



Strategic Planning and Implementation

Nov. 24, 2009

To the UT Southwestern Community:

I am writing to thank all who participated in our Strategic Planning Initiative through the summer and to let the entire UT Southwestern community know about some initial important decisions that have been made, the current status of our efforts, and my expectations for the coming months.

Earlier this year, based on what I had learned during my first months at UT Southwestern, I concluded that, to build on the extraordinary strengths of this institution and the widely shared aspiration for it to be outstanding in every dimension, we needed to focus on seven priorities:

1. **Clinical Care** – Developing our academic health care system to be at the vanguard of quality, safety, and innovation in patient care, enhanced by clinical and translational research, and our commitment to education and training, while ensuring the strength of our collaborative partnerships with Parkland Memorial Hospital, Children’s Medical Center, and the Dallas VA Medical Center.
2. **Basic Research** – Building on the vitality of our basic research through the recruitment of faculty in key areas of new science and investing in technology, while continuing to support the stellar scientists already here who have dedicated their careers to basic discovery in biomedical areas.
3. **Education** – Ensuring that the curricula in our three schools best prepare UT Southwestern students to be successful physicians, investigators, and health care professionals in a rapidly changing environment.
4. **Health Policy and Health Services Research** – Developing robust programs in health policy and health services research to enable us to better serve society and better understand the efficacy and efficiency of approaches to health care.
5. **Care of the Underserved** – Developing programs focused on the health care needs of the underserved, globally and within our own country and community.
6. **Diversity** – Enhancing diversity in our faculty and staff across the Medical Center.
7. **Resources** – Optimizing the use of our resources.

To address this set of priorities – and with the overarching goal of having UT Southwestern become widely recognized as one of the top ten academic medical centers in the country within ten years and ultimately the premier academic medical center – we launched a strategic planning process last summer. It consisted of the Clinical Transformation Project Group, which pursued its work through six sub-groups, and in addition, four task forces on Quality Improvement, Health Policy and Health Services Research, Faculty Diversity, and Information Technology. The participants worked intensively over the summer, and their reports and recommendations are now being finalized, after being made available to the campus community for discussion and feedback through the Chrysalis web site and three Town Hall meetings in mid and late October.

I am greatly indebted to Dr. Suzanne Rivera, who put aside her own work to take on the role of managing and facilitating the strategic process on my behalf. I also wish to recognize the leadership provided by the chairs and co-chairs of each group involved in this process: Rod Rohrich, M.D., John Warner, M.D., Steven Bloom, M.D., Sharon Reimold, M.D., Karen Kowalske, M.D., Stan Taylor, M.D., Duke Samson, M.D., Kim Yancey, M.D., James de Lemos, M.D., Jay Horton, M.D., Chuck Ginsburg, M.D., Jim Valentine, M.D., Byron Cryer, M.D., Ethan Halm, M.D., Kirk Kirksey, and Steven Leach, M.D. All told, these groups encompassed over 130 faculty and staff – and when attendance at the Town Meetings and “hits” on Chrysalis are added, I am very pleased to note that approximately 3,000 members of our community were engaged in this process in one way or another.

I have asked Dr. Robin Jacoby, who joined us in mid-October as Vice President and Chief of Staff, to take the lead in working with me to develop – and then oversee – an overall implementation plan for the recommendations put forth by the groups working over the summer and early fall. There are crucial matters of prioritization, resource allocation, and organizational structures that need to be considered, and we will be developing a comprehensive proposal for discussion with various groups in the near future.

In addition, I note that a group of senior scientific leaders led by Dr. Luis Parada has convened with a particular focus on recruitment of investigators, especially in the area of cancer research and the opportunities provided by the recent funding of the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT), while another group will focus on recruitment of scientists for a Pediatric Research Institute being developed with Children’s Medical Center.

At this juncture, I am pleased to announce the following initial set of decisions stemming from the planning process:

- We will be adding an Executive Vice President for Health Affairs to UT Southwestern’s senior leadership. This executive will oversee the clinical arena as a colleague to the Dean/Provost/Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Executive Vice President for Business Affairs, and all three of course will work closely not only with each other, but with the President. A national search has been initiated, and I am hoping to make an appointment to this position early in 2010.
- As a critical first step on our path to develop an academic health care system that is at the vanguard of quality, safety, and innovation in patient care, we will be pursuing a dedicated Quality Improvement initiative, under the leadership of a Chief Quality Officer, who will be establishing an Office of Quality Improvement and Safety. I am very pleased that Dr. Gary Reed will be serving as the Interim Chief Quality Officer to design and launch this effort, in close collaboration with hospital and medical leadership, key faculty, and the Clinical Chairs.
- To position UT Southwestern to contribute to – and benefit from – the educational, research, and clinical value of Health Policy and Health Services Research, we will be working to coordinate recruitment and expansion of these activities with our partners.
- As an initial step in providing our campus with the information technology infrastructure we need to reach our goals, we will be moving from GroupWise to Outlook in the year ahead.
- Somewhat different in scale, but nonetheless important for enhancing a sense of community among UT Southwestern faculty and staff, we have initiated a process for groups from the Medical Center to participate as representatives of UT Southwestern in community charitable activities, such as the Heart Walk.

- And, not directly related to the planning process – but one of the significant reasons for undertaking it – we have now been authorized by the University of Texas Board of Regents to begin detailed planning for a new University Hospital.

While I expect that we will soon be able to move forward on many additional recommendations, as you can see from the list noted above, I am committed to setting in motion those initiatives that I consider especially crucial and see as foundations for further actions over time.

The understanding, engagement, and support of the entire UT Southwestern community is essential for our success. I look forward to working with you to realize our aspirations and will be updating you periodically as decisions are made, plans develop, and achievements begin.

With best wishes to all for the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday.

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