

# UT Southwestern Medical Center

## A Message from President Daniel K. Podolsky

June 6, 2016

To the UT Southwestern Community:

With Commencement Exercises marking the end of the 2015-16 academic year last week, I write on behalf of the entire UT Southwestern community to congratulate the 326 students who received their M.D., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in Medical School and Graduate School ceremonies – and to thank all members of the faculty and staff for their contributions to new and ongoing programs in support of UT Southwestern’s mission and goals.

I also want to use this occasion to highlight some of the milestones that have been achieved during this academic year, as well as some of the key issues for the year ahead. To note just some of the accomplishments that should be a source of pride for the entire campus community:

**New Medical School Curriculum.** After several years of faculty work and planning under the leadership of Dean Greg Fitz, M.D., the Medical School launched its new Foundation for Excellence Curriculum when the Class of 2019 began Medical School last summer. Designed to ensure that our medical students receive the best possible preparation for the changing landscape in health care delivery, the new curriculum creates a more integrated approach to the basic science and clinical components of medical education, emphasizes team-based learning, and provides closer contact with faculty for ongoing mentoring as well as in-depth scholarly experience. It will take the next three years to fully transition to the new four-year curriculum, but thanks to the commitment and dedicated efforts of faculty, staff, and students, this first year was a great success and a well-deserved tribute to all who had worked so hard to make it happen.

**Faculty Recognition.** Faculty are ultimately the heart and soul of an academic institution, and recent honors to UT Southwestern faculty include: the selection of Drs. Kim Orth and Josh Mendell as Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigators; the top research award of the American Psychiatric Association to Dr. Madhukar Trivedi; and Dr. John Minna was named a “Giant of Cancer Care” by Intellisphere Oncology Specialty Group. In addition, Dr. Helen Hobbs was awarded the Breakthrough Prize, an international award for groundbreaking discoveries in Mathematics, Physics, and the Life Sciences; Dr. Josh Mendell received the 2016 Edith and Peter O’Donnell Award in Medicine from The Academy of Medicine, Engineering & Science of Texas

(TAMEST); and last month, Dr. Hobbs and her colleague Dr. Jonathan Cohen received the 2016 Passano Award, one of the nation's highest honors in biomedical science, for their pioneering research into the genetic basis of cholesterol metabolism.

**Research Breakthroughs.** Recent path-breaking work of faculty scientists has included Dr. Steve McKnight's discovery of proteins that can switch back and forth between a gel-like polymer state and a soluble state, a discovery that holds great potential for understanding the causes of certain genetic diseases, such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease; Drs. David Mangelsdorf and Steve Kliewer's research demonstrating that the hormone fibroblast growth factor 21 determines preferences for sweet foods; and Dr. Eric Olson's development of a new gene-editing technique that reversed the progression of Duchenne muscular dystrophy in mice, a discovery that received major national attention because of the potential it holds for the treatment of this fatal disease.

**New Programs.** The opening of a new \$17 million **cryo-electron microscope (cryo-EM) facility**, with a unique configuration of instruments not found anywhere else, will empower legions of our investigators to address a wide range of important challenges. The cryo-EM instruments allow researchers to view 3-D images of objects ranging from the smallest atom to an intact cell, and this technology is expected to help accelerate discoveries in basic research that answer fundamental scientific questions, as well as in translational investigations that advance the development of drugs and other therapeutic treatments to combat human disease.

In addition, three programs that were announced last spring are now concluding their first year of operation. The **Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute** encompasses both research and clinical programs, including the Texas Institute for Brain Injury and Repair, which has been especially active in promoting awareness about concussions, and the Center for Alzheimer's and Neurodegenerative Diseases, which, under the leadership of Dr. Marc Diamond, is significantly advancing our understanding of the causes of Alzheimer's disease.

