<i>Part C: Professional Resources for Graduate Students</i>	
<i>Results</i>	9
<i>Discussion</i>	10
<i>Conclusions</i>	11
<i>Recommendations</i>	12
<i>Appendix</i>	13

Introduction: The Informal AAHM Student Association

During the past two years, a core group of graduate student members of the AAHM formed an informal graduate student association. The student association held an organizational meeting during the graduate student breakfast at the 2003 Boston meeting and organized a graduate student smoker. The primary aim of these early activities was to access the needs and interests of students in the history of medicine community. It was also our goal to form new networks and strengthen existing ones among graduate students from different institutions. We intended these networks to increase opportunities for academic exchange, to create an infrastructure for syllabi and pedagogical exchange, to facilitate discussion regarding feedback and support for potential publishing opportunities, information on the current job market, funding opportunities, and other issues of professional development. The response from fellow graduate students indicated a need for further action, and the general consensus was for us to explore creating a Student Section within the AAHM. The intent of a Student Section is three-fold: to promote intellectual exchange among graduate students, to foster opportunities for professional development, and to encourage social interaction among graduate students interested in the history of medicine.

The AAHM Ad Hoc Committee for Student Affairs

Because of the enthusiasm shown at the graduate student breakfast meeting, an AAHM Ad Hoc Committee for Student Affairs was created following the 2003 Boston meeting. The Committee consisted of Professor Harry Marks from Johns Hopkins University and four graduate students of diverse age and background. Two students are

Ph.D. students in the history of medicine. Jennifer Keelan is a student about to defend her dissertation at the University of Toronto and Todd Olszewski is a second-year student at Yale University. The other two student members are medical students. Jeremy Greene is an M.D. student at Harvard University also finishing his Ph.D. in the history of medicine. Ryan Gregory is an M.D. student at the University of Texas, with two master's degrees, one in the history of medicine from the University of Pennsylvania. The committee's mandate was to survey the student population, assess the specific interests and needs of graduate students in the history of medicine, and determine how the AAHM might meet some of those needs.

The committee mounted a web-based graduate student survey to gauge what issues were of interest to graduate students in the history of medicine. The survey consisted of a three-part questionnaire-sent to AAHM student members, students who attended the October 2003 Joint Atlantic Seminar for the History of Medicine, and those who expressed interest to committee members. The committee sent out over ninety e-mail surveys in January of 2004, and forty-one respondents submitted questionnaires by the closing date of February 14. The first part of the survey gathered information about the student's current relationship with AAHM, while the second surveyed the need for a graduate student association. The final section requested information about the tools students most frequently utilize for information exchange and professional development in the field of history of medicine. This report follows the same format.

PART A: Relationship to the American Association for the History of Medicine

Results

The demographics of respondents showed a heavy involvement of Ph.D. students (N=39, or 91%). 2 masters students also responded. There was also a trend towards involvement of more senior students: Year 1 = 3, Year 2 = 5, Year 3 = 10, Year 4 = 8, Year 5 = 13. Of the senior students (those beyond year 2), 11 were ABD. Finally, although most students reported studying in the United States, a significant number of Canadian students responded (9, or 22%). No students reported studying in other countries.

Almost two-thirds (65%) of all respondents were student members of the AAHM; by contrast two-thirds had not attended an AAHM annual meeting in the past five years. However, we did notice a trend of increasing attendance for students who did attend annual meetings over this five-year period. Most students who had attended at least one conference during the past five years attended the 2003 conference in Boston (16 total, 5 of whom also presented papers). The second most attended conference was Kansas City in 2002 (6 total, 2 presenters), followed by Bethesda in 2000 (4 total, no presenters). This increase in attendance illustrates the positive effects of facilitating student access to annual meetings. While not the only reason for attending, student-centered opportunities are important factors that influence student attendance and participation in annual meetings.

Respondents were asked to rank several possible reasons why they did or did not attend an annual meeting. Reasons for attending in order of greatest importance were as follows:

1. Presenting a paper.
2. Professional development.
3. Opportunity to meet up with peers.
4. My supervisor/faculty/other students from my department/university encouraged me to go.
5. My scholarship/department funds attendance to the meeting.
6. The program or a particular session was important for my work.

