

Dean's Newsletter

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Public Policy Forum Visit with Senator Arlen Specter

On February 19, 2004, the School of Medicine hosted a policy forum discussion with Senator Arlen Specter, Chairman of the Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, the congressional committee that makes yearly federal funding and policy decisions for the NIH. During his leadership of the subcommittee he has worked with Senator Tom Harkin to increase the NIH budget from \$12 billion to \$28 billion. During his visit, Senator Specter gave a presentation that addressed a wide range of topics that impact biomedical research and health care. He also participated in a spirited question and answer session with faculty and staff.

The Senator's visit coincided with the release of a new report from the Union of Concerned Scientists, a group of 60 influential scientists including 20 Nobel laureates, detailing the negative impact of actions at the federal government level that have modified scientific research to accommodate political and ideological goals. The campaign by the Union of Concerned Scientists, "Restoring Scientific Integrity," has been launched with this open letter calling for regulatory and legislative action "to restore scientific integrity to federal policymaking." Stanford's Dr Paul Berg, Robert W. and Vivian K. Cahill Professor of Cancer Research, Emeritus was one of the individuals who signed this letter.

Senator Specter also spoke passionately about his work to protect and strengthen the NIH budget and to defend stem cell research in the face of opposition from budget cutters and from those who would adversely impact the peer review process for goals unrelated to science. He clearly demonstrated his courage and commitment to challenging issues – and to serving as a champion of biomedical research, including controversial areas like stem cell research.

Drawing an analogy describing the opposition we face today to the time of Galileo, Senator Specter urged those in the science and research communities to actively engage in public debate on these important issues. During the discussion, he recounted his unsuccessful attempt last year to add an additional \$1.8 billion to the NIH budget. That effort failed by eight votes. Looking back on that effort, the Senator strongly emphasized that each of us in the research and higher education community needs to communicate with our legislators on a much more frequent and effective basis, similar to the way private sector interests make their priorities known in Washington.

We are at an important time in our effort to improve the quality of life of people who suffer from disease. We will be planning additional public policy forums in the future and I hope you will be able to participate whenever possible. I also hope that you will join me in the effort to advocate for policies that will give us the best opportunity to succeed in this endeavor.

The Impact of the University-Wide Information Systems Conversion

Virtually every member of our community has been negatively impacted by the Delphi Project and the Oracle Financial System conversion that commenced last September. While there is no question that the older financial systems needed to be replaced, the current conversion has resulted in major issues and equally importantly (and sadly) a serious morale problem among staff and faculty. This largely stems from the inability to generate accurate and timely financial reports or to order or reimburse vendors and personnel for orders and other services. Further, for nearly all staff, the workload has gone up in parallel with the frustration, anxiety and disillusionment. Because this matter is impacting the entire university, Chris Hanley, Chief Information Officer, and others, made a presentation to the University Faculty Senate on Thursday February 19th. He also answered questions in an executive session of the Senate.

Mr. Hanley attributed the current problems to a number of converging issues, among which was the decision to proceed with a total implementation (which he referred to as the “big bang” approach) rather than a phased in series of implementations. That resulted in a situation in which nearly everyone was learning at the same time. There was also an underestimate of the amount of resources that would be necessary to address the problems that arose further limiting the ability of IT staff to address the extraordinary number of questions or problems that arose with the conversion.

It was acknowledged that the current status was unacceptable and that it was necessary to manage the project differently – by both adding resources to focus on key tasks (e.g., reporting, functionality, data integrity and quality, daily support) as well as prioritizing design solutions. It is hoped that additional resources will improve the reporting performance, making the help desk more responsive and reducing transactions. While Mr. Hanley and his team also proffered that they felt they were turning a corner and that the January reports would show improvement, the general reaction from faculty was suspended confidence. Indeed, it was acknowledged by all that it is critical to get the

turn around accomplished as rapidly as possible and to offer the Stanford community regular communications updating the progress being made (or where problems still exist).

