

UT Southwestern Medical Center

New Academic Year

Sept. 3, 2019

To the UT Southwestern Community:

On this day after Labor Day, I am pleased to welcome everyone to the 2019-20 academic year, especially those who are new members of the UT Southwestern community. I am also pleased to take this opportunity to highlight some major events and accomplishments of the fiscal year that just ended and to note key initiatives and priorities for the year ahead. As always, our fundamental touchstone for making decisions and assessing our activities is their contribution to our mission – to promote health and a healthy society that enables achievement of full human potential.

Leadership Appointments

Ultimately, the strength of an institution depends on the values, quality, and commitment of its people. We have had several important academic leadership appointments in this past year. In February, **Dr. W. P. Andrew Lee**, an international leader in hand and arm transplantation and a pioneering researcher in tolerance strategies for such transplantations, was recruited to UT Southwestern to serve as our Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Provost, and Dean of the Medical School. He is already well on his way to launching his agenda as leader of the faculty and UT Southwestern's academic programs. Following on efforts initiated prior to his arrival, Dr. Lee has established an **Office of Faculty Wellness** now led by Assistant Dean **Dr. Susan Matulevicius**, a cardiologist and Associate Professor in Internal Medicine. I want to thank **Dr. Dwain Thiele**, Vice Provost and Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Initiatives, who served so ably as interim EVP while we conducted the national search that culminated in Dr. Lee's recruitment.

Dr. William T. Dauer, a neurologist from the University of Michigan who is highly acclaimed for his research on Parkinson's disease, joined us in July as the inaugural Director of the Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute. By building on UT Southwestern's distinctive strengths in neuroscience research and clinical care, Dr. Dauer will be seeking to expand the O'Donnell Brain Institute's programs to make it a national leader in advancing the understanding and treatment of brain disease, one of society's most compelling medical and social problems.

In addition, **Dr. Anke Henning**, coming from the Max Planck Institute in Germany, joined UT Southwestern in January as Director of the Advanced Imaging Research Center. She is renowned for her work developing novel magnetic resonance imaging technologies for visualization of disease-related changes in the human brain, spinal cord, and heart.

Dr. Celette Sugg Skinner was appointed Chair of the Department of Population and Data Sciences (formerly the Department of Clinical Sciences). A long-standing member of our faculty, Dr. Skinner has

made important contributions to advancing the science of cancer screening to improve the health of populations.

Discovery – Faculty Recognition

We were happy to congratulate **Dr. Sean Morrison**, Director of the Children’s Medical Center Research Institute at UT Southwestern and Professor of Pediatrics, on his election to the National Academy of Medicine in recognition of his significant discoveries in stem cell biology and cancer. And, for the second time in three years, a UT Southwestern faculty member received the internationally prestigious Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences. **Dr. Zhijian “James” Chen**, Professor of Molecular Biology and Director of the Center for Inflammation Research at UT Southwestern, was awarded the 2019 prize for his discovery of the cGAS enzyme that triggers the body’s immune defense against infections and cancers.

In addition, **Dr. Philipp Scherer**, Director of the Touchstone Center for Diabetes Research and Professor of Internal Medicine, was the first scientist to win what some have called the “Triple Crown” in diabetes research – the top American, European, and Asian awards for diabetes investigation – for his significant contributions to understanding the role of fat cells in this disease and the hormones they release. And **Dr. Joseph Takahashi**, Chair of Neuroscience, was awarded the Gruber Neuroscience Prize, a major international award, for his pioneering work on the molecular and genetic bases of circadian rhythms in mammals.

UT Southwestern was the top institution globally in the Nature Index healthcare institutions in biomedical sciences category for publishing high quality scientific research – a testament to the impact of our research community overall.

Education

The new **Medical School curriculum**, which was launched in 2015, is now firmly established. The Class of 2019 was the first Medical School class to graduate having completed all four years under the new curriculum, which is based on close integration of the scientific and clinical dimensions of medical education. The new curriculum also emphasizes teamwork and new skills, such as quality improvement, to better prepare our students for the changing landscape of health care delivery.

Since our core values include a commitment to diversity and inclusion, we were very pleased to be selected to receive the 2018 Health Professions **Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award** from *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine, the oldest and most significant diversity-focused publication in higher education.

A major highlight of the academic space in West Campus Building 3, which opened last fall, is the state-of-the-art **Simulation Center**. One of the largest in the country, it has quickly become an integral part of the education and training we provide for medical students, residents, and fellows, and it also is used by faculty and community physicians, nurses, and other clinicians.

Our **teaching excellence** was recognized when **Dr. Angela Mihalic**, Dean of Medical Students and Associate Dean of Student Affairs, and a Distinguished Teaching Professor in the Department of Pediatrics, was selected to receive the 2019 Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation’s Piper Professor Award, which honors dedication to teaching and outstanding academic achievement. In addition, **Drs.**

John Herring, Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, and **Won Lee**, Associate Professor of Internal Medicine, received the UT System's highest educational honor – the Board of Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award.