The **Center for Depression Research and Clinical Care** is dedicated to identifying innovative treatments and providing state-of-the-art care for patients with depression and bipolar disorder. Led by Dr. Madhukar Trivedi, in addition to efforts on campus, the Center has also established a community-based network, especially in underserved sections of Dallas and surrounding areas. Dr. Trivedi has developed a novel screening tool that has already resulted in higher rates of detection and early treatment of depression, which so often goes unrecognized as it takes its tremendous toll. And the **Lyda Hill Department of Bioinformatics**, chaired by Gaudenz Danuser, Ph.D., has been building its faculty and staff and establishing itself as a valuable resource for faculty working with massive data sets.

**UT Southwestern Health System.** This has been a year of major growth and recognition for the UT Southwestern Health System. The **Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center** received comprehensive designation from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) last summer, making it one of only 45 cancer centers nationally to receive the NCI's highest distinction. The **William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital** received a Rising Star Quality Leadership award last fall from the University HealthSystem Consortium for its quality and safety performance and was also identified as a Top Performer by The Joint Commission. In addition, **Zale Lipshy University Hospital** received two major awards last fall for patient safety and clinical quality from Press Ganey, one of them for the third consecutive year. And in February, UT

Southwestern received the **2016 Healthcare Informatics Innovator of the Year Award** for developing a comprehensive and agile system to identify, track, and report quality systems in the outpatient arena.

We have significantly expanded our ability to provide services to patients in **Fort Worth**. The Simmons Cancer Center opened a satellite clinic in the Moncrief Cancer Institute building, and thanks to a major gift from W.A. "Tex" Moncrief Jr., the UT Southwestern Monty and Tex Moncrief Medical Center at Fort Worth is now under construction. The first building, a multidisciplinary outpatient facility, is expected to be completed in the first half of calendar year 2017.

In October, UT Southwestern and Texas Health Resources (THR) announced the formation of **Southwestern Health Resources (SWHR)**. This innovative new organization is being developed as a clinically integrated network comprised of physicians and hospitals associated with both UTSW and THR. It leverages their mutual strengths and will provide increased access to primary and specialty care for the people of North Texas. (Southwestern Health Resources encompasses 27 hospitals and 300 clinics throughout North Texas, as well as more than 2,600 physicians across a 16-county area.) SWHR is committed to driving continuous improvement and value in the care it delivers across the continuum, from prevention and primary care to the most complex quaternary services in a holistic approach to health in the population. It will also create expanded opportunities for training and education, as well as for clinical, translational, and health services research.

### **The Year Ahead**

Turning to the year ahead, we will see the completion of the **Radiation Oncology Building** currently under construction next to the BioCenter at Southwestern Medical District on East Campus, as well as continued work on the first phase of the master plan for **West Campus**, site of the former St. Paul University Hospital. The first building, which is expected to be completed in the first half of calendar 2018, will house faculty offices, outpatient clinics, and a state-of-the-art Simulation Center that will be used to train medical students, residents, and fellows, as well as nurses and faculty physicians seeking to master new techniques.

**New Leadership.** As previously announced, **Dane Wukich, M.D.**, a nationally prominent foot and ankle specialist, will be coming to UT Southwestern this summer from the University of Pittsburgh to become Chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery; and **Duojia "DJ" Pan, Ph.D.**, arrives this month from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, where he is currently a Professor of Molecular Biology and Genetics and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, to serve as the new Chair of the Department of Physiology. Dr. Pan is internationally known as the discoverer of the "Hippo" pathway of intracellular signaling, which plays important roles in regeneration and tumorigenesis.

It is hoped that searches already underway or soon to commence will eventuate in new leadership for five of our academic departments and centers in the coming year.

**Strategic Planning.** Several major planning initiatives were pursued in 2015-16 that will be implemented in the coming year.