To help our own School of Medicine community, a series of Town Hall Meetings on this topic will be led by Mr. Mike Hindery, Senior Associate Dean for Finance and Administration, to discuss issues and problems related to the Delphi project and Oracle financial system implementation. **There will be two Town Hall Meetings scheduled next week: Tuesday, February 24th from 3 to 4 PM and Wednesday, February 25th from 10 to 11 AM in Munzer Auditorium in the Beckman Building.** The purpose of these meetings is to obtain feedback from faculty and staff regarding the Delphi Project and the Oracle Financial System. You are encouraged to attend one of these meetings to express your experiences (good and bad), issues, and frustrations with these systems to gain a better understanding of what issues others are facing. It is important that we know and understand your issues and experiences with these systems. Your role is important in supporting and assisting us to achieve the many tasks ahead. Please bring your specific concerns about how the systems implementation has impacted you or your department, as we hope these sessions will inform us on issues to take to the University's Systems Governance meetings and to address internally where possible.

Updates from the Board of Trustees Meeting

One Monday February 9th, the Medical Center Committee of the Board of Trustees heard updates from Martha Marsh, President and CEO of Stanford Hospital & Clinics (SHC) and Chris Dawes, President and CEO of the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital (LPCH) on their financial performance. Both hospitals are currently showing very high occupancy rates and each hospital has a higher than budget financial performance. This is certainly good news and builds on the excellent performance that each hospital demonstrated in the last fiscal year. Indeed, SHC's continued positive performance has resulted in recent improvement in their credit rating. That said, both CEO's were careful to point out the numerous challenges that exist or that are on the horizon that could negatively impact their financials. But for now, it is highly encouraging to learn about these very positive results – a good portion of which is related to the work of our pediatric and adult clinical faculty.

We also gave updates to the Committee and Trustees on the progress we are making in further developing our Stanford Institutes of Medicine. Dr. Bill Mobley, Professor and Chair of the Department of Neurology and Director of the Neuroscience Institute at Stanford (NIS), spoke about the exciting developments taking place in fulfilling their vision of creating a new and transforming culture for neuroscience that:

- Involves scientists, clinicians, the University, the Hospitals and donors
- Motivates and supports fundamental neuroscience research and
- Translates neuroscience discoveries into enhanced care for patients with disorders of the nervous system.

The foundations that will help support the NIS goals of translational research (the process of applying ideas, insights and discoveries generated through basic scientific inquiry to the treatment and prevention of human disease and the process of taking insights developed through the study of human disease to generate new scientific insights) will include clinical care, education, basic, clinical and translational research and outreach. Thus the activities of the NIS (and other Stanford Institutes of Medicine) will include basic investigation, disease-oriented research, patient-oriented research, clinical trials and population research. Currently, the community associated with the NIS includes 140 faculty from 17 departments and 3 schools. The NIS will coordinate their activities through “theme groups” but the overarching goal will be to support the work of faculty and departments while stimulating a process that will promote translational research.

An update on the Stanford Institute for Immunology, Transplantation and Infection (IITI) was provided by Drs. Ann Arvin, Lucile Salter Packard Professor of Pediatrics and of Microbiology and Infectious Disease, and Dr. Larry Steinman, Professor of Neurology and Neurological Sciences and of Pediatrics and, by courtesy, of Genetics, both of whom have been instrumental in the planning of the IITI. They have proposed the development of four centers that will comprise the IITI including:

- The Center for Autoimmunity and Allergy
- The Center for Transplantation
- The Center for Microbe-Host Interactions
- The Center for Microbial Evolution and Global Emerging Infections

As with the other Stanford Institutes of Medicine, the IITI is committed to building translation research that will leverage decades of major institutional contributions in immunology, transplantation, microbiology and infectious disease. The IITI will facilitate translation by integrating basic research about immune mediated and infectious processes in human disease with clinical research about disease processes and methods to detect, prevent and treat immune-mediated and infectious diseases. Further the IITI will seek to create innovative programs in global infectious diseases that address their impact on human health and to enhance educational opportunities for medical and graduate students as well as postdoctoral scholars. The IITI is not defined by a specific disease or organ system. It will seek to create links between faculty within the School of Medicine as well as other Schools at Stanford, and it intends to create relationships with developing countries – recognizing the current challenges in clinical immunology, microbial pathogenesis, global infectious disease and biodefense.

