Of scientists doing research in the biomedical sciences, it is a known fact that minorities and women are underrepresented. One study showed that of Ph.D.s employed in the life sciences, 87.3% were White, 8.7% were Asian, 1.9% African American, 1.8% Native American, and less than 1% were Hispanic (NSF 1996). Women represent 26% of the Ph.D.s employed in the life sciences. There are a number of factors that contribute to the high attrition rate among females and underrepresented minorities in science. These factors, which often include perceptions of women, workplace environment, and work-family issues, are based upon differences in sociological, educational and cultural aspects of each minority group (NSF 1994). Students from these groups are often deterred from considering a career in the biomedical sciences because of preconceived notions about scientists. Students view scientists as white men wearing glasses and a white lab coat (Gardner et al. 1989). This is the image most often portrayed by the media and society. These images give students narrow and negative messages about scientists as individuals. With limited access to “real” women and minority scientists, students get the impression that a career in science is difficult to achieve if one is a female or minority.

In addition to the studies documenting the under-representation of women and minorities in the biomedical sciences, many studies and programs seek to find ways to remedy the situation. Outreach programs to primary and secondary schools aim to change the stereotypic image of scientists at a young age. Showing college women and minorities real applications of science in their world and possible career alternatives in the sciences can broaden their view of scientists. Teaching students about specific individuals (women

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