

UT Southwestern Medical Center

FY22 Accomplishments, FY23 Priorities

September 2, 2022

As we prepare for the Labor Day weekend and mark the close of the fiscal year, I write to reflect on our shared accomplishments in this past year and outline institutional priorities for the coming year. Notwithstanding the continued need to cope with the twists and turns of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the UT Southwestern community has much to be proud of in what has been achieved.

Faculty Recognition and New Leadership Appointments

We can all take pride in the many awards and honors received by members of the UT Southwestern community that recognized excellence in research and clinical care, as well as our educational and teaching missions. Over the course of the past year, some examples, and many others not named herein, underscore the outstanding work of the members of our campus.

Earlier this spring, we were delighted to celebrate the election of **Jonathan Cohen, Ph.D.**, Professor of Internal Medicine in the Center for Human Nutrition and the Eugene McDermott Center for Human Growth, to the National Academy of Sciences, as well as the appointment of **Vincent Tagliabracci, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor of Molecular Biology and **Benjamin Tu, Ph.D.**, Professor of Biochemistry, as Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigators, each reflecting outstanding accomplishments in original research. UT Southwestern is home to more National Academy of Science members and HHMI Investigators than any other institution in the state of Texas.

Each year, the **Leaders in Clinical Excellence Awards** serves as a means to recognize exceptional contributions of clinical faculty to the care of our patients, to the education of the next generation of health care professionals, and to UT Southwestern overall. In addition to many other honorees, last December we recognized **Diane Twickler, M.D.**, Distinguished Teaching Professor of Radiology and Obstetrics and Gynecology, as recipient of the 2021 Patricia and William L. Watson Jr., M.D. Award for Excellence in Clinical Medicine, UT Southwestern's highest honor in clinical care. With more than 200 nominations received last month, we look forward to celebrating our next LCE Award recipients at the 2022 awards ceremony, which is scheduled for Nov. 10 in the Gooch Auditorium.

We were also fortunate to appoint new leaders of key academic departments through national searches initiated by W. P. Andrew Lee, M.D., Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. At the start of the fiscal year, **Catherine Spong, M.D.**, who joined our faculty from the NIH two years ago, was named as our new Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology and **J. William Harbour, M.D.**, (from Bascom Palmer Eye Institute) was appointed as the new Chair of Ophthalmology in November. In February, we were joined by **Samuel Achilefu, Ph.D.**, (from Washington University) as inaugural Chair of Biomedical Engineering and in March, **Robert Timmerman, M.D.**, was named as our new Chair of Radiation

Oncology after having served in an interim role for several months. Most recently, **Heakyung Kim, M.D.**, (from Columbia University Irving Medical Center and NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center) assumed the role of Chair of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in May. All of these new Chairs are nationally recognized leaders in their field.

In the coming months, we will formally welcome **Jorge A. Bezerra, M.D.** (from Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center), as the new Chair of the Department of Pediatrics, effective Oct. 1; and **William A. Prinz, Ph.D.** (from the National Institutes of Health), as the new Chair of the Department of Cell Biology effective Nov. 1. Our search for the inaugural Dean of the **O'Donnell School of Public Health** continues and, following the announcement earlier this summer of Kim Yancey, M.D., to step down, a search has been launched for the next Chair of the Department of Dermatology.

I note that in addition to these academic appointments, we have also been fortunate to have some key administrative leaders join us in this past fiscal year, each the result of a national search. **Holly Crawford, M.B.A.**, was named our new Executive Vice President for Business Affairs at the end of November, and in August, **Jeremy Falke, M.B.A.**, joined as Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer. I expect to share the appointment of our inaugural institution-wide Chief Diversity, Inclusion & Equity Officer shortly.