Updates from the Executive Committee

At the February 6th Executive Committee we heard two departmental reports – one from Pediatrics and the second from the newly formed Department of Bioengineering. Following are brief summaries of these reports:

Department of Pediatrics

Dr. Harvey Cohen, Arline and Pete Harman Professor of Pediatrics and Chair of the Department, presented an update on the divisions and programs in Pediatrics. He gave a brief history of the department from the time it moved from San Francisco to Palo Alto in 1969 to the present. He then described the many clinical programs and research activities in the department.

Currently the department has 132 faculty and clinician educators in 14 divisions and six programs that cut across divisions. The department also has some 42 clinical post-doctoral fellows and 65 research post-doctoral fellows. The divisions are:

- Adolescent Medicine
- Allergy and Clinical Immunology
- Cardiology
- Critical Care Medicine, including the relatively new area of Pediatric Palliative Care
- Endocrinology
- Gastroenterology and Nutrition
- General Pediatrics
- Genetics
- Hematology/Oncology
- Infectious Diseases
- Neonatology
- Nephrology
- Pulmonary
- Rheumatology

In addition are crosscutting programs that include Immunology, Molecular Genetics, Developmental Biology, Cancer biology, Prevention, and Policy/Outcomes.

As Dr. Cohen highlighted the exciting clinical, basic research, and educational activities underway in each of the divisions and programs it became clear that the department is dynamic, growing, and deeply committed to the health of children in our local community, regionally, nationally, and even internationally. Thanks to Dr. Cohen for giving the Committee a glimpse of the extraordinary breadth and depth of work being done by the faculty, staff, and students in Pediatrics.

Department of Bioengineering

Dr. Paul Yock, Professor of Medicine and Co-Chair of the newly formed Department of Bioengineering, presented the history and current status of the department, which is jointly administered by the Schools of Engineering and Medicine. The Board of Trustees established the department in June 2002, and the Academic Senate of the University approved the MS and PhD degree programs in December 2003. The department is currently recruiting its first student class and is engaging in its initial faculty recruitments.

The mission of the department is "to create a fusion of engineering and the life sciences that promotes scientific discovery and the invention of new technologies and therapies through research and education." Its goal is to span the scale of the life sciences. The initial research theme was quantitative biology, and additional themes have come together around this initial one. They include biomedical computation, biomedical imaging, biomedical devices, regenerative medicine, and cell/molecular engineering. The clinical dimension of the department includes cardiovascular medicine, neuroscience, orthopedics, cancer care, neurology, and the environment.

The graduate curriculum is being developed for the first year class, which will arrive in September 2004. It will include a three quarter quantitative biology core and courses in each of the research theme areas. Dr. Yock pointed out that the challenge of educating bioengineers is that the breadth of areas encompassed in the field (biochemistry, chemical engineering, computer science, developmental biology, electrical engineering, genetics, etc.) can lead to considerable breadth but little depth. The goal of the Stanford department is to provide interdisciplinary knowledge and skills but also depth of understanding.

The department is currently located in the Clark Center and has ties with related programs that are part of Bio-X as well as other departments in both Engineering and the School of Medicine. Over the next several years it intends to develop an undergraduate program, undertake additional faculty searches, and, some years down the line, fund-raising permitting, have a new building, which would be part of the Science, Engineering, and Medicine Campus (SEMC). Its goal is to be ranked near the top of bioengineering departments in a few years. This is an ambitious goal but one that the department is well on its way to achieving.

Medical School Faculty Senate Town Hall Meeting

At the Medical School Faculty Senate meeting on February 18th I provided a summary of our recent School of Medicine Leadership Retreat that was held from January 29-31. A narrative summary of the Retreat was presented in the February 9th Dean's Newsletter. In addition, all of the presentations from the Retreat are now posted on our Web Site at <http://medstrategicplan.stanford.edu/>.

