

Dean's Newsletter

April 2, 2001

Beginning

Today marks my first “official” day as a member of the Stanford University community. I am enormously pleased to be here and will do my best to help serve the Medical School, Medical Center and University. In order to keep you informed of the many issues and challenges that are going on, I will use this email Newsletter to communicate with you about important issues – at least as I am seeing them. In turn, I will welcome any comments or suggestions that members of the faculty, student body or staff wish to offer.

During the past months I have spent considerable time meeting with faculty, department chairs and students at Stanford as well as medical school, hospital, and university administrators and trustees. I have tried to listen carefully to the issues felt to be most important to the Stanford community and I have begun to offer some of my views and vision for the future. As part of this information exchange, I developed and then circulated a list of strategic initiatives to department chairs and faculty leaders some weeks ago as a vehicle to shaping our collective vision for the future.

There is no doubt that the last several years have been enormously challenging as well as exciting for Stanford University Medical School. In many ways, the events that have transpired during the past several years depict the current polarity of academic medicine. On the negative side, the events and consequences emanating from the Stanford-UCSF merger and de-merger delineate the enormous financial external and internal forces that have been impacting academic medical centers during the last decade. At the positive pole, the incredible contributions to new knowledge by faculty, along with the exceptional clinical care delivered to children and adults and the quality and contributions of remarkable students provides a promissory note of the incredible opportunities that lie ahead.

Without doubt, the financial challenges impacting academic medical centers today are significant and unrelenting. The impact of some of these pressures was underscored by an article in the San Francisco Chronicle and the San Jose Mercury News on Friday, March 30th. It is imperative that the appropriate efforts are made to stabilize and optimize every facet of the medical center that is within our control and which improves our financial position without impacting the quality of clinical care and missions in education and research. I know that Dr. Gene Bauer is committed to achieve these objectives. It is equally imperative that we work to change the external forces impacting our school and medical center, through advocacy and public education efforts with the patients and families, employers, insurers and state and federal government. Such efforts are essential and will help assure that the exceptional contributions of our research and education programs can be fulfilled. I pledge to work on your behalf to help facilitate some of these changes. However, they can only be achieved if we work together for the mission of our school, medical center and university.

In order to assure that we can work closely together I believe it is important that we define our mission clearly in conjunction with the overarching goals we seek to achieve. Accordingly, I am going to take the liberty of offering my views as shared recently with department chairs and senior faculty:

Mission:

To be a leading research-intensive School of Medicine that improves the health of adults and children through education and biomedical research.

Overarching Goals:

1. To make Stanford the national leader in the reformation and rejuvenation of research intensive Medical Schools in the education and career development of thought leaders.
2. To transform the future of biomedical research by novel and innovative alignments and collaborations between basic and clinical scientists and through interdisciplinary partnerships and collaborations with investigators and scholars throughout the University as well as with public and private partners worldwide.
3. To re-engage the public trust in respecting the value and importance of Medical Schools and academic medicine because of their contributions to outstanding patient care through education and research.

In order to achieve these goals, I have outlined ten strategic initiatives in my communication with Department Chairs in February. These focused on (1) Education and Training; (2) Research; (3) Clinical Care; (4) Advocacy, Community Service and Public Policy; (5) Academic and Career Development; (6) Governance, Administration and Finance; (7) Facilities, Infrastructure and Support Systems; (8) Communication; (9) Development/Fundraising; (10) Stanford as a Global Model. I am taking the liberty of highlighting the first five of these in order to share some of my directional signals with you. I will welcome your input and during the next weeks work I will review these with various members of our community to further prioritize them and develop the timelines for achieving them. However, in order to engage faculty and students in this process, I want to outline them with you at this very early juncture.

I. Education and Training

1. Carry out a comprehensive review and renewal of the medical education curriculum with the overriding goal of educating future thought leaders by focusing on the development of physician-scientists and leaders in academic medicine and biomedical research, as well as related leadership opportunities in the public and private sectors. To achieve this it is necessary to define the core competencies of requisite knowledge that serve as the essential underpinnings for all MD students. This platform should then permit creative pathways for interdisciplinary education and individualized career development, including, for example, opportunities in: Basic and clinical sciences (broadly defined) including also bioengineering, computer sciences, biocomputation, informatics; Public Health/International Affairs; Advocacy/Public Policy/Government; Education; Law; Arts and Social Sciences; Religion and Ethics; Business/Health Care Financing
2. Value the importance of outstanding clinical training at Stanford Medical Center and its valued affiliates at the VA Hospital and Santa Clara Medical Center in order to foster excellent clinical skills and knowledge in students and faculty.
3. Sustain and enhance the most outstanding Medical School-based Graduate Education Program which attracts the best students and that prepares them for success as leaders in academia or the public and/or private sector.
4. Create opportunities for graduate students to be acquainted with the principles and practice of clinical medicine in order to foster an understanding and interest in translational clinical research.

