A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Every day it is an honor for me to lead our Health Science Center. Today, I am especially proud to recognize you – the men and women who make our university one of the nation’s finest academic health science centers.

As recipients of the Presidential Awards, you represent exceptional achievement in your fields. Through your creativity, perseverance and leadership, you elevate our Health Science Center as a beacon of hope for the sick, the exciting home of healing discoveries and a stimulating environment for students. Congratulations on your accomplishments.

Sincerely,

William L. Henrich, M.D., MACP
President
Professor of Medicine
UT Health Science Center at San Antonio

February 19, 2015

Welcome
President Henrich

Presentation of Awards
Employee Excellence in Service
Clinical Excellence
Teaching Excellence
Junior Research Scholar

Distinguished Scholar Award

Closing
The Presidential Employee Excellence in Service Award honors Health Science Center employees who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to the university. These individuals regularly and consistently exceed expectations. Their overall performance reflects a high level of service, trustworthiness and respect. By developing new processes or improving existing ones, these individuals have significantly improved productivity and cost savings for the university.

Carrie Cooke  
Photographer-Ophthalmic, UT Medicine/Medical Service, Research and Development Plan, School of Medicine

“Time and time again, Ms. Cooke makes the extra effort to show a frightened patient what the images of their eyes look like behind her lenses and through specialized tests, and explains again to the patient what the doctor has told him or her. This truly enhances each patient’s understanding of the disease process and helps to begin the process of recovery. Throughout the day, she has a positive attitude that permeates the clinic and serves to lift the spirits of those who come into her presence.”

– Ouima Richardson, M.H.A., manager-Clinical Operations, Ophthalmology, School of Medicine

Robin Druckman  
Manager, Academic Programs, Office of the Dental Dean, School of Dentistry

“Every day, Robin demonstrates her willingness to fulfill job-related responsibilities and has made a significant positive impact in our ongoing efforts to enhance the processes of the dean’s office and provide optimal service to all departments and programs throughout the School of Dentistry. She exceeds the expectations of her position and demonstrates a commitment to the university’s mission while reflecting the values of the Office of the Dental Dean.”

– Birgit Junfin Glass, D.D.S., M.S., associate dean for academic affairs, Office of the Dental Dean, School of Dentistry

Melissa Mireles  
Development Officer, School of Nursing/Office of Institutional Advancement

“Melissa bends over backward to ensure that faculty, staff, students and guests are connected to the information they are seeking and does so with the greatest warmth and grace. She is committed to presenting the university in the best light and her efforts reflect that each day. In addition to her collegial presence, she will do whatever it takes to execute a task assigned to her, delivering a quality product regardless of the task.”

– Gwen Notestine, director of development, School of Nursing/Office of Institutional Advancement
Laura Monroe
Manager, Clinical Work Flow, UT Medicine/Medical Service, Research and Development Plan, School of Medicine

“Ms. Monroe’s dedication to the Health Science Center can be seen in her ability to excel in the many different roles and initiatives she has been asked to support. She is able to take new initiatives, even where the projects are ill defined due to changes in the national landscape, and create big wins for the university. She is always collaborating and working well with others, and she creates a positive environment while getting things done.”
– Patty McCarroll, senior director of finance and administration, UT Medicine/Medical Service, Research and Development Plan, School of Medicine

Veronica Ortega, B.A., CG(ASCP)CM
Manager, Cytogenetics Lab, Pathology, School of Medicine

“Veronica is the only recipient of the prestigious Best Platform Presentation Award for three consecutive years at the Association of Genetic Technologists’ annual meeting. Because of her efforts, the Health Science Center is a well-known institution for its quality of patient care, excellent academic achievements and unsurpassed scientific advancements. She has an encyclopedic knowledge of protocols and can troubleshoot quickly any issue and resolve it in no time.”
– Gopinrao Velagaleti, Ph.D., professor, Pathology, School of Medicine

Tony Y. Eng, M.D.
Professor/Clinical, Radiation Oncology, School of Medicine

“I was brought to the ER with a massive headache and two days later I was told that I had a golf ball-sized brain tumor that was stage 4 inoperable, untreatable terminal cancer. It was estimated that I had five weeks left to live. Three hours later, Dr. Eng arrived at my bedside and presented the option of very risky radiation treatments to be conducted twice a day, five times a week for five weeks; with this I was told my life may be prolonged by 12 weeks at most. Needless to say, after this treatment, I am here to tell this story 14 years later as Dr. Eng cured me.”
– Michael Rayleigh, a.k.a. “Miracle Mike” and “The One Percent,” patient
Julie Cowan Novak, D.N.Sc., RN, CPNP, FAANP, FAAN
Professor and Vice Dean, Practice Engagement; Joseph and Thelma Crow Endowed Professor; Executive Director, UT Nursing Clinical Enterprise, Student Health Center, and Employee Health and Wellness Clinic; Professor, Pediatrics, School of Medicine; Director, Campus Wellness Activities

