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The University of Arizona recently conferred Center of Excellence status on the College of Medicine’s Program in Integrative Medicine—a move that reaffirms the positive impact integrative medicine has had on health care system transformation.

Now known as the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine, or AzCIM, the program underwent an intensive evaluation process and earned unanimous endorsements from UA health sciences program directors and college deans. The new designation formally recognizes the center’s achievements in the field over the past 14 years, and its status as the world leader in integrative medical education.

Integrative medicine, as defined by the center, is healing-oriented medicine that takes into account the whole person—body, mind and spirit—including all aspects of lifestyle. It emphasizes a therapeutic relationship and makes use of all appropriate therapies, both conventional and alternative.

Founded in 1994 by internationally renowned author and integrative medicine pioneer Dr. Andrew Weil, the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine joins nine other Centers of Excellence at the UA College of Medicine.

"Having our work recognized in this way is among our greatest accomplishments to date," Weil said. "The Center of Excellence designation formally recognizes us as an innovator in educating the next generation of physicians and health care professionals. Our challenge now is to remain at the forefront of innovation so as to make integrative medicine available to everyone, regardless of economic or geographic limitation."

In approving the designation, UA President Robert N. Shelton said, "This formal designation acknowledges that the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine is a respected and significant voice within the University, and indeed throughout the global health care community.

Shelton also praised the program for the way it has "inspired the development of scores of similar programs across the country, another manifestation of the University's innovation and leadership in the health sciences arena."

Since its founding, the center has created five integrative medicine fellowships, received more than $7 million in federal funding and graduated nearly 300 integrative medicine fellows. Many of these fellows are now academic leaders in other prestigious centers, including the Johns Hopkins University, Stanford University, Duke University, Tufts University, the University of Wisconsin and the University of Maryland.

The Center of Excellence designation will enhance the center’s ability to court top-tier faculty and inspire a new era of program growth—led by the center’s most ambitious
program to date: the Integrative Medicine in Residency, or IMR. The center’s integrative medicine curriculum soon will be incorporated into standard three-year family medicine residency programs across the nation. Residents will learn to incorporate integrative medicine concepts into their practices, including patient-centered care techniques that facilitate lifestyle change.

Through funding raised from both public and private sources, an IMR pilot program will be launched this month at eight family medicine residency programs nationwide, including the UA; Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City; Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, N.C.; Maine Medical Center in Portland, Maine; Maine-Dartmouth in Augusta, Maine; the University of Connecticut in Storrs, Conn.; Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis, Minn.; and the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, Texas.

“This will be the first program in the nation to create a required curriculum in integrative medicine for physicians during residency,” said Dr. Victoria Maizes, executive director of the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine. “Over the next 10 years, development of IMR into the national model for residency education is a major goal for the center. We will gradually move beyond primary care into subspecialty training.”

For more information about the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine, visit http://www.integrativemedicine.arizona.edu [1].

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