

# IN TOUCH

*An update from the dean of The University of Texas Medical School at Houston*

July 22, 2011

Dear alumni, parents, and friends;

This year the Medical School is celebrating its 40th anniversary, so it was a historical occasion as we graduated 240 members of the Class of 2011 at the George R. Brown Convention Center May 27. This is the largest graduating class of the Medical School, which is significant as we have increased our class size to help meet the growing needs of physicians for our communities.



*The Medical School's founding dean, Dr. Cheves Smythe, and I helped celebrate the school's 40th anniversary with a special school-wide party Nov. 18.*

This fall we will accept 240 incoming students – our largest first-year class – in an attempt to help Texas bridge the physician shortage. You may know, Texas ranks 42 out of the states for number of physicians per capita. As our population continues to grow, our ratio of doctor-to-community-member continues to widen.

Rest assured that your medical school is not reducing standards as we work to shore up the medical populace. In fact, our students have become increasingly competitive over the years, and they are excelling thanks to the dedication of our educators. On the national USMLE test, our students continue to best the

national average – ranking in the top 20 percent nationwide – and are matching with leading residency programs throughout the state and nation. We can all be proud of their achievements in the classroom and with their patients.

This year the Medical School made a concerted effort toward improving patient safety and health care quality, ensuring that this emphasis resonates throughout our curriculum for our students, house staff, and in our patient care settings. We have appointed Dr. Eric Thomas and Dr. Jon Tyson as the leaders of the new Office for Healthcare Quality and Safety, which will oversee this priority in all of our clinical departments. A vice chair for quality has been named in each clinical department to



*Dr. Eric Thomas*



*Dr. Jon Tyson*



1. Dr. Chip Souba, '78, recipient of the Alumni Association's Distinguished Alumni Award in 2007, addresses the crowd as one of the guest speakers at the Nov. 18 celebration.
2. Fred Zeidman, chair of the Development Board, visits with State Rep. Ellen Cohen; Dr. Roberta Ness, dean of the School of Public Health; and Barry Lewis, co-chair of the Medical School Advisory Council.
3. Dr. Henry Strobel gives an invocation before the guest speakers begin.
4. Former deans Drs. Louis Faillace, Cheves Smythe, John Ribble, current Dean Giuseppe Colasurdo, Maximilian Buja and Jerry Wolinsky stop for a historic photo.
5. All members of the Medical School community enjoy the day with a Texas barbecue lunch in Webber Plaza.



## GRADUATION *Class of 2011*



*Commencement  
on May 27, 2011  
graduated our largest  
class - 240 students.*



lead specific efforts and goals directed at enhancing patient safety and improved outcomes.

In this new era of medicine, where we speak of the “health care team,” it is more important than ever to focus on quality and safety. I am certain that this renewed effort will do just that, and I look forward to keeping you apprised of our results. Our school has been recognized by the UT System for its innovation in improved patient safety, and with Memorial Hermann – Texas Medical Center, we have been recognized nationally as a top clinical performance leader. Our aim is to always improve.

Research also has been a focus this year as our investigators have worked diligently to innovate and capture new grants. We successfully integrated the Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine for the Prevention of Human Diseases (IMM) into the Medical School, which has further aligned and strengthened our research program. The IMM brings successful investigators in such highly innovative and translational areas as the Center for Molecular Imaging, the Center for Cardiovascular Genetics, the Center for Diabetes and Obesity Research, the Center for Immunology and Autoimmune Diseases, the Center for Stem Cell Biology, the Texas Therapeutics Institute, and the Center for Proteomics and Systems Biology. This new synergy is improving collaborations and efficiencies by sharing resources and building upon productive people and ideas. As Dr. John Hancock, interim director of the IMM, and Dr. David Gorenstein, associate dean for basic science research, remind us, we have always had partnerships with the IMM yet this new alignment is expanding them and helping us to build upon the idea of team-based science in this era of personalized medicine.



*Dr. John Hancock Dr. David Gorenstein*

We also celebrated a milestone in that it was 10 years ago this summer since the devastation of Tropical

Storm Allison. That was a very challenging time in our Medical School's history – the floodwaters wiped out years of research and severely damaged our building, flooding not only the entire basement but also up to a foot of our ground floor. Years of dedication and work by our employees and contractors have brought a silver lining to that terrible storm. As a result, we have a completely redesigned and beautiful new basement and ground floor, which are home to a Surgical and Clinical Skills Center, where our students can train on simulators before interacting with patients, and an advanced gross anatomy lab. Our Learning Resource Center was built from the ground up and features computers, study tools, and rooms for our students 24 hours a day. The new Replacement Research Facility is a six-story building adjacent to the Medical School that is a vibrant home of innovative research. Even the façade of our building was renovated with aquarium glass and submarine doors, and our landscape was redone to keep future floods at bay. Yes, we are stronger and prouder, and better prepared as a result of Allison.

If you have not visited your Medical School in the last 10 years or so, I encourage you to do so. We would love for you to see the changes and innovations of not only our physical structure but also the energy of our students, faculty, and staff. The next reunion for the classes of 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, 1997, and 2002 is tentatively scheduled for June 8-10. The Office of Alumni Affairs will be providing more information, or you may contact 713.500.5065, or [ms.alumni@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:ms.alumni@uth.tmc.edu).

I also have a bit of personal news to share with you. As of April 1, in addition to dean I also have been serving as president *ad interim* of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. I am honored by the opportunity that UT System Chancellor Dr. Francisco Cigarroa and Dr. Ken Shine, executive vice chancellor for health affairs, have given me to show my commitment to this institution. I have received many questions about how I will manage the dual responsibilities of president *ad interim* and Medical School dean. I believe the president's most important job is to work with the leadership team to create a vision and strategic agenda and to empower the deans to manage that vision. I will support the deans' efforts to drive results for their school. Ultimately, what is best for the schools is best for the university, as our true strengths lie in the work being done on each campus. This will be my guiding principle as I approach decisions with school-specific and university-wide impacts. I also will continue to look to our alumni and friends for their support as we weather the outcomes of a tough legislative session and continue to persevere and grow in a challenging economic climate.

Sincerely,



Giuseppe N. Colasurdo, M.D., Dean  
H. Wayne Hightower Distinguished Professor in the Medical Sciences  
David R. Park Professor in Pediatric Medicine

### Stay in touch!

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