“After trials and tribulations with my son’s ear, nose and throat specialist, I was extremely upset knowing that something was wrong and my son, Mitchell, was likely not diagnosed properly. I mentioned the situation to Dr. Novak, and after a few key questions, she provided me with the name of the ideal pediatric ENT who diagnosed him with cholesteatoma, a skin cyst near the middle ear and skull. Mitchell later endured a seven-hour surgical procedure and throughout this process, Dr. Novak educated me about the condition. If it had not been for her, Mitchell’s condition would have worsened, causing a far more devastating outcome than what we have endured. For that, I will be forever grateful to her.”

– Melissa Mireles, parent of patient and development officer, School of Nursing/Office of Institutional Advancement

Vivek Singh, M.D.
Associate Professor/Clinical, Psychiatry, School of Medicine

“When Dr. Singh was recommended to me after having a consultation at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, I thought I would see what he had to offer. Now, six years later, I am still making the trip to San Antonio from Austin regularly because my care with Dr. Singh has offered me a chance to live a life that has allowed me to achieve the level of functioning that I had always hoped was possible but often doubted was truly achievable.”

– Dana Haulotte, patient

The Presidential Teaching Excellence Award is presented to outstanding full-time faculty members who exhibit the finest principles in education. They possess extensive knowledge of their subject material, maintain an awareness of current developments, and incorporate examples from recent literature or clinical experience in the classroom. These faculty members have distinguished themselves not only through teaching methods in the classroom, but also by serving as role models and mentors to students outside class. They have made a significant contribution to the education and development of future health care professionals.
Alex Bishop, D.Phil.
Associate Professor, Department of Cellular and Structural Biology/Greehey Children’s Cancer Research Institute, School of Medicine

“Dr. Bishop’s research was the primary reason I chose to attend the Health Science Center to pursue my doctorate. He taught me to think critically about science and encouraged me to try obtaining my own funding and gave valuable insight into this process. He inspired me to think outside of the box and not be afraid of failure, but most of all Dr. Bishop taught me to believe in my science and myself.”

– Adam Brown, Ph.D., postdoctoral fellow, Duke University

Gregory Ernst, Ph.D., PT
Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Therapy, School of Health Professions

“Dr. Ernst prepared me well for the area of clinical practice, but what makes him a continued inspiration to me is that, despite all the letters that follow his name, he has not slowed his passion to make the lives of people better. His mentorship during my research experience whetted my appetite for physical therapy research and is in large part why I am a researcher and adjunct faculty member with the U.S. Army-Baylor University Doctoral Program in Physical Therapy today.”

– Francis Bisogni, P.T., D.P.T., research physical therapist, Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medical Research

David P. Cappelli, D.M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D.
Professor and Director, Research Division; Director, Dental Public Health Residency, Comprehensive Dentistry, School of Dentistry

“Whether it is by increasing awareness of the positive preventative impact of water fluoridation and sealants or remaining vigilant for signs of abuse, Dr. Cappelli expanded our minds on the responsibilities and roles a dentist carries for the public. He taught us the idea of possessing a social conscience, an understanding that our skills and the ability to help is not limited to the immediate patient in our chair, but can be broadened to include the community we serve.”

– Alexander Ling, third-year dental student, School of Dentistry

Janna Lesser, Ph.D., RN
Associate Professor, Family and Community Health Systems, School of Nursing

“From the very first day of clinicals, Dr. Lesser encouraged and indeed required that we use our knowledge, personalities and people-skills to interact with our patients. Her faith in us as students and her trust in our skills led us to believe in ourselves. That type of education is rare and is worth more than gold. Because of her impact on me, I have in turn helped others find their voices as great psychiatric nurses.”

– Rebecca Jeff Thurston, B.S.N., RN, charge nurse, Methodist Specialty and Transplant Hospital
The Presidential Junior Research Scholar Award honors remarkable investigators at the Health Science Center who began their independent research within the past five years. These scientists demonstrate mastery in their fields and show significant potential for continued success. The award recipients have made major contributions to theory, research and practice, and they have earned national recognition for their outstanding achievements.

William S. Moore, D.D.S., M.S. 
Director, Radiology Clinics, Comprehensive Dentistry, School of Dentistry

“Through small group sessions in Dr. Moore’s classes, my classmates and I feel much more reassured about our ability to work with patients in our clinical years, which is the ultimate goal for professors. His interest in our personal success and dental radiology makes me excited to become a dentist one day. Because of my great experiences with Dr. Moore, I am now inspired to pursue academia in the future so that I can impact students in the same ways that he does every day.”

