

ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS

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

April 21, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

It is my great pleasure to announce the appointment of **Joan W. Conaway, Ph.D.**, as the new Vice Provost and Dean of Basic Research, with the additional appointment as Professor of Molecular Biology. Dr. Conaway will begin her new roles on July 1, and hold the Cecil H. Green Distinguished Chair in Cellular and Molecular Biology.

Dr. Conaway joins us from the Stowers Institute for Medical Research in Kansas City, Missouri, where she serves as an investigator and holds the Helen Nelson Distinguished Chair. She is also an Affiliate Professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of Kansas Medical Center.

In 2020, Dr. Conaway was elected to the National Academy of Sciences for her distinguished and continuing achievements in original scientific research in the field of biochemistry. She has been a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences since 2002.

Dr. Conaway received her undergraduate education from Bryn Mawr College, where she majored in Chemistry and in Biology with honors from Haverford College. She earned her doctorate in Cell Biology from Stanford University School of Medicine, where she worked in the lab of Roger Kornberg, Ph.D., recipient of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Dr. Conaway completed post-graduate training as a research fellow at the DNAX Research Institute of Molecular and Cellular Biology in Palo Alto, California.

Her laboratory, which she has co-directed with her husband, Ronald Conaway, Ph.D., studies molecular mechanisms responsible for the regulation of RNA polymerase II transcription. Over the span of 30 years, this research has significantly advanced scientific understanding of the mechanisms of gene transcription – the process through which a gene encoding a specific protein produces a corresponding specific messenger RNA that can be translated by the cellular machinery to produce the actual protein. This area of basic research has critical implications for understanding processes that, when disrupted, can lead to cancer and other diseases.

Prior to joining the Stowers Institute for Medical Research, Dr. Conaway was an Associate Investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI). She served as the interim head of the Program in Molecular and Cell Biology at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation and an adjunct professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.



In 1997, she was a joint recipient of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology's Amgen Award with Ronald Conaway. She is a member of the scientific advisory board of the Institute of Genetics and Molecular and Cellular Biology in Strasbourg, France, and is past chair of the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) Board of Scientific Counselors for Basic Sciences.

A prolific author of peer-reviewed scientific publications, Dr. Conaway has been on the editorial committee of the *Annual Review of Biochemistry* since 2007. She has served on grant review panels for National Institutes of Health and HHMI, and as an editorial board member and associate editor of the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Eric Olson, Ph.D., Director of the Hamon Center for Regenerative Science and Medicine and Chair of the Department of Molecular Biology at UT Southwestern, for his leadership as Chair of the Search Committee; and to the Search Committee members – Dr. Michael Brown, Dr. Lora Hooper, Dr. David Mangelsdorf, Dr. Michael Rosen, and Dr. Celette Skinner.

Dr. Conaway succeeds Dr. David Russell, who has served the institution most capably as the inaugural Vice Provost and Dean of Research since 2010. He plans to retire later this year after Dr. Conaway is fully acclimated to our institution.

Included in her priorities as Vice Provost and Dean of Basic Research, Dr. Conaway will seek to advance our premier basic research programs that leverage existing strengths in laboratory-based investigation and a robust and growing research portfolio. The vast experience and knowledge that Dr. Conaway brings positions her to guide expansion and coordination of core resources and facilities needed to support state-of-the-art biomedical investigations and keep UT Southwestern at the forefront of innovation.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Conaway to UT Southwestern.



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