

Quarterly Alumni Newsletter, Spring 2014

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The *GSBS Alumni Newsletter* is published quarterly by the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Office of Postgraduate Affairs (OPA). Inquiries, comments and class notes items may be directed to the OPA by calling 409-772-2665; writing to 301 University Boulevard, Galveston, TX 77555-1050; faxing to 409-747-0772; or by email to atropea@utmb.edu.

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Niesel Appointed Graduate School Dean

Early in March, UTMB announced the appointment of David W. Niesel, PhD as vice president and dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS). He has served as interim VP and dean of the GSBS since September 1, after his predecessor, Cary Cooper, PhD, retired.

“Dr. Niesel is the best person to lead our graduate school. He’s already demonstrated his skills and expertise in so many areas,” said Dr. Danny O. Jacobs, executive vice president and UTMB provost, in the announcement to the university. Jacobs said Niesel has been a strong advocate of increasing the diversity of the biomedical workforce. He is the principal investigator of two NIH-sponsored training programs for minorities and the disadvantaged, “Bridges to the Doctorate” and the post baccalaureate “PREP” program.

Niesel began his career at UTMB in 1983 in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology. He filled the position of interim department chair in 2000 and was appointed the permanent chair in 2004. He currently holds the J.P. Saunders Professorship in Graduate Biomedical Sciences and the Lawrence E. Ethridge, Jr. Professorship in the graduate school.

Under his leadership, the research profile of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology rose to a top 10 ranking in NIH funding among microbiology and immunology departments nationally. In 2013, the department ranked No. 5 in NIH funding.

“Dr. Niesel has an excellent reputation in the international research community,” said Jacobs, who also is dean of UTMB’s School of Medicine. “He has had experiments conducted on the space shuttle. He holds four patents, has trained and mentored graduate students, undergraduate students and postdoctoral research fellows who have greatly benefited from his scientific, administrative and teaching wisdom.”

Niesel’s current research involves *in vivo* models of gene/protein expression by the respiratory pathogen *Streptococcus pneumoniae* and facultative intracellular bacteria (*Francisella tularensis*, *Shigella flexneri*, *Salmonella typhimurium*). His research group is also investigating alterations in gene/protein expression and alterations to the virulence potential of *S. pneumoniae* in a low shear environment. Plus, the Niesel lab is developing a highly sensitive and rapid method for the detection of antibiotic resistance in bacterial pathogens.

“I am honored to accept this appointment,” said Niesel, “and eager to work with our faculty, staff and alumni to further enhance the solid reputation UTMB has earned in the biomedical education community. And to do that, I believe we must embrace a model of convergence—partnering with physical sciences, engineering, clinical science and computational disciplines to enhance graduate training.”

Niesel received his Ph.D. from North Carolina State University in 1980 and completed postdoctoral research fellowships at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in Research Triangle Park, N.C., and in the Department of Microbiology at the University of Texas in Austin.

Niesel is a co-founder of UTMB’s dynamic Summer Undergraduate Research Program, which is in its 22nd year, as well as the Committee for Career Development for graduate students and postdoctoral scientists. He is also a member of the Center for Tropical Medicine and Sealy Center for Structural Biology, Institute for Human Infections and Immunity and a senior member of the Sealy Center for Vaccine Development. Niesel is co-creator and co-host of *Medical Discovery News*, a radio show that is syndicated and broadcast on more than 110 stations in 16 states, Puerto Rico and three countries. This program and companion newspaper column, which is published in five Texas newspapers, highlights compelling advances in biomedical research to the public and has won national and regional awards.

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U. T. System chancellor steps down

In a letter to the UT System community on February 10, Chancellor Francisco G. Cigarroa, M.D., announced that he is stepping down from the position, but staying until his successor is in place. He will become head of Pediatric Transplant Surgery at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSC-SA), returning to patient care and teaching.

“In February 2009,” he wrote, “I knew the day would come when I would return to pediatric transplant surgery. Having spent the past 14 years in administration for the U. T. System, first as president of The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSC-SA) and now as chancellor, the time has come for me to return to my lifelong love and passion for the care and treatment of patients full time.”

The new position allows him to return to his passion. “I view it as an important calling at an ideal time,” he said. But he believes he leaves the university system in a good state: “Thanks to your extraordinary work, U. T. institutions continue to excel in great teaching, new discoveries, and much more. One of my most cherished



experiences has been the opportunity to spend considerable time on campuses meeting with faculty and students. I learned more from you in these visits than I could have from any other source.”

