

## Dean's Newsletter

### June 4, 2007

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#### **Commencement 2007 Will Be June 16-17**

June 16-17<sup>th</sup> is Commencement Weekend, and I invite all medical school faculty to participate in the School of Medicine Convocation Ceremony, which will begin at 1:30 pm on Saturday, June 16<sup>th</sup>. I hope as many faculty who are able to participate will join us in this wonderfully festive occasion, during which we will honor 30 recipients of the Master of Science Degree, 89 recipients of the Doctor of Philosophy Degree and 76 recipients of the Doctor of Medicine Degree – with a number of the graduates receiving more than one degree. Please let Ms. Zera Murphy ([Zera.Murphy@Stanford.edu](mailto:Zera.Murphy@Stanford.edu)) know if you plan to participate.

Dr. Herbert L. Abrams, Professor of Radiology, Emeritus, will give this year's Commencement Address to Medical School Graduates. In addition to his enormously distinguished career as a pioneer and leader in cardiovascular radiology, Dr. Abrams is a world-renowned leader in nuclear proliferation and founding vice-president of the International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War as well as a 1985 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Among the great traditions of the medical school commencement are the addresses to graduates by members of the graduating class. This year Joe Dam Dunn will speak on behalf of the PhD graduates and Joshua Spanogle will speak for the graduating class in Medicine.

On Sunday, June 17<sup>th</sup> the University Commencement will take place in the Stanford Stadium at 9:30 am to 12:30 pm. This year's University Commencement Speaker is Dana Gioia, Stanford alumnus and renowned poet, literary critic and chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. I welcome as many of our faculty and students to participate in this event as well.

I look forward to welcoming our graduates, along with their families and friends, on June 16-17 and hope to see as many faculty members as possible as well.

### **Bioscience Programs Garner Outstanding Candidates**

Renewal is one of the remarkably wonderful things about universities. Just as we prepare to confer degrees on distinguished students who will graduate in two weeks, we are also pleased and honored to welcome students who will be joining Stanford in late summer to begin their graduate school education. Based on the information I received from Dr. Ellen FitzSimmons Porzig, Associate Dean for Graduate Education, the 12 departmental and interdisciplinary programs offering PhD degrees received 1365 applications, of which 278 were offered interviews. Ultimately, 180 students were admitted, of whom 101 will be matriculating in bioscience programs in the Schools of Medicine and Humanities and Sciences – with the second highest yield on record. In addition to having a record of excellence and future promise, 16 of the entering students are also members of under-represented minorities and an additional two students are under-represented in science at Stanford. We remain committed first and foremost to admitting the very best students possible – but we are also committed to having as diversified a student body as possible, and I am grateful to the efforts of our faculty, students and members of the Dean’s Office in attracting such wonderful individuals to Stanford.

In addition, 373 students applied to the joint School of Engineering and Medicine Bioengineering Department (335 for the PhD program and 38 for a MS degree). Of the PhD applicants, 42 were interviewed and 31 were extended offers, of whom 17 accepted and will matriculate in 2007. This is the fourth year of admissions to the still new Bioengineering Department and although its history is short, the consensus is that each year the quality of the applicants and admitted students continues to get better and better – a comment that can be offered about virtually all Stanford programs.

Without question the lifeblood of a university is the quality and commitment of its students. I am very pleased with the selection of the graduate student class entering in 2007 and grateful to the faculty and the students who make Stanford such a wonderful environment in which to work, learn and contribute new knowledge.

### **Why Do We Need Free Clinics?**

I wish we did not need free clinics as they are currently constituted. But I am proud of and thankful to our medical and undergraduate students, faculty and community physicians volunteers for all they do to serve patients coming to the Cardinal Free Clinics – including the Arbor Free Clinic and the Pacific Free Clinic. On Wednesday evening, May 30<sup>th</sup>, we had the opportunity to thank and acknowledge the contributions of all of these volunteers in a celebratory dinner at the Arrillaga Alumni Center. Special thanks to the 2007-08 Managers (Asya Agulnik, Marissa Aillaud, Tiffany Castillo and Pearl Chang) and to Drs. Rex Chiu, Medical Director of Pacific Free Clinic, and to Lars

Osterberg and Ian Tong, Co-Medical Directors of Arbor Free Clinic, for their tremendous efforts and commitment during the past year(s).