– Kim Do, president, Dental Class of 2017

Christopher Moreland, M.D., M.P.H., FACP 
Assistant Professor/Clinical, Internal Medicine, School of Medicine

“As residents, we are exposed to many different styles of practice during our intern year, but most junior residents have consistently cited Dr. Moreland as a figure that they try and model their practice after. His focus on the education of medical students of all years and internal medicine residents is leaving a strong influence that will cause a ripple effect larger than he will be able to see.”

– Alfredo Camero Jr., M.D., third-year resident, School of Medicine

Robert Svatek, M.D., M.S.C.I. 
Assistant Professor, Urology, School of Medicine

“At any given moment, Dr. Svatek has had more than 10 clinical trials active, with a peak of 16 at one time. His trials leadership has been noticeable on the national level and has been well received to the point that he has fast-tracked several clinical trials. Most urologic oncologists would be happy to reach his level of achievement by the time they retire—but he has done it within the first four years of his appointment to the faculty. There is little doubt he will be a major leader in the field of urology and we are very fortunate to have him here in San Antonio.”

– Ron Rodriguez, M.D., Ph.D., professor and chairman, Urology, School of Medicine
The Presidential Distinguished Scholar Award represents the very best in academic achievement. This award honors an individual who exhibits superior scholarship and maintains the highest standards of professionalism. This award also recognizes significant contributions to theory, research and practice, a national or international reputation, a sustained record of extramural support, and major additions to scientific literature and health advancement.

After earning degrees in psychology and chemistry at the University of Kansas, Dr. John Hart earned his doctoral degree in biochemistry from the University of Texas at Austin. He completed postdoctoral training at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the University of Texas at Austin. He later joined the Health Science Center, where he continues to serve as professor of biochemistry and as a research health scientist at the Audie L. Murphy VA Hospital of the South Texas Veterans Health Care System.

Since 1999, Dr. Hart has served as the director of the X-ray Crystallography Core Laboratory, which provides a powerful technology to researchers at the Health Science Center that allows them to determine the fine molecular structures of the proteins on which they work. This technology has recently had a large translational impact by using these protein structures to rationally design small molecule therapeutic agents to treat different diseases. Through his work, he has made seminal contributions to several new areas of research.

Dr. Hart’s lab obtained the first structure of Dbr1, the primary enzyme that causes debranching of the lariat intermediate in RNA splicing, a process that is central to the expression of most proteins in the body. This has broad scientific interest as it was named “breakthrough of the year” by leaders in the field and also has been specifically implicated as a causative agent in many cases of Lou Gehrig’s disease, and thus presents a new target for therapeutic intervention. Additionally, in a tour-de-force combination of epidemiology, genetics, biochemistry and structural biology, Dr. Hart was a crucial part of a collaboration with Phillip LoVerde, Ph.D., professor of biochemistry and pathology, in identifying the target for oxamniquine action against Shistosoma mansoni, a parasite that afflicts more than 200 million people worldwide. By defining the structure of the drug’s target (a sulfotransferase) with the drug bound to it, it provided the critical insight into how resistance to the drug was acquired and opened the door to designing a new generation of drugs that can circumvent resistance and expand their effectiveness as broad-spectrum anti-parasitics. Another example of his work includes a collaboration with Joel Baseman, Ph.D., professor of immunology and microbiology. Dr. Hart solved the structure of the Community Acquired Respiratory Distress Syndrome toxin from mycoplasma pneumonia, which opens many possibilities for therapeutic intervention against acute airway diseases, including asthma.

The breadth and impact of Dr. Hart’s contributions are impressive and a real tribute to his collaborative nature and dedicated work ethic. His findings have been published in Science, the Journal of the American Chemical Society, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, and many other prominent journals. He is clearly a major intellectual force behind research projects, as his insights into the structures have greatly enhanced the outcomes of the work and their funding potential. It is anticipated that a flood of work relating to the development of new diagnostics and therapeutic drugs stemming from these discoveries will be seen in the near future.

In addition to his work in the laboratory, Dr. Hart is heavily involved in leadership roles within the Department of Biochemistry by serving as chair of the graduate student Qualifying Exam Committee, and the Biochemistry Promotion and Tenure and Post Tenure Evaluation committees. He also is a leader within the Health Science Center through his services as a member of the scientific advisory board to the Vice President for Research. He received the Ewing Halsell President’s Council Distinguished Chair in 2006, the Presidential Junior Research Scholar in 2003 and other notable awards.

Dr. Hart represents the best in what we hope our faculty will strive for, and as such, I feel is most deserving of the honor of Presidential Distinguished Scholar.

– Bruce J. Nicholson, Ph.D., professor and chair of biochemistry, School of Medicine

P. John Hart, Ph.D.
Ewing Halsell President’s Council Distinguished Chair, Director, X-ray Crystallography Core Laboratory, Biochemistry, School of Medicine
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With Appreciation