

# UT Southwestern Medical Center

## EVP for Academic Affairs Transition

February 15, 2018

To the UT Southwestern Community:

I am writing with a mixture of regret and deep gratitude to announce that Dr. J. Gregory Fitz has decided to step down from his position as Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Provost, and Dean of the Medical School as of March 1, 2018.

I am, however, pleased to announce that Dr. Dwain Thiele, a Professor of Internal Medicine and currently Vice Provost and Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Initiatives, has agreed to serve as the Interim Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Provost, and Dean while we undertake a national search to identify the next permanent appointee for this vitally important position at UT Southwestern.

Dr. Fitz will be returning to the faculty and will also be taking on a new leadership role with responsibility for developing a broader and more comprehensive global health program for UT Southwestern. He will be expanding the scope of our current program, which has focused primarily on students, to encompass more faculty involvement and to include an array of research programs designed to address global health needs.

Dr. Fitz was recruited to UT Southwestern in 2003 to serve as Chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine, and after a national search, he was selected for his current position in 2009. In the almost nine years since then, he has truly transformed the heart of UT Southwestern – our faculty and academic programs.

Under his leadership, 29 new Department Chairs and Center Directors have been recruited, which has made for an almost complete generational renewal of our academic leadership; 15 of the 21 Clinical Chairs and six of the 12 Basic Science Chairs have been recruited by Dr. Fitz, all after national searches. In addition, three new academic departments have been created (Emergency Medicine, Biophysics, and Bioinformatics), and several important new centers have been created (the Center for Alzheimer's and Neurodegenerative Diseases, the Center for the Genetics of Host Defense, the Children's Medical Center Research Institute at UT Southwestern, and the Hamon Center for Regenerative Science and Medicine).

Joint programs have been established in Bioengineering with UT Dallas and in Biostatistics with Southern Methodist University, and more than 1,000 new physicians and scientists have been added to the UT Southwestern faculty, which now totals 2,736.

Research expenditures have grown to \$432 million in FY17, and of the \$1.8 billion in grants that have been awarded by the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) since 2010, UT Southwestern faculty have received \$340 million, or 19 percent of the total funding awarded by CPRIT to Texas institutions. CPRIT grants have been instrumental in the successful recruitment of many new faculty.

Dr. Fitz was impressively successful in obtaining funding for scientific equipment and laboratory renovations from the UT System STARs (Science and Technology Acquisition and Retention) program, which as its name suggests, was established to help UT institutions recruit and retain “star” faculty.

In addition to creating programs to implement strategic priorities in global health and faculty diversity, Dr. Fitz addressed another important institutional priority in overseeing a comprehensive faculty-driven review and revision of our Medical School curriculum. We are now in year three of its implementation, and a centerpiece of the new program will be the state-of-the-art Simulation Center that is scheduled to open this summer as part of the new clinical and academic building under construction on West Campus.

Early on in his tenure as Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Provost, and Dean, Dr. Fitz created a strong team to work with him in serving the faculty and supporting UT Southwestern’s research and educational missions. As the institution has grown and become more complex, one of the strengths of his tenure has been the quality of his team and his organization and then reorganization of the Academic Affairs arena.

As important as the tangible accomplishments of Dr. Fitz’s tenure are the values and personal characteristics he has brought to his leadership of UT Southwestern’s academic mission. He has been unwavering in his commitment to the highest standards of academic and scientific excellence and integrity, and at the same time he is also widely known, admired, and appreciated for the personal warmth, good humor, and human interest he brings to his interactions with all members of the UT Southwestern community.

Dr. Fitz, who currently holds the Nadine and Tom Craddick Distinguished Chair in Medical Science and the Atticus James Gill, M.D. Chair in Medical Science, is a member of the Society for Clinical Investigation as well as the Association of American Physicians. He has published extensively on liver disease and liver transplantation, has served in numerous editorial positions, and is the co-editor of a major textbook on gastroenterology and liver diseases. He was a member of the Governing Board of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) and served as President of this national professional organization in 2013. In 2014, he became a Fellow of the AASLD.

Dr. Fitz has not only provided outstanding, transformative leadership to UT Southwestern during his years as a leader of our academic enterprise, but he has also been an invaluable institutional leader, working closely with the other Executive Vice Presidents and me on the full range of issues that have been involved in our efforts to serve UT Southwestern faculty, students, and staff and to advance UT Southwestern as a national leader among academic medical centers.

I am personally deeply grateful to Dr. Fitz, and it has been a special pleasure for me to have been able to work so closely with him as a colleague on our shared goals and aspirations for UT Southwestern. I am delighted that he has decided to continue his career here and take on this new, important responsibility of developing UT Southwestern’s contributions in the international arena of global health.

I will form a committee shortly to work with me on the national search for his successor. In leading this effort, I will be seeking input from the broader campus community as part of the search process.

For now, please join me in thanking Dr. Fitz for all that he has done for us as Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Provost, and Dean – and in wishing him well for this next chapter of academic leadership and program building that he has decided to pursue.

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