Twenty years ago, Lisa Brath arrived at VCU as an intern in Internal Medicine, already on an upward trajectory. Today, as an Associate Professor, Fellowship Program Director in Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, as well as Medical Director of Respiratory Care, her accomplishments and energy strongly merit her selection as the Fellowship Director winner of this year’s Leadership in Graduate Medical Education Award.

“From the outset of her faculty tenure, it was clear that Dr. Brath brought new thinking, new ideas, new passion and new techniques to the tough task of teaching and training post graduate MDs how to become physicians,” said Chairman, Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine Alpha A. Fowler, III, MD. “Recognition quickly followed, and she has been recognized repeatedly as one of the Internal Medicine’s best teachers.”

“Few physicians can compare with Dr. Brath’s ability to profoundly impact graduate medical education at both the resident and fellow levels,” explained Assistant Professor Wes Shepherd, MD. “She clearly has a passion for graduate medical education. She has a keen insight into residents and fellows as learners and the education process of training at these levels.”

Embracing new possibilities in graduate medical education, Dr. Brath worked to form multidisciplinary conferences in Thoracic Imaging and Surgical Pathology. Among many other initiatives, she also created a monthly Fellows journal club and established virtual bronchoscopy courses.

Not surprisingly, Dr. Brath’s efforts on behalf of the Department began to attract notice outside of the institution. “Her leadership has directly resulted in dramatic improvements in both the quality and quantity of PCCM (Pulmonary Critical Care Medicine) fellowship applicants,” Dr. Fowler added. “Dr. Brath led the PCCM fellowship program into the national fellowship match program which resulted in recruitment of fellows from outstanding universities across the United States. She has provided leadership and advocacy for PCCM fellows in an unprecedented manner.”

Today, the PCCM Fellowship is an institutional treasure. “One testimony to the fellowship’s health is the fact that of the fellows present or entering the PCCM program, five are former chief residents and the remaining six are award winning former internal medicine residents who were highly recruited by other programs,” added Richard Wenzel, MD, Chairman, Department of Internal Medicine.

This growth in the Fellowship is due to more than just the program innovations Dr. Brath has set in place. It also is testimony to her talent as an instructor. “In much the same way as a coach provides guidance and expertise without actually taking over a game from his players, Dr. Brath provides guidance and expertise to the housestaff without eliminating their critical role in the evaluation and management of their patients,” said Assistant Professor Jeffrey Kushinka, MD. The Program Director of the Internal Medicine Training Program, Stephanie Call, MD, expanded on Dr. Brath’s style of leadership: “I have never seen someone so in tune with each trainee with whom they work. I have seen Dr. Brath struggle with finding the most supportive solution for fellows not meeting expectations, even when all usual options had been exhausted. It is ALWAYS, personal with Lisa Brath when it involves one of her trainees, and she ALWAYS puts her whole person into each encounter.”

What kind of a difference can this kind of dedication make? An astonishing one, according to legions of fellows and colleagues. “On many levels, her efforts have fundamentally changed the way physicians are educated at this institution.”