Healing

The UT Southwestern Health System is flourishing. Our clinicians continue to deliver extraordinary care to patients both within our University Hospitals and Clinics, as well as at our partner institutions – Parkland Memorial Hospital, Children's Medical Center, the Dallas Veteran Affairs Medical Center, and Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children. In aggregate, they now annually provide care to more than 105,000 hospitalized patients and close to 370,000 emergency room patients, and facilitate approximately 3 million outpatient visits.

Although our University Hospitals have received multiple national awards in the past year, such as the **Vizient Rising Star Award** for quality and safety efforts, we can take special pride in being recognized as **the most patient-centered academic medical center**, as well as among **the top 10 institutions in diminished mortality rates in the country** on the Vizient Scorecard, a national database that includes 95 percent of the academic medical centers in the United States and Canada. Another indication of the dedication and excellence of UT Southwestern physicians, nurses, other clinicians, and the entire staff of our University Hospitals and Clinics, is that for the third year in a row, UT Southwestern University Hospitals were ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as the **No. 1 Best Hospital in Dallas-Fort Worth and the No. 2 Best Hospital in Texas**.

To better recognize faculty whose daily work in fulfilling our clinical mission has made clinical expertise, a commitment to innovation, and the compassionate delivery of high-quality patient care the hallmarks of the UT Southwestern Medical Group, whether within our University practice sites or at partner institutions, we launched a new program of **Leaders in Clinical Excellence awards** last year. Awards were created in six categories, and over 200 nominations were received from clinical faculty, staff, and department chairs. This summer, we again received many nominations and are planning a campuswide event for November to honor this next academic year's award recipients.

Legislative Session

The biennial state legislative session always has important implications for UT Southwestern, and the 86th Legislature, which met this year, approved a performance driven **funding formula** that should provide predictable funding to support and leverage UTSW's leading-edge biomedical research enterprise. A pilot funding formula, based on UTSW's performance in securing external funding for research, was adopted, resulting in increased funding for UTSW for the biennium.

Campus Landscape and New Building Projects

The **Seldin Plaza** was transformed in June by the installation of two major pieces of sculpture – "Untitled" by Joel Shapiro and "Dumna" by Ursula von Rydingsvard. The Shapiro piece was actually commissioned for the site, and both sculptures were wonderfully special and generous gifts from Nobel Laureate Dr. Joseph Goldstein, Chairman of Molecular Genetics, who is also a notable art connoisseur.

A testimony to the vitality of UT Southwestern – and to our disciplined use of resources – is the robust building program we have been able to pursue in advancing our mission. Currently, the most visible project is the **expansion of William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital**, which will provide additional capacity to meet patient demand. The new patient tower will serve as the clinical home for

neuroscience programs that are part of the O'Donnell Brain Institute, and the inpatient services currently located at the Zale Lipshy Pavilion will relocate to this new space at Clements University Hospital. The Emergency Department is also being expanded. New operating rooms, imaging capabilities, and labs are being added, and two garages are being built. The Emergency Department expansion will be completed this December, and the new bed tower will open next September.

On the South Campus, to provide critically needed support for our research activities, a new, state-of-the-art Vivarium is under construction in space behind the James W. Aston Ambulatory Care Center. The facility is currently projected to be ready for use in October 2020.

With site preparation well underway, actual construction will soon begin on **two new towers comprising one large building on our North Campus**. One tower will be used for Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center outpatient clinical services and the other will house laboratories and related support space for research programs of the O'Donnell Brain Institute. The project is scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2022. Ultimately, the new building will allow our cancer clinicians and their teams to provide care for the increasing number of patients who are turning to us for help, and the growth it will allow in neuroscience research will help to establish UT Southwestern as a national leader in basic discoveries about the brain. We greatly appreciate the understanding and patience of all who have been unavoidably inconvenienced by the parking changes we have had to make to accommodate this major construction project.

Another project that is actually close to completion reflects UT Southwestern's expanded North Texas footprint in providing clinical care. We will be opening **UT Southwestern Medical Center at Frisco** in December, in conjunction with a new hospital that is being built jointly with our partner, Texas Health Resources. Since this is such a rapidly growing area, we expect the Frisco campus to be an important addition to UT Southwestern's other off-campus regional medical centers in Richardson/Plano, Park Cities, Las Colinas, and Fort Worth.

Having received approval to proceed from our Board of Regents last month, beginning in November we will construct our newest capital project, **a second Radiation Oncology building** adjacent to the current building on East Campus. The new facility will be ready for use in September 2021. In conjunction with the new Simmons Cancer Center tower on North Campus, this will enable us to provide for the increasing number of patients and their families from North Texas and beyond who come to UT Southwestern seeking cancer care.

Key Priorities for the Year Ahead

UTSW as a Great Workplace

We continue to do all we can to enhance UT Southwestern as a great place to work for our employees. Two initiatives that were launched in the past year will be receiving considerable attention in the year ahead.