Determining the average ranking for each possible response, we noticed two trends. The three highest-ranking choices were tightly grouped with respect to their average ranking (1.86, 2.14, and 2.31), which suggests all three might be of nearly equal importance. The relative rankings of the last three reasons, however, were spread over a wider range (3.1, 3.8, and 4.2). The top three reasons for attending annual meetings very much mirror the three-fold intent of the Student Section: intellectual exchange, professional development, and social interaction.

Reasons for never attending, or not regularly attending, annual meetings were just as telling. Reasons for having NEVER attended in order of greatest importance were as follows:

1. Cost.
2. Was not aware that there was a meeting.
3. Family (ex: parental leave).
4. Did not receive notice in time to make travel arrangements.
5. Chose to go to another conference.

Similarly, reasons for NOT REGULARLY attending meetings (less than twice in the past five years) were as follows:

1. Cost.
2. Family.
3. Was not aware of meeting.
4. Schedule conflict.
5. (TIE) Chose to go to another conference AND Was discouraged to attend by department and university.

Discussion

These findings suggest that cost is an important factor in explaining why a large number (two-thirds) of respondents have never attended an AAHM meeting. To ensure sustained graduate student involvement, it is critical that the AAHM continue to subsidize student attendance at meetings by offering discounted registration rates and volunteer opportunities in exchange for registration waivers. These opportunities were made available to students at the 2003 meeting in Boston and were tremendously successful. Students were very grateful for the savings and, perhaps more importantly, felt glad to contribute to the organization and execution of the conference. Many volunteers reported feeling a greater sense of belonging within the association and that their experience was likely to positively influence their decision to attend future meetings.

It is also critical that the Association continue to try to fund the generous travel bursaries for students, especially for those who are presenting papers. Clearly, the

AAHM cannot be a limitless source of financial support for graduate student attendance at meetings. We propose that a well-organized Student Section could significantly reduce costs by helping students find accommodations with other students local to the meeting (this was done with great success at the Joint Atlantic Seminar in Baltimore and hopefully at the upcoming Madison meeting). At the Boston meeting, graduate students were able to pair up with other students wishing to share hotel accommodations and transportation costs.

Another consistent source of graduate student non-attendance appears to be a problem of communication. 25% of respondents commented that they were unaware of the meeting and/or learned of it late. A Student Section could help address this problem by helping disseminate information about upcoming conferences to students directly. Granted, all AAHM meetings are posted on the organization's website far in advance; however, timely reminders from fellow students can go a long way towards encouraging greater attendance by students not initially inclined to attend and participate at annual meetings.

Finally, the Association's proactive stance towards accepting graduate student papers for presentation has not gone unnoticed. Professional development and the opportunity to meet peers rank as factors equally influential as presenting a paper for attendance at annual meetings. Given that most respondents who said they had attended a meeting recently had attended the Boston meeting and this meeting was the first to have official (Graduate Student Breakfast sponsored by the AAHM) and unofficial (Grad Student/Faculty Mixer sponsored by Harvard) graduate student programming, it is likely that these events influenced attendance. We feel the perpetuation of such events will

encourage graduate student attendance at future meetings. We propose that a Student Section would be the most efficacious way to ensure continuity and quality of such programming in the future.

PART B: Is there a need for a Graduate Student Association in the AAHM?

Results

The vast majority of graduate students (85%) responding to our survey supported the creation of a Student Section within the AAHM. Students ranked the following reasons for supporting the creation of such a section:

1. Information exchange of current graduate research/problems.
2. (3-way tie)
 - a. Professional development.
 - b. Sense of community.
 - c. Cost sharing/hosting opportunities for conferences and research.
5. Lobbying for dedicated graduate student funds from the AAHM for activities, prizes, and research.
6. Investigating and compiling sources for graduate student funding.
7. Sharing teaching materials and syllabi.
8. Graduate student social events at AAHM annual meetings.
9. Hosting a graduate student webpage on the AAHM website.

The 5 respondents who did not support the creation of a student section of the AAHM were also asked to rank their reasons. The following reasons were all ranked nearly equivalently: needs met by other entities within the AAHM; do not believe a student

section would be effective in addressing needs, time commitment and continuity of organization; needs met by other organizations outside the AAHM; and, will create a clique of graduate students.

Discussion

These results show overwhelmingly strong support within the graduate student community surveyed (of whom 65% are already members of the AAHM) for the creation of a Student Section. Furthermore, the ranking of priorities for students supporting such action is very consistent with the proposed goals of a Student Section.