Research

Over the course of this year, our faculty and their teams have made important advances in both basic and clinical research. It is not possible to fully detail all of the important discoveries made at UT Southwestern, but a few examples illustrate the breadth, importance, and potential impact. These include deep learning-based structure modeling to predict protein interactions in the lab of Qian Cong, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in Biophysics and the Eugene McDermott Center for Human Growth and Development, and the study of epigenetic regulators of liver and colonic regeneration in the lab of Hao Zhu, M.D., Associate Professor of Internal Medicine-Pediatrics. And the work of Xuewu Zhang, Ph.D., Professor of Pharmacology and Biophysics, imaging at near-atomic resolution of a key immune protein, designated STING (originally discovered by Zhijian "James" Chen, Ph.D., Professor of Molecular Biology, at UT Southwestern), has identified a previously unrecognized binding site that appears to be pivotal for launching immune attacks, potentially leading to new ways of manipulating STING to prompt stronger immune responses or stem its action in autoimmune diseases. More than a thousand clinical trials are also underway by our faculty, researchers, staff, and learners. Their work directly impacts the lives of our patients and their families, ultimately advancing and changing the standard of care. For example, Yujin Hoshida, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Internal Medicine, and other UT Southwestern researchers recently helped to develop a simple blood test to predict which patients with a common form of liver disease are most likely to develop liver cancer.

To ensure adequate space for our growing research program, I am pleased to note construction of the **Peter O'Donnell Jr. Biomedical Research Building** was recently completed and faculty and staff have begun to move into the new facility. This new building was made possible in part by funds received in **our \$1 billion dollar Campaign for the Brain**, which was successfully concluded this year. I am grateful to the leadership of Marc Nivet, Ed.D., Executive Vice President for Institutional Advancement, along with Amanda Billings, Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations, and her entire team for their support in bringing the campaign to a successful conclusion. This success will positively shape the future of brain research and treatment for generations to come.

Our new Department of Biomedical Engineering, led by Dr. Achilefu, will help catalyze transformational research in biomedical engineering and related fields, enabling our patients and their families to benefit from the unique cross-section of medicine and science on our campus. Faculty, researchers, and staff from UT Southwestern and UT Dallas will move into the new five-story **Texas Instruments Biomedical Engineering and Sciences Building** currently under construction on the East Campus when it is completed next year.

Education

In August, we welcomed the **Medical School Class of 2026** to campus. The class is our most diverse to date, a tribute to the great work of our recruitment and admissions teams, as we strive to more closely represent the patients and families we serve in order to improve health outcomes and enhance the care we provide.

Our **School of Health Professions** continues to evolve, adding a new Master of Genetic Counseling program, which will soon welcome its first class of students. The new program will help train and develop genetic counselors to address a growing need for their services in key areas such as prenatal, pediatric, adult, cancer, and cardiovascular care. We also welcomed our new class of students in our **Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences** last month; the Graduate School continues to evolve as well, creating a new program this year called Postbaccalaureate to PhD (PB2PHD), which is designed to help recent college graduates who want to strengthen their skills and increase their competitiveness for admission to graduate school or an M.D./Ph.D. program. The innovative program, which welcomed our first group of students to campus this summer, is comprised of individuals from all backgrounds and strives to increase diversity among health care professionals.

In this past year, significant progress has been made in establishing the new **Peter O'Donnell Jr. School of Public Health**, with the hiring of several new faculty members and the transition of the Department of Population and Data Sciences to the new school. While Celette Skinner, Ph.D., Chair of the Department of Population and Data Sciences, continues to serve as Interim Dean, a national search is underway to find a permanent leader for the School of Public Health. We look forward to welcoming the first class of M.P.H. students next year. We are encouraged by the outpouring of community support for our newest school, including a transformative \$100 million gift from the O'Donnell Foundation, the largest gift ever to a school of public health at a public university in the United States. I am pleased the new school will honor the legendary generosity and visionary spirit of Peter O'Donnell, Jr., who passed away last year, for generations to come.

The **Biomedical Preparatory at UT Southwestern**, an innovative school launched by Dallas Independent School District (DISD) next to our campus, welcomed its first group of students – who come from across the DISD including children of our own UTSW family living in the district – in August. I would like to acknowledge and thank Charles M. Ginsburg, M.D., Vice Provost and Senior Associate Dean for Education, for his outstanding efforts in working with DISD to make the school a reality and keeping our commitment to also embrace our Dallas community.

Patient Care

Our physicians, nurses, and all those involved directly or indirectly in providing care to patients have again shown their remarkable commitment to quality, patient experience, and multidisciplinary, team-based care. This is reflected in our rankings by Vizient, a national health care performance improvement

company in which we are benchmarked against nearly all academic medical centers in the country. UT Southwestern is consistently ranked at the top in reducing **Mortality** and in the top few for **Patient Centeredness** and **Equity**.