There can be no question that “free clinics” are a consequence of as well as a response to the lack of a health care system in the United States. With over forty million uninsured and many more minimally insured Americans, access to health care is limited to emergency facilities or to no health care at all. While free clinics are not an answer to the health care needs of the uninsured, they provide an important safety net for our community by providing health assessments and offering access to at least some individuals in need. Sadly, the need for free clinic services may grow even more as the state of California and various counties cut back on mental health and preventive medicine services over the next year!

Free clinics offer an opportunity for our students to minister to underserved individuals, make a patient-provider connection that is not driven by market forces or money, and learn from exceptional community physician and faculty role models – and from each other. In addition, this important volunteer work enables students to better appreciate the serious deficiencies of our current health care (non)-system and to become better-informed advocates for change. I sincerely hope that the rising national (and state-wide) dialogue on addressing healthcare in the United States will be met by real changes in the years ahead. If that occurs the need for free clinics may well disappear – but the lessons learned in the art and professionalism of medicine will be sustaining and important to current and future generations of students and physicians.

### **Stanford Digestive Disease Center and the Symposium on Hepatitis C**

The Stanford Digestive Disease Center (DDC), with the co-sponsorship of the Immunity, Transplantation and Infection Institute, will hold its Third Annual Symposium on June 8, 2007, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm in the Clark Center auditorium. The event, focused on “The Virology and Treatment of Hepatitis C,” features experts from outside and inside Stanford, including: John McHutchison (Duke University), Stanley Lemon (University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston), Christopher Walker (Ohio State University), Michael Houghton (Epiphany Biosciences Inc.), and from Stanford: Mark Kay, Carlos Esquivel, Steven Fong, Shoshana Levy, Xiaosong He and Jeffrey Glenn, DDC Symposium Director. Harry Greenberg, DDC Director and Senior Associate Dean for Research and Training, will open the Symposium with welcome remarks and an overview of the Center. You are welcome and invited to attend the symposium.

The DDC is a 5-year NIH multi-disciplinary program grant. It has 46 Research Base Investigators and Associate Members from 10 departments: nine from the School of Medicine and one from Engineering. It also supports a variety of core functions. The DDC’s scientific Cores include the FACS/Immunoprobe (Director, Eugene Butcher of Pathology; Associate Director, Bishr Omary of Medicine/Gastroenterology and Hepatology), Cell Imaging (Director, Stan Falkow of Microbiology and Immunology; Associate Director, Anson Lowe of Medicine/Gastroenterology and Hepatology), Proteomics/Genomics (Director, David Relman of Medicine/Infectious Diseases;

Associate Director, Bill Robinson of Medicine/Rheumatology and Immunology), Animal Imaging and Tissue Histology (Director, Chris Contag of Pediatrics/Neonatology; Associate Director, Allen Cooper of Medicine/Gastroenterology and Hepatology).

### **Focusing on Early Diagnosis of Cancer**

Even with sophisticated imaging and other diagnostic technologies, cancer is diagnosed today only when many millions to trillions of malignant cells have populated a solid lesion or invaded tissues like the bone marrow. Early detection, diagnosis and intervention could play a critically important role in improving the outcome of cancer. But while the technologies are evolving, they are not available today. Accordingly, the recently announced collaboration between the Canary Foundation, the Stanford Cancer Center and the Department of Radiology to establish a Center of Excellence for Cancer Early Detection is important and exciting. On Tuesday evening, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, Mr. Don Listwin, founder of the Canary Foundation, announced a \$7.5 million gift to this new center, of which \$4 million will support the center; the remaining will support the research of individual faculty (see also: <http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/2007/may30/med-canary-053007.html>). Of particular note, the Department of Radiology, led by Dr. Gary Glazer, has pledged a \$4 million match that will further enhance the research efforts, which will focus initially in genomic medicine and molecular imaging. This is an exciting collaboration that utilizes the strengths of Stanford faculty in innovation and technology development, which are highly relevant to our burgeoning efforts in cancer diagnosis, treatment and prevention.