PART C: Professional Resources for Graduate Students

Results

The first question of this section asked what primary sources of information students utilized to learn about North American educational institutions and programs in history of medicine. HNET, the online listserv, ranked as the most utilized resource, with over 35% of respondents ranking it as their primary source of information. Localized sources of advice ranked next, with faculty and peers listed as key resources. Students ranked the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, followed by other academic journals, as less-utilized sources of information.

A lack of consensus among graduate students emerged with regard to the AAHM's online and printed resources. For both the AAHM webpage and newsletter, equal numbers of students ranked both sources as either very important resources or as un-utilized sources. The AAHM research guide was the least popular AAHM

publication, with nearly 50% of respondents ranking it “not relevant.” The responses indicate that AAHM publications, especially the *Bulletin* and the webpage, are still significant community portals into the field for many students. The success of HNET indicates that while there might be a niche for a history of medicine listserv, existing listservs can be exploited for the same purpose. Many students ranked peers and faculty highly as sources of information, yet approximately 20% ranked peers, faculty, and department resources as not relevant. For this cohort, a Student Section could be an invaluable resource to students for extending their networks beyond their own institutions.

This section also sought to determine the sources of information regarding funding and potential opportunities for post-doctoral studies in the history of medicine. The top ranking resources regarding professional development were very similar to those regarding programs in the field. However, AAHM publications ranked significantly lower in this category. Approximately 25% ranked the AAHM newsletter, which ranked better than the *Bulletin*, as an important resource for professional development. Asked to rank resources about funding for their graduate and postgraduate research, students deemed local advice to be the most utilized resource. Half of the respondents ranked the AAHM publications as un-utilized sources of information about funding for graduate work and postdoctoral research.

Discussion

The findings of this section reflect a high degree of variability in the degree of students' utilization of available resources in the field. One explanation could be that the graduate

community itself is fragmented, and that the diversity of responses reflects a lack of community cohesiveness, shared experiences, and hence a common set of resources. If this is the case, a stronger graduate student presence might narrow these gaps by introducing students to the resources available to the community in a more routine fashion.

Conclusions

That many students studying topics in the history of medicine rely heavily on local sources for information about the larger field poses many pragmatic problems. Complaints that many students feel isolated from intellectual peers or might be the only person in a history department or medical program studying the history of medicine, suggest that there is an opportunity for an AAHM Student Section to play a significant role within the history of medicine community. AAHM publications do play a significant role in disseminating information about ongoing research in the field, but do not play as central a role in contributing to the professional development of its student members. Students do not see the AAHM as an information resource regarding potential postdoctoral fellowship funding and graduate level awards.

The AAHM does already serve a critical role in the professional development and sense of community for graduate students who attend annual meetings. A major problem, however, is that only one-third of respondents have actually attended a meeting in the past five years. A Student Section of the AAHM could effectively address the top reasons for such a high level of non-attendance AND could further enhance the already

positive aspects of professional development and community building that students seek from the AAHM.

Recommendations

1. Create a Student Section of the AAHM. Its mandate will be three-fold: to promote intellectual exchange among graduate students, to foster opportunities for professional development, and to encourage social interaction among graduate students interested in the history of medicine.
2. Encourage the annual meeting host institution to appoint a student liaison to work with the Student Section to provide cost sharing options for students.
3. Request annual meeting host to budget for a Student Section breakfast (as in Boston) for future meetings.
4. Waive student participant's registration in lieu of volunteering for the conference (as in Boston).
5. Continue to support Student travel with travel bursaries.
6. Allow Student Section to maintain an active link on AAHM website.
7. Suggest the AAHM encourage graduate programs in history of science, medicine, and technology to promote AAHM membership among students and to publicize awareness of annual meetings among students.

Acknowledgments

The Ad Hoc Committee on Student Affairs would like to thank the University of Toronto Computer Support for the Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS) and Kenneth Ludmerer.

Appendix

Table 1 Peers as a primary source of information about the North American institutions and programs in history of medicine.

