

UT Southwestern Medical Center

FY23 Accomplishments, FY24 Priorities

September 8, 2023

To the UT Southwestern Community:

Now that Labor Day is behind us and the 2023-24 academic year is in progress, I write as I have in the past to highlight some of the notable accomplishments of FY23 and a few of our key priorities for the new fiscal year that began Sept. 1. However, I want to first welcome those who are new to UT Southwestern, including faculty, staff, and learners, and to thank all members of the UTSW community who are collectively responsible for all that we have achieved in this past year.

Below are highlights of some of those achievements that have set us on a path for further progress in advancing our institutional mission in the year ahead.

New leadership appointments

This past year, we welcomed a new Dean and two new Department Chairs. In June, **Saad Omer, M.B.B.S., M.P.H., Ph.D.**, assumed the role of Founding Dean of the Peter O'Donnell Jr. School of Public Health, UT Southwestern's first new school in more than 50 years. He came to UTSW from the Yale Institute for Global Health. Last fall, **Jorge Bezerra, M.D.**, joined UT Southwestern as Chair of the Department of Pediatrics. He arrived at UT Southwestern from Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. Additionally, **William Prinz, Ph.D.**, became Chair of the Department of Cell Biology after a distinguished career at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). **Joseph Merola, M.D., M.M.Sc.**, arrives next month from Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, to serve as our new Chair of the Department of Dermatology, effective Oct. 16. National searches are ongoing for three additional Chairs to lead the Departments of **Radiology, Psychiatry, and Orthopaedic Surgery.**

I am pleased to share that after an extensive national search, we have arrived at a final candidate for the important role of **Executive Vice President for Health System Affairs**, and I look forward to announcing that appointment in the coming days. Additionally, searches for the key roles of **Vice Provost and Senior Associate Dean for Education**, as well as **Vice Provost and Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Initiatives**, are well along with appointments anticipated in the coming months.

On May 1, **Jessica Moreland, M.D.**, began her service as Associate Dean for Faculty Development, and last fall **Shawna Nesbitt, M.D.**, took on additional responsibility leading programs and initiatives that advance our commitment to ensure that UT Southwestern is a destination for the very best faculty, staff, students, and trainees to thrive irrespective of background. The passage of SB 17 by the Texas Legislature has necessitated some changes in this new year in our approach. Dr. Nesbitt's important work continues as Vice President and Chief Institutional Opportunity Officer.

Along with these academic appointments, we have been fortunate to have two key administrative leaders join us this past fiscal year. **Tony Lakin**, a veteran cybersecurity leader, became Vice President and Chief Information Security Officer in May, and in April, **Jenny Doren, M.S.**, started her new role as Vice President for Communications, Marketing, and Public Affairs.

Advancing our commitment to educate, discover, and heal

UT Southwestern is recognized among the nation's premier academic medical centers for clinical care, for education and training of the next generation, and for impactful research discoveries.

DISCOVER

Our research enterprise continues to benefit from a substantial increase in funding from the NIH, which is a testament to the high quality of research underway here. Last fall, UT Southwestern was selected to be one of 12 NIH Nutrition Obesity Research Centers in the nation – and the only one in Texas – bringing together more than 150 UTSW scientists from across dozens of departments to investigate the causes, prevention, and treatment options for obesity. UT Southwestern is ranked as the top-rated public institution and No. 3 among global health care institutions in the 2023 *Nature Index* for its published research. The myriad research projects at UTSW have led to several hundred original scientific publications. Here are a few examples that exemplify the breadth and vitality of our research programs:

1. **A mechanism for counteracting the effects of alcohol intoxication:**

In a [study published in *Cell Metabolism*](#), longtime collaborators David Mangelsdorf, Ph.D., Chair and Professor of Pharmacology, and Steven Kliewer, Ph.D., Professor of Molecular Biology and Pharmacology, showed that the hormone FGF21 counteracts alcohol-induced loss of consciousness and coordination without reducing blood alcohol levels. It does so by stimulating the release of norepinephrine, a neurotransmitter that increases alertness and arousal. They suggest FGF21 could prove useful in treating acute cases of alcohol poisoning. [Read more](#) in the UTSW Newsroom.

2. **Healthy gut bacteria can activate anti-tumor immune response:**

Recent work from the lab of Andrew Koh, M.D., Associate Professor of Pediatrics, in partnership with teams in the labs of Lora Hooper, Ph.D., Chair and Professor of Immunology, and Bret Evers, M.D., Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Pathology, revealed how healthy bacteria can escape the intestine, travel to lymph nodes and cancerous tumors elsewhere in the body, and boost the effectiveness of certain immunotherapy drugs. The findings shed light on why antibiotics can weaken the effect of immunotherapies and could lead to new cancer treatments. [Learn more](#).