### **Interest in Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine Continues to Grow**

On Wednesday, May 30<sup>th</sup> the Stanford University Medical Center hosted a program entitled “Harnessing the Power of Stem Cells: A New Medical Frontier” that was attended by over 200 members of the community. There is no question that stem cell biology and regenerative medicine are now regarded as one of the most exciting – and controversial – areas of biomedical research. Stanford has been in the forefront of this effort and has made great strides since the formation of the Stanford Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine, which is led by Dr. Irv Weissman, Virginia and DK Ludwig Professor. It is particularly exciting to witness the number of outstanding Stanford faculty who are engaged in stem cell research across a broad array of biological processes and disease states – a number of whom spoke at this highly successful event. In addition to the keynote address by Dr. Weissman, some of the most challenging and exciting areas of investigation were presented by a highly diversified and outstanding faculty group from across the university, including:

- **Embryonic Stem Cells:** *Hank Greely*, Deane F and Kate Edelman Johnson Professor of Law and *Renee Pera*, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology
- **Cancer:** *Mike Clarke*, Karel H and Avice N. Beekhuis Professor in Cancer Biology and *Steve Quake*, Professor of Bioengineering

- **Autoimmunity:** *Seung Kim*, Associate Professor of Developmental Biology and *Judy Shizuru*, Associate Professor of Medicine
- **Tissue Regeneration:** *Mike Longaker*, Deane P and Louise Mitchell Professor in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
- **Heart Disease:** *Bobby Robbins*, Professor and Chair of Cardiothoracic Surgery and Director of the Stanford Cardiovascular Institute and *Joe Wu*, Assistant Professor of Radiology and of Medicine
- **Neurological Diseases:** *Theo Palmer*, Associate Professor Neurosurgery and *Gary Steinberg*, Bernard and Ronni Lacroute-William Randolph Hearst Professor and Chair of Neurosurgery and Neurosciences

Particularly exciting is the fact that more than half of these faculty have joined Stanford since the Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine Institute efforts began in earnest. Equally important are the breadth of scholarship and the inclusion of interdisciplinary skills and backgrounds that forge new opportunities for discovery and that, in time, will translate those discoveries to improvements in the lives of adults and children. It is also important to note that this group is only a small portion of the Stanford faculty now studying stem cell biology – many of whom now benefit from the funds being provided by the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine. We can look forward to the enhancement and enrichment of those efforts in the years ahead. And while we must be careful not to over promise as to when discoveries will impact human disease I am confident that this will happen and that Stanford will be a leader in transforming this important new field of medicine and science.

## **Violence, Injury and Death Among the Young**

While a great part of our attention and focus in academic medical centers is devoted to the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease – and to better understanding fundamental biological processes – the major causes of death among teenagers are accidents, injuries and violence, including suicide. This was well illustrated in the May 23rd presentation by Dr. Edward Cornwell, Associate Professor of Anesthesiology and Critical Care Medicine and Director of the Adult Trauma Service at Johns Hopkins on “A Trauma Surgeon’s Perspective on Youth Violence”. In his inspiring presentation and his responses to “5 Questions” (see: <http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/2007/may16/med-cornwell-051607.html>) Dr. Cornwell described how his experiences as a trauma surgeon prompted him to develop community programs in Baltimore in an attempt to help engage teenagers and young adults to reduce gang and community violence. One must admire and praise such a dedicated physician who is willing to go beyond the traditional borders of the medical center to help educate, inform and hopefully motivate vulnerable youth to amend their life styles and escape from the “culture of violence.”