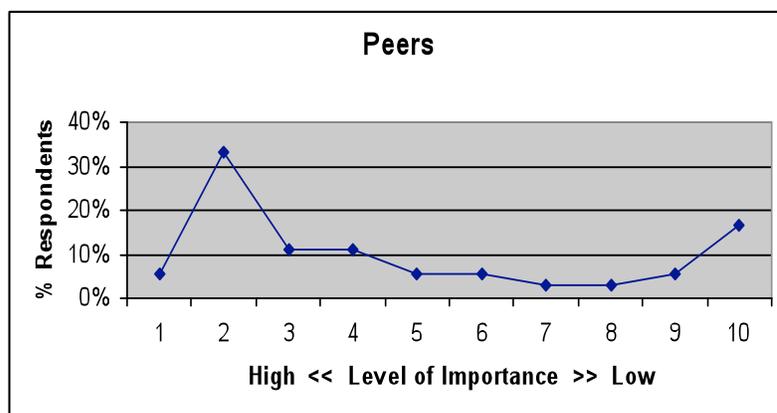


Table 2 Faculty as a primary source of information about the North American institutions and programs in history of medicine.

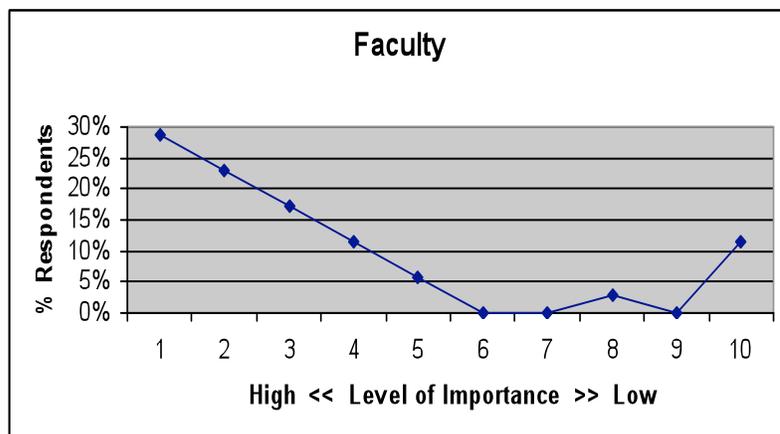


Table 3 AAHM webpage as a primary source of information specifically with respect to professional development, academic and non-academic positions in the history of medicine.

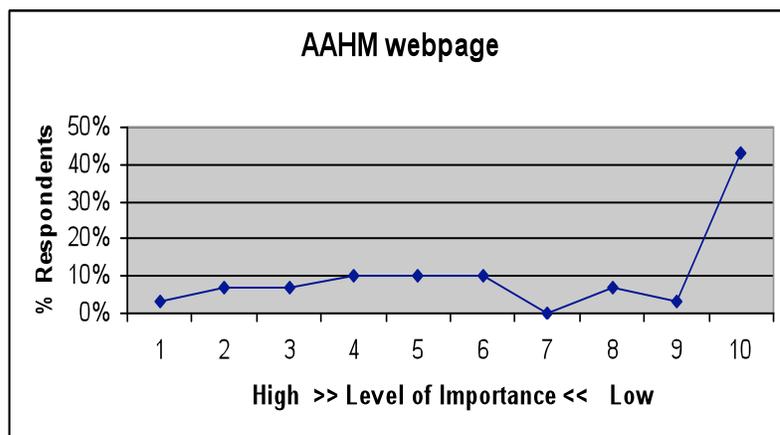


Table 4 AAHM research guide as a primary source of information specifically with respect to professional development, academic and non-academic positions in the history of medicine.

