

ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS

THOUGHTS AND UPDATES FROM DR. W. P. ANDREW LEE

December 15, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

I write to share the news that David W. Russell, Ph.D., Vice Provost and Dean of Research, and the Eugene McDermott Distinguished Chair in Molecular Genetics since 1992, has announced his plans to retire in 2021 after nearly 40 years of service at UT Southwestern. A renowned investigator in basic research and expert in enzymatic mechanisms of lipid metabolism, Dr. Russell's leadership is without parallel in advancing UT Southwestern's research mission. He will continue to serve the institution in this role until a successor assumes his important responsibilities.

Dr. Russell received a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Texas at Austin, where he worked on protein synthesis in the laboratory of Joanne M. Ravel. After graduating in 1975, Dr. Russell went to the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and performed dissertation research with Linda L. Spemulli, in which he characterized ribosome anti-reassociation factors. In 1980, Dr. Russell earned his Ph.D. in chemistry and was later a Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation postdoctoral fellow, studying with 1993 Nobel laureate Michael Smith at the University of British Columbia.

After joining UT Southwestern's faculty in 1982, Dr. Russell began a five-year collaboration with 1985 Nobel laureates Drs. Michael S. Brown and Joseph L. Goldstein. The trio worked on cloning the low-density lipoprotein receptor gene and determining the molecular basis of familial hypercholesterolemia, one of the most common human genetic disorders.

Dr. Russell's research interests are in lipid metabolism, in particular the enzymatic pathways that dispose of cholesterol. His laboratory has isolated over a dozen genes that encode enzymes involved in cholesterol breakdown and has identified the molecular bases of six human genetic diseases characterized by abnormal cholesterol and lipid metabolism.

In addition to his research achievements, Dr. Russell has made significant contributions to the education and training of scientists. Together with Joseph Sambrook, he co-authored the third edition of the popular Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press cloning manual, *Molecular Cloning*, which has served as a foundation of technical expertise in laboratories worldwide.

Of particular note among Dr. Russell's many achievements are his numerous professional awards and recognitions, including the Katz Award from the American Heart Association, the Kilby Science Place Award from Texas Instruments, the Oppenheimer Award from the Endocrine Society, the Windaus Prize from the Falck Foundation, the Avanti Award in Lipids from the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, the Barbara Bowman Distinguished Geneticist Award from the Texas Genetics Society, and election to both the National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

As the inaugural Vice Provost and Dean of Research since 2010, Dr. Russell has championed scientific discovery across the campus and ensured that the institution remains at the forefront of modern biomedical research. During his tenure as Dean of Research, new Departments of Biophysics, Bioinformatics, and Biomedical Engineering were created, significant investments were made in imaging at the atomic, cellular and whole organism levels, research in population and data sciences was expanded, and a generation of biomedical scientists were recruited to the faculty.

I am pleased to announce that **Eric Olson, Ph.D.**, Professor and Chair, Department of Molecular Biology, and Director, Hamon Center for Regenerative Science and Medicine will serve as Chair of the committee that will conduct a national search to identify Dr. Russell's successor. Other members of the committee are:

- **Michael Brown, M.D.**, Professor, Department of Molecular Genetics
- **Lora Hooper, Ph.D.**, Professor and Chair, Department of Immunology
- **David Mangelsdorf, Ph.D.**, Professor and Chair, Department of Pharmacology
- **Michael Rosen, Ph.D.**, Professor and Chair, Department of Biophysics
- **Celette Skinner, Ph.D.**, Professor and Chair, Department of Population and Data Sciences

This important search will be launched shortly, and we look forward to receiving faculty input as we chart the next era of extraordinary research at UT Southwestern. Please join me in congratulating Dr. Russell for his many years of visionary leadership and substantial contributions to the field of science.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

W. P. Andrew Lee, M.D.

Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Dean, UT Southwestern Medical School

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