Multidisciplinary teams of more than 175 faculty, students, and staff participated in developing the latest version of the **UT Southwestern Six-Year Plan**, a rolling initiative carried out in all UT System institutions every two years to track major initiatives and establish new priorities. High-priority areas of the recently completed plan for UT Southwestern include:

- Continued implementation of the new Medical School curriculum.
- Development and growth in population health research, population health management, and medical informatics to provide the best possible patient care and establish new training opportunities.
- The continued growth and maturation of the University Health System and its commitment to quality, along with the development of Southwestern Health Resources as an integrated health care network.
- Transformation to a more user-friendly, responsive, and positive environment for those who work here, as well as for our patients and other external constituents.
- Leadership and professional development programs for educators, mentors, and managers.

If you wish to read the complete plan, it can be accessed at

<http://www.utsouthwestern.net/intranet/about-us/institutional-info/six-year-plan/>

We will also be implementing recommendations from retreats and task forces related to our ongoing **Clinical Transformation** agenda. These will include changes in the governance structure of the Faculty Practice Plan and other initiatives designed to promote and embed clinical excellence in the culture and operations of the University Health System. Through a separate but complementary set of retreats and workgroups, a **Pediatric Strategic Plan** focused on pediatric clinical care, research, and education across UT Southwestern clinical departments was developed this year, and implementation of its recommendations will begin in the year ahead.

Yet another planning initiative has been the development of a proposed **Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusion**, under the leadership of Kimel Hodges, Assistant Vice President for Diversity & Inclusion and Equal Opportunity, working with a newly created President's Council on Diversity & Inclusion. This initiative addresses faculty and staff across the institution, and echoes many of the recommendations related to onboarding, recruiting, leadership training, and accountability that were in the Six-Year Plan and Clinical Transformation initiatives.

**Clements University Hospital Third Tower.** The opening of the William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital in December 2014 and our related emphasis on the growth of UTSW clinical neuroscience programs have led to increases in patient volume at both Clements and Zale Lipshy that have significantly exceeded our expectations, with occupancy now at a level not originally expected for another several years. We are therefore moving ahead with planning the addition of a third bed tower at Clements, so that we are able to accommodate the needs of patients. As with the building of Clements, no state funds will be used for this expansion; it will be entirely supported by a combination of funds generated through our University Health System and bond financing.

**Campus Carry.** Beginning August 1, 2016, we will be implementing legislation passed during the 84<sup>th</sup> Session of the Texas Legislature that allows licensed holders to carry concealed handguns on campuses of institutions of higher education. However, even for licensed holders, the

carrying of concealed handguns will be prohibited at UT Southwestern in patient care areas; campus childcare and playground facilities; and in buildings with laboratories where greater than 50 percent of the net assignable square footage contains chemical, biologic agents, and/or potentially explosive gases. We will be installing signage next month to indicate all of these places on campus, and if you wish to review the entire policy, it may be accessed at the link below. Open carry remains prohibited throughout the campus.

<http://utsouthwestern.net/intranet/administration/policy-library/handbook/chapter-04/sec-155-weapons-on-campus.html>

**2017 Legislative Session.** Next year will include the 85<sup>th</sup> Session of the Texas Legislature, which will be developing the State Budget for FY18 and FY19. We have been preparing for the next session since the conclusion of the last one, meeting with legislators and their staffs to enhance their understanding of UT Southwestern and the many ways we are an asset to the State of Texas in the goals we set for UTSW and the programs we carry out in pursuing our missions of education, research, and patient care.

**Concluding Comments.** As you can see – and as I am very pleased to report – UT Southwestern is thriving. Nonetheless, as proud as we rightfully are of all that our faculty, staff, and students have accomplished, we must all recognize that for UT Southwestern to continue to flourish, we must remain disciplined in our adherence to our strategic priorities, rigorous in our commitment to ongoing quality improvement, and unwavering in the integrity we bring to everything we do.

Every member of our community makes a difference, and I thank each and every one of you for your contributions. I also wish you an enjoyable and productive summer and a successful and gratifying year ahead.

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.  
President, UT Southwestern Medical Center