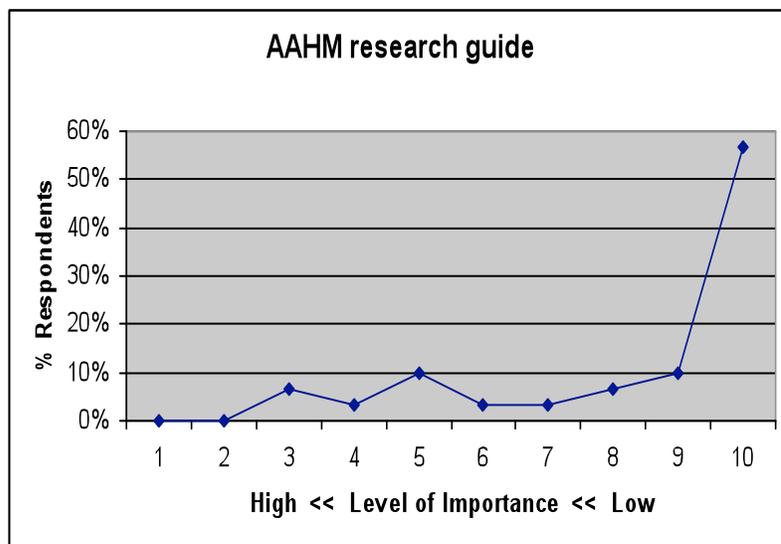


Table 5 Bulletin of the History of Medicine as a primary source of information specifically with respect to professional development, academic and non-academic positions in the history of medicine.

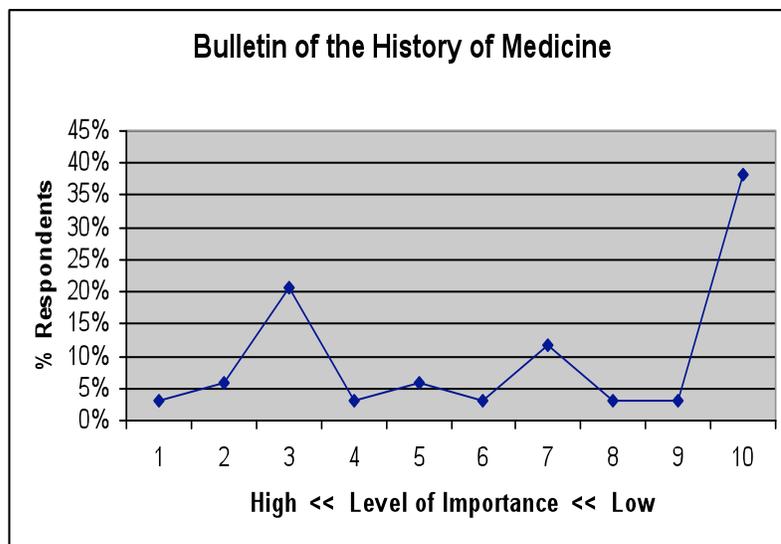


Table 6 Peers as a primary source of information specifically with respect to professional development, academic and non-academic positions in the history of medicine.

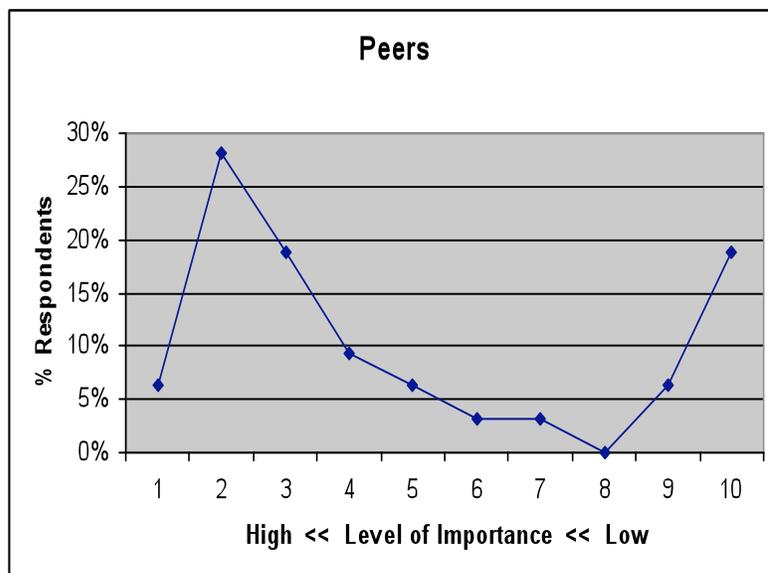


Table 7 Faculty as a primary source of information specifically with respect to professional development, academic and non-academic positions in the history of medicine.