3. **An approach for developing a new class of drugs targeting the SARS-CoV-2 virus:**

The proteins required for replication and transcription of SARS-CoV-2 are encoded by two open reading frames (ORF1a and ORF1b) in the viral genome. Ribosomes bind to ORF1a and initiate translation, but because the two ORFs are out of frame, translation of ORF1b can only occur if ribosomes can “slip” or shift their reading frame. Using a CRISPR screening strategy, the labs of John Schoggins, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Microbiology, and Joshua Mendell, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Molecular Biology, identified host “ribosome recycling” factors that are needed to remove stalled ribosomes from the end of ORF1a, where they prevent the next ribosome from shifting frames to

translate ORF1b. Because ORF1b translation is needed for viral replication, these ribosome recycling factors are potential targets for anti-viral drugs. [Learn more.](#)

4. **UTSW-led clinical trial brings a once-weekly version of insulin closer to FDA approval:**

An experimental form of insulin administered just once a week was safe for patients with Type 2 diabetes and helped them maintain healthy blood sugar levels better than insulin injected daily, according to the results of a phase three clinical trial led by Ildiko Lingvay, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.C.S., Professor of Internal Medicine and in the Peter O'Donnell Jr. School of Public Health. The findings, published in [JAMA](#), could move this potentially innovative new drug, called insulin icodec, one step closer to approval by the Food and Drug Administration. Unlike the current daily insulin degludec, patients would inject insulin icodec once a week, relying on its interaction with a prevalent blood protein called albumin to slow icodec's release into the bloodstream. The results suggest insulin icodec could be a significant innovation for patients with Type 2 diabetes if it is approved for clinical use. [Learn more.](#)

New NAS and NAM members

While we take great pride in the outstanding work that occurs at UT Southwestern and the impact it promises in its own right, we also gain satisfaction in seeing our faculty and staff honored for their contributions. Earlier this spring, two more colleagues, **Russell DeBose-Boyd, Ph.D.**, and **Duoja "DJ" Pan, Ph.D.**, were elected to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) – one of the highest honors bestowed upon American scientists, raising the number of UT Southwestern faculty who are members of the NAS to 26, more than any other institution in Texas. Similarly, last fall, the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) announced its newest class of elected members, which included **Lora Hooper, Ph.D.**, and **Zhijian "James" Chen, Ph.D.** UTSW now has 19 members of the NAM, also the largest number or contingent of any institution in Texas.

EDUCATE

U.S. News & World Report ranks [UT Southwestern Medical School](#) nationally among the Best Graduate Schools, as well as recognizes nationally rated programs in the [UT Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences](#) and the [School of Health Professions](#). Also in 2023, *Forbes* and Statista recognized UT Southwestern among America's Best Large Employers, Best Employers for New Grads, Best Employers for Diversity, and Best Employers for Women.

This September, we celebrate the fifth anniversary of UT Southwestern's [Simulation Center](#), which is among the nation's largest and most advanced facilities. Since its opening, the Sim Center has held more than 6,000 simulated events and logged more than 126,000 learner encounters.

In August, we welcomed the **Medical School Class of 2027** – each student brings a record of outstanding academic accomplishment. These learners come from 79 undergraduate schools, with women composing 54% of the class, and 27% of students identifying as coming from traditionally underrepresented groups in medicine.

Among those accepted, 16 will pursue combined M.D./Ph.D. degrees as members of the **Perot Family Scholars Medical Scientist Training Program at UT Southwestern**. The NIH has continuously funded this medical scientist training program (MSTP) since 1982. Last year, the

Perot family, The Perot Foundation, and The Sarah and Ross Perot, Jr. Foundation provided a transformative **\$50 million endowment**, which will ensure our ability to prepare the next generation of physician-scientists in perpetuity.

The School of Health Professions continues to experience growth, welcoming more than 140 new students into its seven existing degree programs. In addition, the School of Health Professions is slated to start a Genetic Counseling program next year.

The Division of Basic Sciences within the **Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences** welcomed 134 matriculants last month – its largest class to date across its Basic Biomedical Sciences (76%), Biomedical Engineering (19%), and Organic Chemistry (5%) Ph.D. programs. Of the incoming students, 58% are women, 44% are international students, and 37% of U.S. students come from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. Within the Division of Clinical Sciences, the Clinical Psychology Ph.D. program welcomed a class of 12 students. The Graduate School is also anticipating expanded educational and research opportunities within the Biomedical Engineering Department with the opening of the **Texas Instruments Biomedical Engineering and Sciences Building**. Faculty and their teams have already begun moving into this innovative facility, and we look forward to a formal dedication with our UT Dallas partners in October.

The **Peter O'Donnell Jr. School of Public Health**, under the leadership of Dean Omer, recently started inaugural classes in the Master of Public Health (M.P.H.) program and in the combined Doctor of Medicine/Master of Public Health (M.D./M.P.H.) program.

