

ACADEMIC CONNECTIONS

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

July 14, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to announce the appointment of **William A. Prinz, Ph.D.**, as the new Chair of the Department of Cell Biology, effective on or before Nov. 1. He will hold the Virginia and Edward Linthicum Distinguished University Chair in Biomolecular Science.

Dr. Prinz joins us from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), where he serves as Chief of the Lipid Trafficking and Organelle Biogenesis Section of the Laboratory of Cell and Molecular Biology.

Following his undergraduate education at Vassar College where he majored in biochemistry, Dr. Prinz pursued graduate studies in philosophy at Columbia University. He earned his doctorate in microbiology and molecular genetics at Harvard University, where he also completed postdoctoral studies in cell biology.

During his 21-year career at the NIH, Dr. Prinz has carefully studied organelle biogenesis – the process by which new structures within a living cell are made – and how membrane contact sites and lipids affect the ability of a cell to maintain stable internal conditions upon changes in its extracellular environment.

Defects in lipid metabolism and organelle biogenesis are associated with numerous diseases. By gaining insight into the basic processes in cells, Dr. Prinz is committed to further the understanding of how defects in these areas contribute to human disease.

Among his notable scientific accomplishments, he discovered the structure and function of oxysterol-binding protein related-proteins (ORPs) – a large, conserved family of lipid-binding proteins that play a role in keeping lipid balance and reside at membrane contact sites. Dr. Prinz found that ORPs bind cholesterol and other sterols

in a water-repelling pocket and can transport sterols between membranes both in vitro and in cells. He also discovered where they reside and described one of the ways ORPs operate.

At the time, few proteins that mediate lipid exchange at membrane contact sites had been identified, and it has subsequently been shown that many lipid transport proteins operate at contact sites where they sense and transport lipids. This work laid the foundation for a paradigm-shifting understanding of the role of membrane contact sites in lipid transport and cellular lipid homeostasis.

Dr. Prinz has published numerous research articles in high-impact journals and serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Cell Biology*, *Developmental Cell*, *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, and *Contact*.



He is an active member of the American Society for Cell Biology and the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. He has served on multiple national and international scientific advisory panels and regularly speaks at scientific symposia around the globe.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Yuh-Min Chook, Professor of Pharmacology, for her service as Chair of the Search Committee, and to all the Search Committee members – Dr. Neal Alto, Dr. Russell Debose-Boyd, Dr. Helen Hobbs, Dr. Lora Hooper, Dr. Steve Kliewer, Dr. Sean Morrison, Dr. Julie Pfeiffer, and Dr. Joan Conaway – for the dedication and insights they brought to this comprehensive national search. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Philipp Scherer, who served as Interim Chair, for his capable leadership during the Department’s transition. Finally, Dr. Conaway should be recognized for playing a critical role in Dr. Prinz’ recruitment.

The scientific expertise and proven leadership record Dr. Prinz brings will continue the Department of Cell Biology’s tradition for excellence and further elevate our institution as a national hub for discovery and innovation.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Prinz to Dallas and UT Southwestern.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

W. P. Andrew Lee, M.D.

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

Copyright 2022 UT Southwestern Medical Center. All rights reserved.

Academic Connections is a publication of Communications, Marketing, and Public Affairs (CMPA) at UT Southwestern Medical Center.