

Dr. Michelle Williams
2006 Exemplary Leadership Award Winner
Fourth Annual Grace Hopper Awards Luncheon

Seattle Girls' School is honored to award Dr. Michelle Williams with the Exemplary Leadership Award at the Fourth Annual Grace Hopper Awards Luncheon. It is because of Dr. Williams' consistent and constant striving as a teacher, professor, and scientist to build systems that assure better opportunities for students in the sciences that she is being given this award this year.



Dr. Williams' primary research interests are in reproductive and perinatal epidemiology. As Associate Director of the Center for Perinatal Studies at Swedish Medical Center, Dr. Williams' current research includes both clinical epidemiological studies and infant chromosomal abnormalities. Her other research interests include cancer epidemiology, particularly the epidemiology of renal cell carcinoma, and the underlying biological mechanisms associated with perinatal characteristics and subsequent risk of breast cancer.

Along with her work at Swedish Medical Center, Dr. Williams is also Director of the University's Multidisciplinary International Research Training ([MIRT](#)) Program, which provides research training opportunities to undergraduate and graduate students. It is her work with this program that was most inspiring to the members of the Grace Hopper nominating committee, and exemplifies who Michelle Williams is and why she deserves this award.

While on maternity leave in 1993, Dr. Williams developed a program that would help to encourage minorities underrepresented in biomedical and behavioral sciences to pursue PhD research careers. The MIRT Grant was awarded in 1994. Funded by the Fogarty International Center, Dr. Williams chose to develop her program, not the easy way with wealthy partners and less risk, but rather to send those minority students to resource poor settings in underdeveloped countries. By identifying and implementing partners for this groundbreaking program, Dr. Williams has made it possible to educate these students in more than science.

Students and faculty in the MIRT Program are dedicated to helping the colleagues and collaborators in developing countries by giving them access to journals, supplies, international conference travel opportunities, and inviting them to their US academic institutions. Dr. Williams believes that her "chance quality" of academic experience drives her to make sure that talented students have access to greater opportunities than their expectations. She believes that being amongst smart, motivated people has been a blessing beyond measure. And it is her intent to make sure students do not have to "luck into" their dreams.