Douglas M. Tollefsen, MD/PhD ’77, HS ’79
Faculty Achievement Award

Douglas M. Tollefsen, MD/PhD ’77, HS ’79, professor of medicine at Washington University School of Medicine, is known internationally for major discoveries in blood clotting and his expertise in anticoagulation therapy for thrombosis.

By the time Tollefsen graduated from the Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) in 1977, he had published a book chapter and six papers in major journals. In 1981, he made a breakthrough that would become the foundation of his career. At that time, only one protein was known to collaborate with heparin, an anticoagulant in blood. Then Tollefsen discovered a second, which he named heparin cofactor II (HCII). Within the next few years, he purified HCII, characterized its remarkable biochemical properties, and discovered that it has a unique mode of activation that could be exploited to prevent abnormal blood clotting. Later, his animal studies showed that HCII modulates arteries’ response to injury.

Among his many contributions to Washington University, his service to the MSTP stands out. Every year for 23 years, he helped review about 500 applications, and he served on the MSTP committee 13 years longer than anyone else, demonstrating his gratitude for his own MD/PhD training.

Tollefsen has also served on the Faculty Council, the Faculty Senate Council, the Advisory Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom, and the Barnes-Jewish Hospital Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee. He also has served on the editorial boards of several journals and on four committees for the American Heart Association, one committee for the American Society of Hematology, and two study sections and two review panels for the National Institutes of Health.

His achievements have been recognized by his election to the American Society for Clinical Investigation and the Association of American Physicians, two of the major honor societies for physician-scientists.

Tollefsen earned his bachelor’s degree from Grinnell College in 1970 and his medical and doctoral degrees from Washington University in 1977. He was a resident at the University of Colorado from 1977 to 1979, when he returned to Washington University as a hematology-oncology fellow and faculty member.

The Washington University Medical Center Alumni Association is pleased to present its Faculty Achievement Award to Dr. Tollefsen.