

# ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS

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

April 6, 2026

Dear Colleagues,

I write to share the news that **Herbert Zeh, M.D.**, holder of the Hall and Mary Lucile Shannon Distinguished University Chair in Surgery, will step down from his position as Chair of the Department of Surgery to become Vice President of Surgical Services and Senior Vice President in the Hospital Services Division at the University of Pittsburg Medical Center (UPMC), effective June 1.

Dr. Zeh joined UT Southwestern in 2018 to lead a Department of more than 80 full-time faculty in seven specialized Divisions, offering a spectrum of complex and innovative surgical care. Dr. Zeh has led the Department to sustained growth and excellence across its core missions. Clinical programs have expanded in scope and complexity, the research enterprise has strengthened significantly, and educational programs have advanced to national prominence.



He has also driven meaningful innovation in surgical quality and performance, including the implementation of OR Black Box technology and the integration of artificial intelligence and computer vision into surgical practice and training – positioning the Department at the forefront of data-driven surgical care.

After receiving his medical degree from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Dr. Zeh completed his surgery residency and fellowship in advanced gastrointestinal surgery and surgical oncology at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. Prior to joining UT Southwestern, he served as the Watson Family Professor of Surgery at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Chief of the Division of Gastrointestinal Surgical Oncology at UPMC Hillman Cancer Center, and co-Director of the UPMC Pancreatic Cancer Center.

I am pleased to announce that **Parsia Vagefi, M.D.**, Professor of Surgery and Chief of the Division of Surgical Transplantation, will serve as interim Chair until Dr. Zeh's successor is identified. **Nader Pouratian, M.D., Ph.D.**, Chair and Professor of Neurological Surgery, will serve as Chair of the committee that will conduct a national search for the next Department of Surgery Chair.

Dr. Zeh leaves the Department on a strong and accelerating trajectory, with a durable foundation for continued excellence across clinical care, research, and education. Please join me in wishing him all the best in his new leadership role.



Sincerely,

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**W. P. Andrew Lee, M.D.**

Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost  
Dean, UT Southwestern Medical School

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