As this is my first annual report as associate chair for faculty affairs, I should begin by recognizing my predecessor, Margaret Gyetko, MD, who rose to associate dean for faculty affairs in September 2007, after seven years of excellent service to our department’s faculty.

Now that she has taken on the challenge of addressing faculty issues for the entire Medical School, I am privileged to step into the departmental role.

One of the key issues that I am focusing on as associate chair is improving the department by expanding the diversity of its faculty and trainees. The benefits of doing so are multiple.

In particular, it is imperative that the department make available to all segments of our population the unique and exceptional training opportunities that we can provide. By so doing, we will fulfill a major mission of the University, namely to train individuals to become the leaders for all components of our society. Furthermore, no department of medicine can reach its highest level of accomplishment without benefitting from the talents of all members of our society—including those who belong to groups who have traditionally under-represented in medicine.

Although the Medical School has been relatively successful at expanding the diversity of the student body, the same trends have not been as strongly seen in our residency and fellowship programs. Correcting this will require combined efforts in recruitment and in ensuring that the environment within the department supports all individuals in a fashion that allows them to excel and meet their full potential.

To achieve these goals, a departmental diversity committee has been convened to develop a set of initiatives. Robert Todd, MD, PhD, the interim chair of our department, has committed a substantial amount of resources to the program. The department’s efforts will be coordinated with those of the Medical School’s Diversity and Career Development Office, which has a strong history of expanding opportunities to people from a broad range of backgrounds.

A second major initiative of my office is to enhance career development programs within the department. Working with the associate chairs for research, Benjamin Margolis, MD, and Anna Lok, MBBS, increased attention is being directed to providing guidance for faculty who are at the lecturer, instructor, and assistant professor levels.

The challenges inherent in achieving success in clinical care, research, and/or education, demand that systems be put in place to support faculty development in a fashion tailored to the needs of each individual.

Particular emphasis is being placed on ensuring that all junior faculty members have skilled mentors who continually evaluate their progress and provide expert guidance. Although this effort is being implemented across the whole department, one of the perceived benefits will be to foster the advancement of women to senior academic ranks and to leadership positions with the department.

A third initiative being organized from my office will be to improve and streamline the evaluation process that is used to reward high-performing faculty members. Increased input from division chiefs and Veterans Administration hospital leadership is being incorporated into the process. Accountability will be improved by increasing the transparency of the process.

As I begin my first full year in the role of associate chair for faculty affairs, I feel honored to be in a position where I can assist faculty to achieve their career goals. By so doing, the department will continue to be one of the best in the nation.