Following the discussion, we had the opportunity to engage in an open discussion focusing on some of the important issues that we have identified in education and faculty development.

Update from the Council of Clinical Chairs

At the Friday, February 13th Council of Clinical Chairs meeting Dr. Gerry Shefrin, VP for Ambulatory Programs at SHC, provided an update on the service incentive fund that is linked to the SHC and SOM Collaborative on improving access, efficiency and patient satisfaction in clinical office practices. A total of \$5 million from the overall funds flow allocations will be distributed to clinical departments based on

performance in achieving various milestones to improve the aforementioned parameters. Further details will be provided later in the year.

In addition, we announced the plans to proceed with the formation of a Faculty Practice Organization for adult medical programs at SHC that will complement the one that is now being implemented for the pediatric faculty at LPCH. The goal is to complete the organizational planning regarding this FPO within the next 3-4 months. This will be lead by Dr. Norm Rizk, Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs and Dr. Gerry Shefrin, VP for Ambulatory Programs at SHC. Based on the discussions that emerged at the Strategic Planning Leadership Retreat, there is considerable interest among Medical Center leaders (and, I am confident, among faculty in general) in such an organization. Clearly details will be shared as they develop.

New Health and Safety Training Program to Aid Compliance

We have received the following information from Arthur Bienenstock, Vice Provost and Dean of Research and Graduate Policy, and Larry Gibbs, Associate Vice Provost for Environmental Health and Safety.

Health and safety training is required to be provided to all personnel at the University. California state regulations make it the legal responsibility of supervisors and managers, including faculty, to assure that individuals they supervise have been provided safety training and information appropriate to their workplace. In a large and diverse organization such as Stanford, this is often a challenging task.

To aid faculty and staff in fulfilling this responsibility to employees, visitors, and students working under their direction, the Environmental Health and Safety Department, in concert with the School of Medicine Health and Safety Office, has developed a web-based safety-training program. The first four courses of the web-based Environmental Health and Safety Program are now available to the University community for use at <http://safetytrain.stanford.edu>.

This Web-training program replaces some existing classroom courses with documented on-line safety training that can be completed by individuals at a workstation during times that fit their schedule. This new approach to safety and compliance is anticipated to be more instructive for the individual, as well as to save the University significant personnel resource time. Employees and students receive training appropriate to their specific work environment. Documentation for management and compliance purposes is automatically provided to the individual and supervisor, as well as being maintained in a central University database.

Individuals who have not previously received required safety training should take advantage of this new training opportunity. Anyone having questions regarding the safety training program and requirements should contact Susie Claxton (Claxton@stanford.edu) of EH&S at 723-0448.

Honors and Awards

- **Dr. Larry Steinman** has been named the winner of the John Dystal Prize for his groundbreaking research on multiple sclerosis. The award will take place at the American Academy of Neurology meetings in San Francisco
- **Dr. Bill Newsome** has been named the winner of the Dan David Foundation Prize for his research that has helped to revolutionaries the field of neurobiology. This prize will be shared with Robert H. Wurtz, senior investigator of the Laboratory of Sensorimotor Research, NIH and Amiram Grinvald, director of The Grudetsky Centre for Research of Higher Brain Functions at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel.

Please join me in congratulating Drs. Steinman and Newsome for the outstanding accomplishments.

Events

- **Community Lecture Series:** On Tuesday, March 2nd, Daria Mochly Rosen, Ph.D., Chair, Department Molecular Pharmacology, will present “*Can Basic Research of Heart Attacks Lead to Drug Development in Academia?*” at the next monthly lecture in this very successful series. Dr. Mochley Rosen will discuss the general belief that the resources and tenor of academia are not conducive to applicable research. However, academic research often yields key discoveries that can affect clinical care. The freedom to explore ideas, the outstanding researchers available for discussions and collaborations, and the institution that encourages the pursuit of research allows the translation of laboratory discoveries into drug development. Please join us in the Clark Center Auditorium at 7:00 p.m. for this lecture. If you have any questions, please call 650-234-0647.