While such efforts are important, I cannot help but express concern that their impact will be overshadowed by some of the societal issues that promote violence and by the ready availability and ease of acquiring guns. This was all too sadly illustrated in the horrible shootings that recently occurred at Virginia Tech, but they occur on different scales and with less notice virtually every day in the streets of cities around this nation. Sadly, better gun control, which would almost certainly impact on some of this violence, remains beyond the political and, dare I say moral, will of this nation. And yet, if effective gun control policies were established and implemented it is most likely that Dr. Cornwell's efforts would be made simpler – and that violent deaths due to gunshot injuries would decline.

To a not insignificant degree we are increasingly immune to violence, since it comes across our TV each day in the inflicted deaths that occur in global communities – or in the wars between and within nations. So important is this matter that the next issue of Stanford Medicine will be devoted to the topic of “War” – and will be available later this month.

### **Medical Faculty Prominent as University Faculty Award Honorees**

Faculty excellence is measured in many ways, among which are major awards and honors. And what makes Stanford so great is the quality of its faculty and students. Each year the President and Provost honor major award recipients and newly elected members of national academies. This year 121 faculty members from across the university were so honored – ranging from Nobel Prizes and major professional or society honors to election to distinguished honorary societies and academies. We should all be proud to be members of such an outstanding community of scholarship and excellence. I am also proud to note that 50 of these 121 awards were among faculty in the School of Medicine – many of whom I mentioned in prior Dean's Newsletters. Congratulations to all.

### **Upcoming Events**

Once again the very popular Outdoor Summer Science Talks are being scheduled at the Cantor Arts Museum. Everyone is invited to attend these informative sessions, which are free and open to the public.

Outdoor Science Talk 1 - Thursday, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 7pm

**Regenerative Medicine: What Is It? Where Do We Stand? Where Are We Going?** with Dr. Michael T. Longaker.

Outdoor Science Talk 2 – Thursday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 7pm

**Recent Advances in Heart Surgery** with Dr. Robert Robbins.

Outdoor Science Talk 3 – Thursday, July 26, 7pm

**Cool Hands, Better Performance** with Professor H. Craig Heller.

Outdoor Science Talk 4 – Thursday, August, 9<sup>th</sup>, 7pm

**Drugs: One Size Does Not Fit All** with Dr. Russ Altman

## **Awards and Honors**

*Dr. Sarah S. Donaldson*, Catherine and Howard Avery Professor and Associate Chair and Residency Program Director for the Department of Radiation Oncology, has just received the Gold Medal from the American College of Radiology. Prior recipients include Marie Curie, as well as former Stanford faculty Robert Reid Newell, Henry Kaplan, and Malcolm Bagshaw. Congratulations, Dr. Donaldson.

*Dr. William J. Maloney*, Elsbach-Richards Professor in Surgery just been elected to serve as President of the HIP Society starting in 2009. Congratulations, Dr. Maloney.

*Dr. Raymond L. Hintz*, Department of Pediatrics Professor Emeritus, has been awarded The Human Growth Foundation 2007 Lifetime Achievement Award for his outstanding contributions to the field of pediatric endocrinology and growth. The Human Growth Foundation is a non-profit organization, composed of patients, families, and medical professionals, whose mission is to help individuals with disorders of growth and growth hormone through research, education, support, and advocacy. Congratulations, Dr. Hintz.

*Richard W. Tsien*, George D. Smith Professor of Molecular and Cellular Physiology at Stanford, has just received the 2007 Gill Award at the annual meeting of the Linda and Jack Gill Center for Biomolecular Science at Indiana University Bloomington, in honor of his career-long contributions to the field of neuroscience.

## **Appointments and Promotions**

- *Penny Gardner* has been promoted to Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor of Pediatrics, effective 5/1/07.
- *Theodore A. Jardetsky* has been appointed to Professor of Structural Biology, effective 6/01/07.
- *John K. Salisbury* has been reappointed to Professor (Research) of Computer Science and Surgery, effective 9/01/07.
- *Carla Shatz* has been appointed to Professor of Biological Sciences and of Neurobiology, effective 6/01/07.