

## Jim Russo BioSketch:

Jim Russo was born in Gary, IN and earned a B.A. in Chemistry from Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington, IL in 1984. He then entered the graduate program in the Department of Pharmacology and Molecular Sciences at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, MD. His dissertation research, conducted at the Johns Hopkins Oncology Center, focused on the role of the enzyme aldehyde dehydrogenase (ALDH) in conferring cellular resistance to the antitumor agent cyclophosphamide. After completing his Ph.D. in 1988, he was a Visiting Assistant Professor for one year at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, PA before joining the Whitman faculty 1989.

Since 2002 he has served as the Director for the Biochemistry, Biophysics, and Molecular Biology (BBMB) program, an interdisciplinary major program in the molecular life sciences supported by grants from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the MJ Murdock Charitable Trust, and the WM Keck Foundation. Since 2000 he has also served as the Health Professions Advisor at Whitman College, assisting students preparing for careers in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, public health, and other health professions.

His teaching and research interests in the biomedical sciences span from the molecular to the community level. He teaches the Biochemistry component of the BBMB core sequence, focusing on the role of proteins in conferring specificity molecular recognition and catalysis and techniques for characterizing proteins in the lab. The course also explores the disease burden caused by malnutrition, both nutritional deficits and calorie excesses. He has also developed a special topics seminar course on Infectious Diseases. This course examines the global impact of infectious disease and has introduced global public health and epidemiology to the curriculum.

His molecular level research has pursued the role of ALDH enzymes in Vitamin A (retinal) metabolism, hematopoiesis, and immune system protection against infectious disease. Current efforts in collaboration with Doug Juers are focused on obtaining a

crystal structure of ALDH with cofactor and inhibitor bound to the active site. Recent collaborations with the Walla Walla Public Schools and the University of Washington Center for Public Health Nutrition on policy work has focused on the creation and implementation of local and state school district policies for improving student learning through improved nutrition and health.

From 1990–2008 he shared his faculty position with his wife Ruth as they have raised four children.