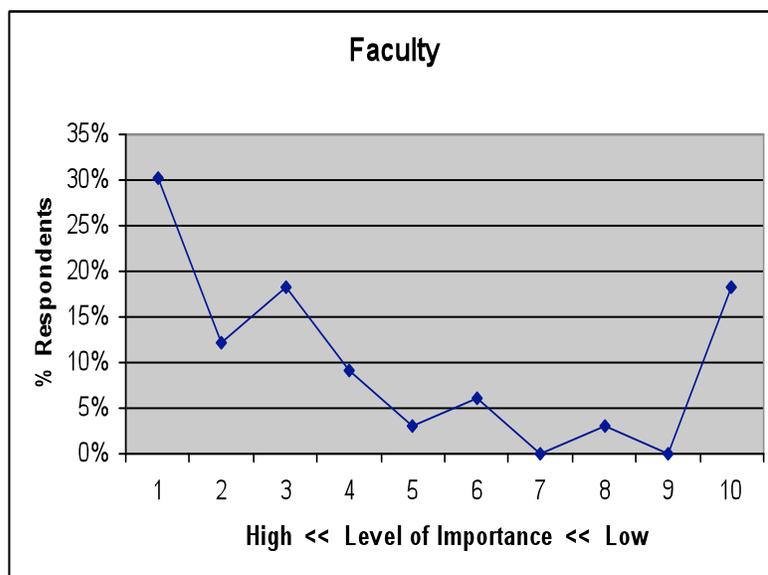


Table 8 Peers as a primary source of information about funding for graduate work and postdoctoral research.

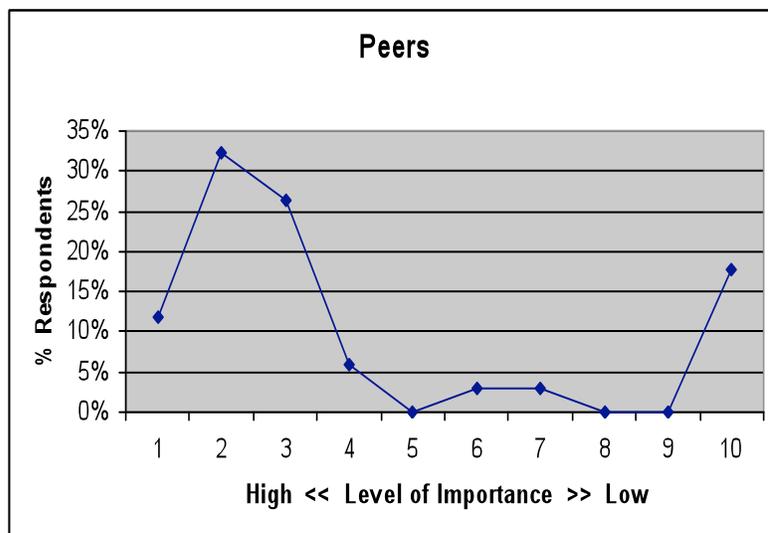
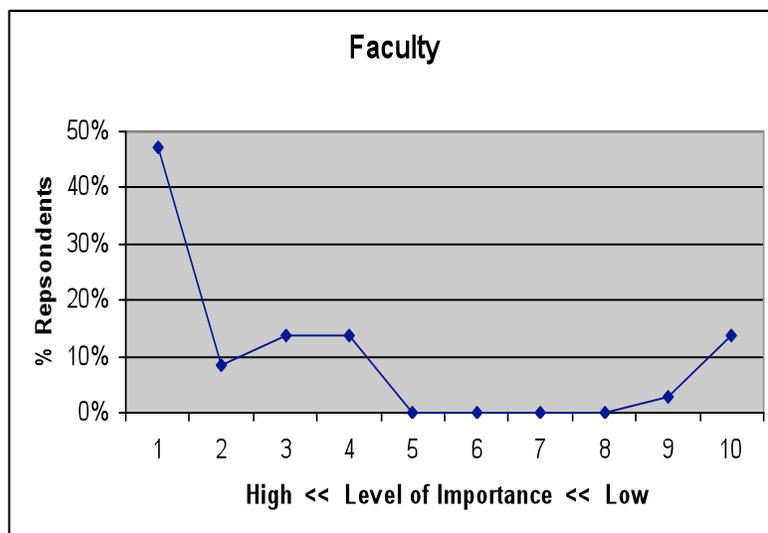


Table 9 Faculty as a primary source of information about funding for graduate work and postdoctoral research.



Top Five Sources of Information: Funding

1. Faculty
2. Departmental bulletin board
3. Peers
4. HNET
5. AAHM website and newsletter

Top Five Sources of Information: Employment Prospects and Professional Development

1. HNET
2. Peers
3. Faculty
4. AAHM newsletter
5. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*