Elevate the Experience, led by **Arnim Dontes**, our EVP for Business Affairs, was created to achieve high-quality and efficient administrative services across UT Southwestern. It has been designed to increase accountability; to ensure that employees have the tools and infrastructure they need to successfully do their jobs; to develop and apply change management processes to changes that affect employees; to establish and utilize communication guidelines for consistent messaging; and to achieve service excellence through the implementation of a centralized service model that supports employees' ongoing needs. Projects have been launched or are being planned in Benefits, Compensation, Employee

Engagement, the UTSW Intranet, Leave Administration, Performance Management, Procurement, Service Center, and Timekeeping. For more information about this initiative and toolkits and documents associated with it, see utsouthwestern.net/intranet/services/elevate/.

We believe that **employee engagement** is fundamental to employee personal fulfillment, and it is also essential for achieving the level of institutional distinction we seek in carrying out UT Southwestern's mission. To promote our core values of excellence, innovation, teamwork, and compassion, a Values in Practice (VIP) employee engagement initiative began in July with a survey that was sent to all nonfaculty employees. The plan is to repeat the full survey annually, with quarterly "pulse checks" on key issues throughout the year.

This first survey has now been analyzed, and the results have been distributed to institutional leaders and department managers who are tasked with both formulating and executing action plans to address the survey findings. We expect there will be robust communication within departments about survey results, action plans to address issues impeding engagement, and progress made in resolving them. In particular, we want to ensure that every person working at UT Southwestern feels comfortable and safe in raising issues that concern them – and confident that appropriate actions will be taken when needed.

Clinical Strategic Planning Initiative

A high priority for the UT Southwestern Health System is to complete a Clinical Strategic Planning initiative to guide decisions about our development in the coming years. Extensive analytic work as background for consideration of key strategic issues has been completed.

Dr. John Warner, EVP for Health System Affairs, and I recently invited over 100 clinical department chairs, faculty physicians, other clinicians, and health system administrators to participate in a set of work groups to consider issues related to our ambulatory and inpatient services, network expansion, opportunities for growth and for creating destination service lines, payment models, the value of academic medicine, the patient and family experience, and the expansion of UT Southwestern's clinical and translational research portfolio.

Academic Programs and Leadership Appointments

With **Dr. William Dauer** now in place as Director of the **O'Donnell Brain Institute**, we look forward to an accelerated pace of building on our current strengths in neuroscience programs to expand the scale and scope of UT Southwestern's brain-related research programs and clinical care activities. He is especially focused on building teams of both scientists and clinicians across disciplines to discover the fundamental causes of brain diseases and then to translate those discoveries into treatment options, making UT Southwestern a leading institution for brain research and clinical care.

We also will be launching our newly established **Department of Biomedical Engineering**. The plan to launch this Department was approved by the UT Southwestern Faculty Council, the UT System, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and we will be building on the base created by our existing biomedical engineering programs and our collaboration with the University of Texas at Dallas. Provost/Dean **Dr. W. P. Andrew Lee** recently announced the appointment of a search committee for a Department Chair, and the goal for this new leader will be to build a Department that significantly expands biomedical engineering at UT Southwestern, both within the new Department and through integrating biomedical engineering research efforts with programs in other departments and centers. We expect that creating this new Department will advance both basic science and clinical research at UT Southwestern.

In addition to completing searches for new **Department Chairs in Internal Medicine and Neurology and a Director of the Cecil H. and Ida Green Comprehensive Center for Molecular, Computational, and Systems Biology**, a priority for the year ahead will be implementing the recommendations of a faculty group that was convened to focus on Artificial Intelligence, to keep UT Southwestern at the cutting edge of technology applied to education, research, and patient care. The faculty group reviewed current AI strengths and activities at UTSW and produced a white paper document on “Artificial Intelligence in Medicine, Research, and Education,” which proposed the creation of a Center to both expand AI activities and coordinate the integration of them across our three core missions and UTSW business operations.

Concluding Comments

We are all very fortunate to be part of an institution that is thriving and making so many important contributions to scientific advances, to health and wellness, and to educating and training the next generations of scientists, physicians, and other clinicians.

At the same time, we are living in a society with a national crisis in opioid use and with other major issues that need to be addressed, including racism and violence.

We remain committed to promoting diversity, providing equal opportunity, and prohibiting racial discrimination. We believe that a diversity of cultures and perspectives is fundamental to achieving scientific success and to delivering the quality of patient care we seek to provide to all who come to us for help.

At UT Southwestern, we also are committed to sustaining a safe and secure environment for learning and working for all students, trainees, faculty, and staff. Sexual discrimination and misconduct will not be tolerated, and all members of the campus community are expected to treat one another with dignity and respect.

Each one of us is in a position to make a difference in carrying out UT Southwestern’s mission and goals, and I hope you will always keep that in mind as you carry out the responsibilities of whatever position you hold.

We should all take pride in what we have accomplished working together this past year. This fall, I will once again be hosting three Town Halls and hope you will make time to attend one or join online. I look forward to hearing your suggestions and the opportunity to address your questions or concerns. The dates and locations will be posted later this month.

Thank you for all that you do each and every day. I wish you a productive, engaged, and personally gratifying 2019-20 academic year.

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