



A Special Message to the Campus Community

February 5, 2009

To the UT Southwestern Medical Center Community:

With this message and another to follow shortly, I will outline my thoughts on our collective priorities, objectives and goals, as well as those initiatives I believe we need to embrace as we chart a future course for our institution. I hope these communications stimulate vigorous discussion and ultimately lead to a shared commitment to work together to build on our solid foundation of excellence and achievement.

In the five months since I arrived at UT Southwestern, I have met with each department chair and autonomous center director, many senior and junior faculty members, and in small groups with more than two hundred employees who work in a remarkable variety of roles across the medical center. I have participated in clinical teaching rounds, and I have listened to the perspectives of our supporters and patients in the community, as well as those of our Regents and state legislators. Finally, I have had the chance to work with many colleagues in the medical center's administration and with the leadership of our partners at Parkland Memorial Hospital and Children's Medical Center. I am grateful to all who shared their observations and insights.

These experiences have helped me understand the many strengths of our complex institution and see both challenges and opportunities to enhance UT Southwestern's impact through our interrelated and interdependent missions — excellence and innovation in clinical care, discovery through research and training and educating those who will carry these missions in the future.

Seven Strategic Priorities

In all of my meetings I have consistently heard the unwavering sense of pride in this medical center and an aspiration for UT Southwestern to be outstanding in every way, distinctively serving the needs of the DFW region, Texas, and beyond. To achieve that ambition, I believe we need to focus on **seven priorities**:

1. Develop an academic health care system that is at the vanguard of quality, safety and innovation in patient care, enhanced by clinical and translational research and our commitment to education and training — while ensuring the strength of our collaborative partnerships with Parkland, Children's Medical Center and the Veterans Administration.
2. Build upon the vitality of our basic research through recruitment of faculty in key areas of new science and investment in technology while continuing to support the many outstanding scientists at UT Southwestern who have dedicated their careers to basic discovery.
3. Ensure curricula in all of our schools that best prepare our students to be successful health-care professionals, investigators, and educators in a rapidly changing health-care and technological environment.

4. Develop robust programs in health care policy and health services research.
5. Develop programs focused on the health care issues of underserved — both global and within our own community/country.
6. Enhance diversity in our faculty and across the medical center.
7. Optimize the use of our resources, both financial and human capital, empowering employees with the training and tools they need to contribute to our mission.

Building on Our Foundation

While we are building on the historic foundations of this medical center, we nevertheless must be mindful that these priorities will drive our institutional focus and resource allocation at this juncture in UT Southwestern's evolution; this will require significant change. The list above is ordered intentionally to emphasize the importance of achieving the highest level of excellence in our clinical care and innovation. To accomplish this, I believe we must:

- Hold ourselves accountable to each other and to our patients for the highest standards of clinical care (outcomes, safety and quality of patient experience) and develop the processes necessary to achieve the very best in patient-centric care.
- Expect excellence in every clinical area, while establishing clear priorities for programmatic expansion.
- Recruit and support the career development of master clinician-teachers and clinical and translational investigators.
- Build a new academic university hospital that is unique in incorporating into its design and function the needs for state-of-the-art clinical care, as well as those for clinical/translational research and training. All three missions must be intrinsic to this facility.
- Incorporate and leverage innovative information technology and develop best-in-class technological support of our clinical enterprise, including the administrative systems necessary to support our physicians and other care-givers.
- Develop a comprehensive and rigorous program assessing quality, safety and outcomes in every clinical area with processes for continuous improvement to make our health care system a laboratory for improving care delivery.

Our goal is simple: to become fully recognized as a top ten academic medical center within ten years. We will accomplish this by improving our processes of care, recruiting and retaining outstanding faculty and other personnel, and developing state-of-the-art facilities.

The first and last bullet points deserve special emphasis because they are inextricably linked and we cannot achieve our goals without them. **The day when an institution can claim excellence by assertion is at an end, and we should embrace that as inherent in our commitment to our patients and our obligation to demonstrate our value.** A focused assessment of our clinical care will benefit our patients with the promise of continuous improvement, which provides a rich opportunity for clinical research that can have broad impact.

It is vitally important that we recognize that a state-of-the-art facility will not itself ensure a world-class academic health system. It is absolutely essential that we fulfill our need to develop outstanding patient care and service well before we move into a new hospital.

It is important to me that every member of our community understands what I regard as our key strategic priorities, the objectives and values that will contribute to their achievement, and the over-arching goals we all must embrace if we are to build upon the excellence of this institution.

Please take time to consider these thoughts, and I will communicate within a few days about the intensive planning effort that I intend to launch in the coming weeks. I believe the actions it will lead to are essential to our progress.

I welcome your comments.

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President
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