The entire UT Southwestern community should take pride in the fact that earlier this summer, UT Southwestern's **William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital** was named by *U.S. News & World Report* as the **No. 1 Best Hospital in Dallas-Fort Worth** and the **No. 2 Best Hospital in Texas** for the **sixth consecutive year**. While I hope that no one comes to work at UT Southwestern with rankings as a goal in and of themselves, everyone can take satisfaction that their commitment and dedication to the welfare of our patients and their families has led to this recognition. I was also pleased that earlier this year, the National Cancer Institute renewed the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center's comprehensive designation, and the American Nurses Credentialing Center redesignated the Medical Center as a Magnet organization, a reflection of the excellence and expertise of our nurse colleagues and their dedication to our patients.

This year has also seen expansion of our clinical services, as we endeavor to facilitate access to care for the many patients and families reaching out to us. These include our newest clinical facility, **UT Southwestern Medical Center at RedBird**, which opened earlier this week. Our new RedBird location will bring more convenient and expanded access to our specialty medical care for patients living in the southern sector of Dallas. In the fall, we will open our new **Cancer Care Outpatient Building**, an important component of the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Center, on North Campus and celebrate both the expanded capacity and enhanced environment of care it will provide to our patients and their families.

COVID-19 Response

As has been the case for the last two-and-a-half years, we continue to face challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. In FY22, we began to adjust to what appears to be the new normal for living with this disease, remaining vigilant and continuing to improve the treatment and care of patients with COVID-19. Because of the commitment of all who work here, the UT Southwestern campus remains a safe environment in which to educate our learners, conduct research, and care for our patients. I understand and greatly appreciate the resilience required from each of you in order for us to sustain this level of excellence. Please utilize the [wellness resources](#) available and, just as importantly, continue to check in on one another and foster UT Southwestern's culture of collegiality and support for one another.

Finally, before turning to the coming year, and though the calculation of FY22 financial close will not be finalized for several weeks, I am pleased to share that we performed financially well again this year. Driven by strong patient care volumes for university hospital and clinics, growth in faculty practice plan professional fees, growth in sponsored research, and a record year in philanthropic support, we exceeded our budgeted revenue and met our operating margin targets, despite the financial challenges of inflation and its impact on all of our expenses, making it possible to offer a merit program to recognize the efforts of those who work at UT Southwestern.

Institutional Priorities for FY23

As we begin the new academic and fiscal year, I want to take this opportunity to highlight some of the priorities that I believe will be most important for our institution.

This month we will launch the process to update our **Six-Year Strategic Plan**, a biennial effort to identify and set priorities for our institution. **Lora Hooper, Ph.D.**, Chair of the Department of Immunology, and **Thomas Wang, M.D.**, Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine, have agreed to serve as co-chairs for this effort, which will include representatives from across our entire organization. Several subcommittees will review our institutional progress, suggest new priorities, prioritize institutional needs, and make recommendations on resource allocations. The updated Six-Year Strategic Plan, when completed at the end of the calendar year, will be shared with the UT Southwestern community. I would like to thank the dozens of colleagues who will participate in our strategic planning process in advance for their work.

In parallel with the Six-Year Strategic Planning process, we will **launch an additional important focused strategic planning work group**, which will undertake an assessment of both the environmental impact of UT Southwestern and conversely the potential impact of evolving climate conditions on UT Southwestern operations. It is my expectation that the group will develop a multiyear plan with recommended initiatives designed to take reasonable steps to reduce our contribution to environmental change and impact as an academic medical center.

Preparation and planning to officially open the Peter O'Donnell Jr. School of Public Health will continue to be a significant area of focus in the coming year. As our first new school in more than 50 years and our fourth school overall, the school will advance the science of public health through research and innovation, while preparing a robust public health workforce for the benefit of those who live in North Texas and beyond. We are on course to welcome the first class of M.P.H. students next summer and first class of Ph.D. students the following year.

