

ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS

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

May 22, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to announce the appointment of **Julie Pfeiffer, Ph.D.**, as the new Chair of the Department of Microbiology, effective immediately. She will hold the B.B. Owen Distinguished Chair in Molecular Research and the Nadine and Tom Craddick Distinguished Chair in Medical Sciences.

Dr. Pfeiffer joined UT Southwestern in 2006 as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Microbiology. She has established herself as a highly respected scientist and leader, serving as Vice Chair of the Department since 2022, and most recently, as Interim Chair.

Following her undergraduate education at Miami University, Dr. Pfeiffer earned her doctorate in microbiology and immunology from the University of Michigan. She then pursued postdoctoral studies at Stanford University.

As a postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Pfeiffer showed that RNA viruses benefit from an error-prone replication strategy that leads to mutations, enhancing the likelihood that they will acquire pathogenic properties. When she founded her laboratory at UT Southwestern, she explored whether bacteria in the gut could influence viral infection.

Her focus on how bacteria can affect virus infection was a departure from traditional lines of study on bacteria or viruses as separate entities. Dr. Pfeiffer brought together virologists, immunologists, and bacteriologists, laying the foundation for a new discipline within the umbrella of microbiology now known as trans-kingdom interaction. Her discovery that bacteria in the gut promote viral infection opened new possibilities to utilize available drugs for bacterial infections to limit viral infections.

For almost two decades, Dr. Pfeiffer's research has been supported by federal and private grants including the National Institutes of Health, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, the American Cancer Society, and the Pew Innovation Fund. She serves on the editorial boards of *Science*, *Cell Host & Microbe*, and *Journal of Virology* and is Associate Editor of the *Annual Review of Virology*.

Her contributions have been recognized with honors that include UT Southwestern's Excellence in Postdoctoral Mentoring Award (2022) and the O'Donnell Award in Science (2019) from the Texas Academy of Medicine, Engineering, Science and Technology (TAMEST).



I would like to express my appreciation to Margaret Phillips, Ph.D., Chair and Professor of Biochemistry, for her service as Chair of the Search Committee, and to all the Search Committee members – Roger Bedimo, M.D., Zhijian “James” Chen, Ph.D., James Collins, Ph.D., Lora Hooper, Ph.D., Andrew Koh, M.D., Kim Orth, Ph.D., Michael Shiloh, M.D., Ph.D., Vincent Tagliabracci, Ph.D., and Joan Conaway, Ph.D. (ex officio) – for the dedication and insights they brought to this comprehensive national search.

Dr. Pfeiffer succeeds Michael V. Norgard, Ph.D., who retired in January after 45 years of distinguished service at UT Southwestern.

Her scientific expertise, multidisciplinary approach, and proven leadership record will continue the Department of Microbiology’s tradition of excellence and further elevate our institution as a national hub for discovery, collaboration, and innovation.

Please join me in congratulating Dr. Pfeiffer on her new leadership role at 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

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