

UT Southwestern Medical Center

Chen, Hooper elected to National Academy of Medicine

October 17, 2022

To the UT Southwestern Community:

I am pleased to announce that two of our colleagues – Lora Hooper, Ph.D., Professor and Chair of the Department of Immunology, and Zhijian “James” Chen, Ph.D., Professor of Molecular Biology and Director of the Center for Inflammation Research – have been elected to the National Academy of Medicine, one of the highest honors in the fields of health and medicine.

With their election, UT Southwestern now has 18 members of the National Academy of Medicine on its faculty, along with 24 members of the National Academy of Sciences, placing the institution among the nation’s elite academic medical centers. Ten UTSW faculty members – including Drs. Hooper and Chen – are members of both organizations. Drs. Chen and Hooper are also among UT Southwestern’s 14 Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigators.

New National Academy of Medicine members are elected by current members through a process that recognizes individuals who have made major contributions to the advancement of the medical sciences, health care, and public health.

Dr. Hooper, who holds the Jonathan W. Uhr, M.D. Distinguished Chair in Immunology and is the Nancy Cain and Jeffrey A. Marcus Scholar in Medical Research, in Honor of Dr. Bill S. Vowell, is working to understand how resident intestinal bacteria influence the biology of mammalian hosts. She has contributed valuable insight into our understanding of the mechanisms and regulation of host-microbial interactions. Discoveries by Dr. Hooper, Professor and Chair of the Department of Immunology, and also a member of the Department of Microbiology and the Center for the Genetics of Host Defense as well as the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center at UTSW, have helped explain how a host peacefully coexists with the trillions of beneficial bacteria present in the intestinal tract, and how these bacteria can shape immunological and metabolic functions in their host.

Dr. Chen, Professor of Molecular Biology and a member of the Center for the Genetics of Host Defense and the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center at UTSW, holds the George L. MacGregor Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Science. He is broadly interested in mechanisms of signal transduction, namely how a cell communicates with its surroundings and within itself, and how a cell detects harmful

or foreign insults and mounts an appropriate response to restore homeostasis. His discovery of the cGAS/STING signaling pathway has provided profound insights relevant to the understanding of autoimmune disease and cancers. Dr. Chen was awarded the [Breakthrough Prize](#) in Life Sciences in 2019.

Drs. Hooper and Chen will be inducted into the National Academy of Medicine during ceremonies next year.

Please join me in congratulating them on their significant achievements.

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