5. Develop a continuum for training physician-scientists that extends throughout medical school, graduate medical education and fellowship training. Such a program might be anchored in the M.D./Ph.D. curriculum. Further, efforts to expand the M.D./Ph.D. training program should be sought.
6. Review, expand, and seek to endow the Medical Scholars Program.
7. Seek new funding source to support educators as well as Medical and Graduate School education programs.
8. Address faculty education opportunities that foster knowledge exchange, communication and research opportunities among basic and clinical investigators and clinicians, including, for example: Faculty retreats can help promote dialogue, collegiality and collaboration. In addition, a robust role for the “teaching attending” which includes members of both the basic and clinical science communities can help forge new alignments.
9. Review and expand efforts in Continuing Medical Education to optimally engage and align community physicians with Stanford Medical School and Medical Center.

II. Research

1. Continue to develop and enhance excellence in basic and clinical investigation in conjunction with seeking ways to foster interdisciplinary research efforts that are either programmatic or represent areas of opportunity
 - a.) Several programmatic areas have already been defined including: biocomputation, bioengineering, genetics/genomics, cancer biology, microbiology and host defense, neuroscience, and cardiovascular science. Wherever possible, there should be an alignment of basic and clinical research opportunities with the “centers of excellence” areas being developed through the Child Health Initiative and Stanford Hospital strategic initiatives.
 - b.) Stimulate areas of special opportunities – especially those which pair MD’s with PhD’s, to stimulate translational research.
2. Develop an Office of Clinical Research to support academic alignment and an infrastructure that facilitates clinical investigation ranging from translational research to clinical trials, health outcomes, epidemiology and behavioral research.
3. Assess and overcome impediments to recruiting the best graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and junior faculty. Examples might include salary equity and housing.
4. Initiate a regular seminar for senior fellows/junior faculty to present research work to Dean, Senior Associate Deans and responsible Department/Division Chairs in order to provide interaction and exposure to Stanford’s “rising stars”.
5. Critically review space, facilities and utilization to develop a 5-10 year space plan.

III. Clinical Care

1. Value the important role that clinicians contribute to the community of excellence within a research-intensive academic medical center, including the VA Medical Center, Santa Clara Medical Center and other affiliated institutions.
2. With VP, CEO’s and Chairs, evaluate strategic centers of excellence for clinical development and opportunity in adult and pediatric area.
3. With VP and Senior Associate Deans, seek ways to optimize and enhance education, research and clinical care goals and initiatives with community partners and affiliated institutions, especially the VA and Santa Clara Medical Centers.
4. With VP, CEO’s and Chairs, determine the expectations, incentives and rewards for physicians who are clinicians, clinician/teachers, clinician-scientists.

5. Critical evaluation of finance and administration and related funds flow between the medical center, medical school and university.
6. With VP, CEO's and Chairs, critically assess the financial and organization structures guiding in-patient and ambulatory care in order to optimize the efficiency, quality and service of care delivery in tandem with the education and training of students, residents, fellows and faculty.
7. Evaluate the development of a faculty practice plan or related business models under the leadership of the Senior Associate Deans for Clinical Affairs.

IV. **Advocacy, Community Service and Public Policy**

1. Use the office of the Dean to engage Community, State and Federal government around issues impacting the missions of the Medical School and Medical Center.
2. Promote opportunities for students and faculty to improve community benefits and relationships in order to align the school and medical center with local and regional neighbors and communities.

V. **Academic and Career Development**

1. Critically reassess and, where appropriate work to change, the current guidelines and structure for academic appointments and promotions. The goal should be to recognize and enhance career development that values the important roles played by clinicians, researchers and teacher/scholars.
2. Assess and optimize mentoring at all levels of career development.
3. Create an Office for Women in Medicine and Science which oversees career development, salary equity, recruitment/retention and the diverse challenges and needs of the workplace.
4. Create an Office for Minority Student and Faculty Diversity that works in parallel with the Office for Women in Medicine and Science to enhance and promote the same issues.
5. Seek ways to overcome impediments to achieving more optimal work/family balance within the School and Medical Center. For example, this should include an assessment of services for infant, child and sick-child on-site care.
6. Critically reassess the reappointment process surrounding the review of Departments and their Chairs.

Achieving these goals will take work, coordination and time. Moreover, faculty, students and other members of our community will propose additional challenge or opportunities to pursue. Naturally, it will require prioritization and focus to achieve our goals, but we must begin with a plan of direction. I have therefore outlined some of the broad directions that I think are important and look forward to working with you to help achieve these and others that we deem important. There is no doubt that we face some difficult choices and challenges but I do believe that if we are as unified as we can be, the future can be bright, and Stanford University Medical School can be the source of illumination.