A number of key priorities for the coming year will build on our strong partnerships. In collaboration with UT Dallas, as noted, construction continues on the new **Texas Instruments Biomedical Engineering and Sciences Building**, which is scheduled to be completed by this time next year. And in partnership with Children's Health, planning for our **new pediatrics campus** will accelerate as our joint pediatric experience enables our two organizations to work together to provide care to children and support their families. The new hospital and expanded ambulatory services will advance our pediatric care strategic plans and strengthen our longstanding partnership with Children's. We are delighted that **John Brennan, M.D., M.P.H.**, has taken on the role as the first President and CEO of our Joint Pediatric Enterprise (JPE) with Children's Health. Dr. Brennan brings deep experience in health care delivery, having been jointly recruited from Atlanta by our two organizations. In collaboration with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (THHSC), planning for the **first state psychiatric hospital in the Dallas-Fort Worth region** is well underway, and we will break ground on this much-needed facility in FY23, ultimately completing the new hospital in 2025.

Guided by the Clinical Strategic Plan completed last year and led by our John Warner, M.D., Executive Vice President for Health System Affairs and CEO, UT Southwestern Health System, and colleagues, we will **continue to focus on enhancing the quality and safety of care across all of our clinical programs** while expanding access to UT Southwestern's clinical care by the communities of North Texas and beyond through the key initiatives mentioned earlier, among others.

With our new Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer Jeremy Falke now leading HR at UT Southwestern, our commitment to **sustaining and enhancing employee engagement** will, as always, be an institutional priority in the coming year. Over the course of the past year, we have listened to your requests and concerns, working together to develop new initiatives and enhance our tuition benefits program for all UT Southwestern employees. I will be sharing the details of the expanded tuition benefits in our upcoming September Town Hall.

Within each and every institutional priority outlined above, UT Southwestern is unequivocally committed to **promoting diversity, providing equal opportunity, and prohibiting racial discrimination** – and to sustaining a safe and secure environment for learning and working for all students, trainees, faculty, and staff. While our diversity, equity, and inclusion journey continues, the external validation that comes from being named **#1 health care employer in the country for diversity** and **one of the top 10 best large employers to work for in the United States** (both according to *Forbes*), indicates that the diverse culture and level of inclusivity we are striving to achieve at UT Southwestern is headed in the right direction.

As noted above, I expect to announce the appointment of our inaugural Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer (CDEIO) in the coming weeks. This new executive will report directly to me and focus on ensuring a continued commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity at UT Southwestern, as well as strengthening our relationships with the communities we serve. The CDEIO will be responsible for identifying barriers that limit opportunity for any group on campus and proposing actions to help ensure that each member of our community thrives and develops the cultural awareness and competency required to advance the mission of UT Southwestern.

Finally, preparation for the 88th regular session of the Texas State Legislature, which will convene in January, are already underway with the expert leadership of Angelica Marin Hill, Vice President for Government Affairs and Policy. As in prior legislative sessions, we will work to articulate our institutional priorities to elected leaders that are needed to deliver on our mission to address the needs of the citizens of Texas for the next biennium. The remarkable achievements of the UT Southwestern community in the current biennium are the basis for the continued trust of the legislature in investing in our institution. Funds appropriated by the legislature play an essential role in supporting our academic missions – including both our educational and research programs.

Concluding Comments

I hope the institutional priorities outlined above help to provide clarity on some of our key goals as we set the direction for our institution. Please make time to join me and the Executive Vice Presidents at our next **Town Hall, scheduled from noon – 1 p.m. on Tuesday, September 13**. At that time, I look forward to sharing more information regarding our priorities for the new year, as well as answer your questions.

As I begin my fifteenth year as President of UT Southwestern next week, I cannot help but reflect on the truly remarkable accomplishments of the UT Southwestern community during the past fourteen years and feel fortunate indeed to have been here to be a part of those efforts. I am confident that we will continue that trajectory in the coming year and those that follow. Despite the challenges presented by the ongoing pandemic, disruptions to the supply chain, and impact of rising costs and inflation, we have managed to persevere in our efforts to advance the UT Southwestern mission. I want to thank each of

you for your efforts. Whatever your role, you have helped make all that has been achieved in this past year possible and I hope you take well-deserved pride in that, and that this next year will be fulfilling for each of you.

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