

Inspiring Leadership: Student-Led Award Highlights Excellence in Research Mentorship

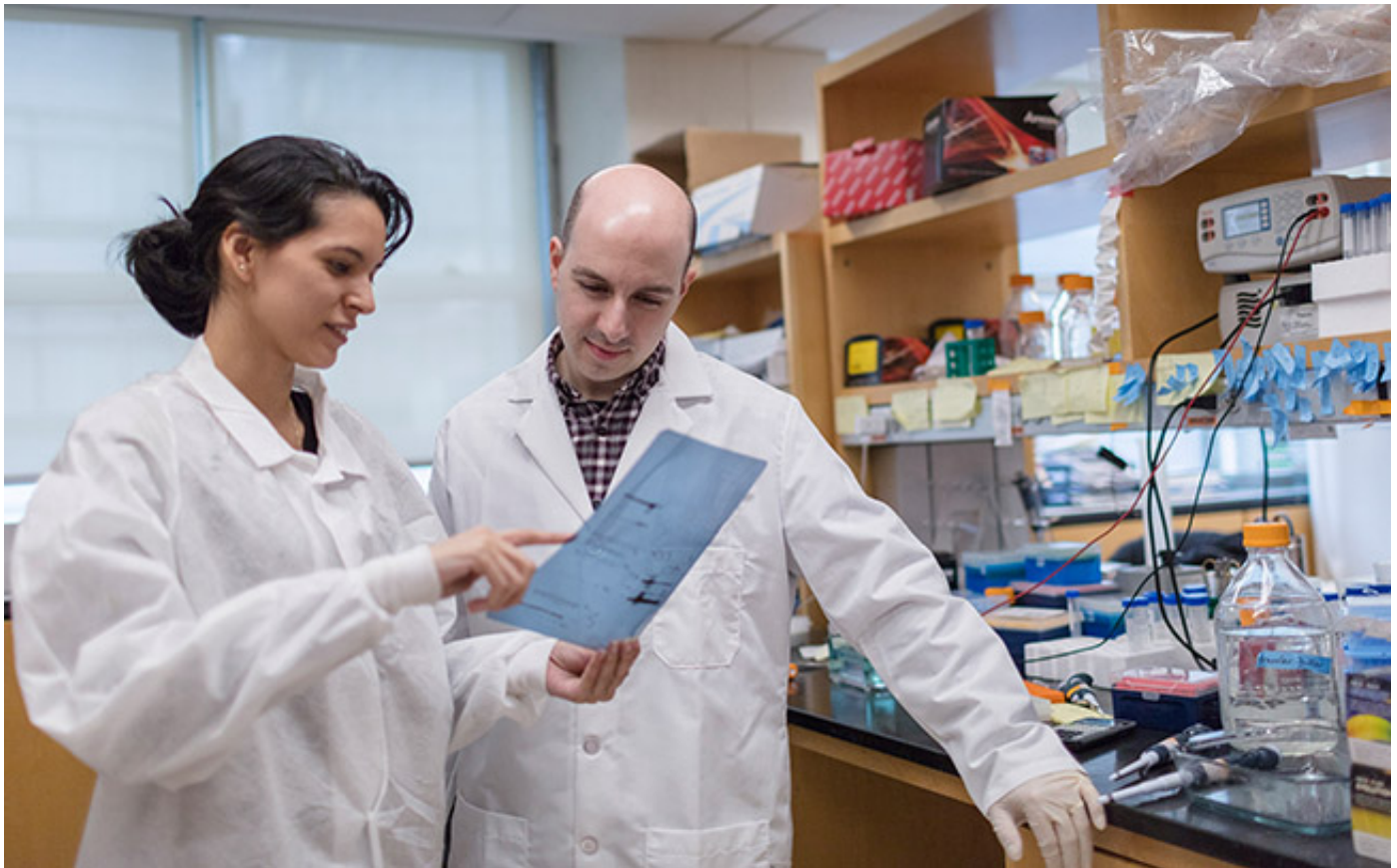


Mentoring is an expansive task; it can be daunting for new principal investigators (PIs) and those with decades of experience. To show their appreciation for great mentorship, the Students Advocating for Science, Education, and Medicine (SASEM), a student-led club in the Sackler Institute for Graduate Biomedical Science, recently created the "Above and Beyond Mentorship Award." The

club presented the inaugural honor, which recognizes a mentor at the NYU School of Medicine who creates an excellent experience for trainees, to Richard L. Possemato, PhD, assistant professor, Department of Pathology. *(Pictured left, from left to right, Samantha Lux, Cristina Castro, Julia Derk, PhD, Richard Possemato, PhD, Kody Mansfield, Shoshanna Kahne.)*

To determine the award recipient, SASEM asked nominators to describe how a PI exemplified the following qualities: promoting scientific excellence, valuing professional advancement, being open-minded and inclusive to gender and racial minorities, being thoughtful in criticism, and promoting work/life balance. "The nominations were a fortifying reminder that positive mentoring experiences are acutely appreciated and make a huge impact on trainees' lives. Many PIs were highlighted as excellent scientists, caring people, and devoted leaders, but Dr. Possemato stood out by the number and strength of his nominations," said Lili Blumenberg, a PhD student and member of SASEM.

In his nomination letter, Vlad Sviderskiy, an MD/PhD student in the Possemato lab, emphasized Dr. Possemato's reliable commitment to students' success and well-being. "He truly cares about his students and wants them to succeed in their career. He goes out of his way to make sure they are on track professionally and to minimize their stress," he said. One theme in Dr. Possemato's nominations was that he serves as a mentor to those outside his lab as well. "I've gotten texts from multiple people whose committees he is on telling me how wonderful he is," added Sviderskiy. Nominations also highlighted that Dr. Possemato is "an active advocate for the LGBTQ+ community and creates an inclusive environment that is welcoming for all in our lab."



Above, Dr. Richard Possemato (right) with senior lab manager Samantha Alvarez.

Dr. Possemato cites his eagerness to listen as the key to his mentorship

success. "Listen to what is coming out of your trainee's mouth, and what their body language is telling you while remembering that everybody is a bit different. I see my role as trying to clear the path for my trainees," said Dr. Possemato.

Dr. Possemato's success exemplifies the fact that excellence in science and mentorship go hand in hand. Since its inception, the Possemato lab has published robust, meticulous work on cancer metabolism in journals such as Nature and Molecular Cell. He credits this synergistic approach to his experiences as a trainee. "When I was a postdoc, my mentor, David Sabatini, MD, PhD, professor of biology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, showed me how to really pick apart a biological problem. His mentorship was instrumental to my success," he said.

"Receiving this award is very gratifying. As a mentor, I am very invested in the success of the members of my lab," shared Dr. Possemato. "It's rewarding to know that they appreciate my efforts to help them thrive not only as scientists, but also as people."

This story was contributed by the Students Advocating for Science, Education, and Medicine.