HEAL

Earlier this summer, and for the first time, UT Southwestern [joined an elite Honor Roll](#) of the nation's top 20 hospitals recognized for delivering the highest standard of care, according to *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Hospitals listings for 2023-24. More than 4,500 hospitals were evaluated. Eleven of our medical specialties are nationally ranked, eight among the top 25 and three more among the top 50. William P. Clements Jr. University Hospital is now ranked as the No. 1 hospital in Texas (tied) and, for the seventh year in a row, No. 1 in Dallas-Fort Worth. Nineteen out of 21 procedures and conditions that were evaluated were rated as "High Performing," the top category.

UT Southwestern also recently received national recognition for patient experience (top 2%) and quality of care from multiple reviewing bodies, such as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Leapfrog, Healthgrades, and Press Ganey. Our Health System has been extraordinarily productive – both within our hospitals and clinics. We concluded FY23 with roughly 5 million patient visits, representing a 3% increase, which amounts to nearly 140,000 additional visits beyond those we provided last year. More than numbers, we can all take pride in the quality of care – outcomes and patient experience – which are among the very best as we benchmark against peer institutions across the country and locally.

In July, [two UT Southwestern nurse leaders](#), David Wyatt, Ph.D., RN, Associate Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer for University Hospital, and Bradley Goettl, D.N.P., APRN, Assistant Director of our Office of Advanced Practice Providers, were selected to be inducted into the **American Academy of Nursing 2023 Class of Fellows**. The Academy epitomizes nursing's most accomplished leaders in policy, research, administration, practice, and academia.

Strategic growth and investments in the future

In this past fiscal year, we undertook a biennial refresh of our rolling [Six-Year Strategic Plan](#), with subcommittees prioritizing institutional needs and making recommendations on resource allocations for the 2022-28 period. Additionally, leaders identified cross-cutting issues for FY24, which include an increased emphasis on making UT Southwestern the preferred institution for learners, faculty, and staff through enhanced recruiting, onboarding, retention, and wellness strategies. As always, our organization will continue its focus on improving **patient access and experience**, especially through interdisciplinary care and care coordination and navigation.

We continue to identify ways to deliver care closer to where our patients live and work as evidenced by last September's opening of UT Southwestern Medical Center at RedBird and our latest regional medical center in Coppell, which opened this summer. We are also executing our **Clinical Strategic Plan**, including renovating Zale Lipshy Pavilion and expanding services at Texas Health Dallas and those available in Fort Worth.

Additionally, we are finding ways to better integrate innovative technology, such as **artificial intelligence**, to operate at a higher level by enhancing automated processes, identifying patterns to inform inquiry, managing large volumes of data, and improving workflows. We are also incorporating **virtual reality** into education to simulate real-life experiences.

To lessen the environmental impacts of our operations, our **Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Initiatives Work Group**, led by Holly Crawford, M.B.A., Executive Vice President for Business Affairs, is finalizing a plan to define our carbon footprint and identify additional initiatives that may mitigate its effects. Included are energy and water conservation programs and solid waste reduction initiatives, as well as efforts to increase our resilience to climate-related events such as the record-setting freezes we have experienced in each of the past two winters and the stress of summer heat.

Two vitally important projects that we will continue to advance in FY24 are the building of the **Texas Behavioral Health Center at UT Southwestern** – slated to open in late 2025 – and the planning for a new **pediatric campus**, where the Paul M. Bass Administrative and Clinical Center currently stands, in partnership with Children's Health. These investments in our community will position us to meet the growing need for specialty care as our population in North Texas rapidly expands. The Behavioral Health Center addresses a critical need for inpatient care for patients from Dallas, Collin, Denton, and Tarrant counties. Together with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and Children's Health, this facility – the first of its kind in North Texas – will shift the trajectory of our community's rapidly escalating mental health challenges.

Employee engagement

This fall, we look forward to once again gaining valuable perspectives from our employees about opportunities to enhance UTSW as a workplace, so we can measure whether we are making necessary progress. Results from last year's Values in Practice (VIP) Employee Engagement survey (Oct. 18-Nov. 6, 2022) led to additional efforts by departments and managers across our organization to apply ideas shared by many of you for continuous improvement in the areas of employee well-being, connectedness, and recognition, to name a few. We are eager to hear from you again this year so we can learn what more we can do to drive employee satisfaction, best support you in your career, and sustain a culture of excellence in all that we do. Watch for additional communications on how to share your thoughts in the coming months.

Finances

As we advance on these plans, we appreciate everyone's careful stewardship of resources to help counter the impact of inflation. We are encouraged by the savings already generated through efficiencies so that we may optimally serve the communities that depend on us.

There is an energy on our campus and across our regional medical centers that is sustained through your steadfast focus on excellence in all that we do. I have witnessed the continued growth of this excellence throughout the 15 years I have been privileged to serve as President.

Thank you for all you accomplished last year and for all we aspire to achieve together in this new year.

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