His decision was influenced by family, he said. “I will be able to convey gratitude and respect to my parents for the sacrifices they made for my siblings and me to spend considerable years in school to train as physicians. My father continues to practice medicine daily at age 89, and three of my brothers are physicians. It is time to honor what my parents did for me by returning to my father’s and my first love, the practice of medicine.” He added that he will continue to be part of the UT family as a faculty member at UTHSC-SA, concluding:

“Thank you for your support and friendship and for all you do every day to make the U. T. System one of America’s finest systems of higher education.”

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Photos by Jessika Davidson, Office of Student Life

GSO members serve up shrimp, crawfish, sausage, potatoes and rice, left. Students peel shrimp and shell crawfish amid Mardi Gras decorations.

Students mix up a big party

What do you get when you mix 200 pounds of potatoes, 125 pounds of crawfish, 200 pounds of shrimp, and 80 pounds of sausage?

A giant Mardi Gras party, graduate students’ style.

The GSBS Graduate Student Organization (GSO) hosted its annual Mardi Gras Thank Goodness It’s Thursday party on Feb. 20. The Graduate School and the UTMB Student Government Association financed the festivities.

Graduate student volunteers needed all day Feb. 20 to prepare the food for the 5:30-8:30 pm traditional crawfish boil: more than a quarter-ton of potatoes, crawfish, shrimp, and sausage, plus water, seasonings, and propane.

In total, 350-450 UTMB students (representing all schools) enjoyed this annual tribute to the Mardi Gras season as a safe, family-friendly alternative to other Galveston festivities.

Organizers were GSO officers Brian Mann, President (Experimental Pathology), David Briley, Vice President (Neuroscience), Sergio Rodriguez, Treasurer (Microbiology & Immunology), and Shannon Ronca (also ExPath).

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Society of Cell Biology holds first student symposium

The Society of Cell Biology (SCB) and the Cell Biology Graduate Program presented the inaugural Symposium for the Cell Biology Graduate Program on March 4 in Levin Hall. The centerpiece for the day was the Mason Guest Memorial Lecture, “Cardiac Reprogramming: From developmental biology to regeneration,” presented by Deepak Srivastava, MD.

Srivastava is Younger Family Director of the Gladstone Institute of Cardiovascular Disease, director of the Roddenberry Stem Cell Center for Biology and Medicine at Gladstone, and Wilma and Adeline Pirag Distinguished Professor in Pediatric Developmental Cardiology at the University of California at San Francisco.

Officers of the SCB, Daniel Jackson, Charles Umbaugh and Malaney O’Connell, organized the symposium with the assistance of Pomila Singh, PhD, cell biology program director, and Aurora Galvan, program coordinator.

The day began with five 15-minute oral presentations on one of two themes: Cell Biology of Cancer and Wound Healing and Cell Biology of Environmental Toxicology, Steroids and Neurodegeneration. Two prizes were awarded in each category; prize winners are listed below.

The oral sessions were chaired by Cell Biology graduate program students, Luke Koong, Javier Allende-Labastida and Katherine Ruppert (First oral session) and Mostafa Borahay, Stephanie Moya and Anita Reno (second oral session).

The poster session, “Advances in Translational Cell Biology,” followed, with awards for the top three poster presentations and a Sigma Xi award for the overall best presentation. Winners are listed below.

The society also recognized its members for service, listed below.

Cell biology of cancer and wound healing: Malaney O’Connell, first place, and Mostafa Borahay, second.

Cell biology of environmental toxicology, steroids, and neurodegeneration: Daniel Jackson, first place, and Rebekah Viner, second.

Advances in translational cell biology-poster session: C. Sam Umbaugh, first place, Arham Ali, second, and Uylissa Rodriguez, third. The Sigma Xi award for overall best presentation went to Daniel Jackson.

Outstanding service awards: Javier Allende Labastida, first-year student, C. Sam Umbaugh, second-year, Malaney O’Connell, third-year, and Daniel Jackson, fourth-year.

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Presidential Scholars in the Graduate School flank Dr. Nathan Wolfe after his seminar March 18 in Levin Hall. Pictured, from left, are Julia Gerson, Brian Mann, David Briley, Wolfe, Krista Versteeg and Meghan Hermance.

Photos by Claiborne Fant



Presidential Scholars host noted virologist for seminar

A noted virologist on the faculty of Stanford University, Dr. Nathan Wolfe presented a seminar on “Global Surveillance for the Emergence of Novel Viruses” as a guest of UTMB’s Presidential Scholars. The presentation March 18 was followed by a reception for students, staff and faculty.

Wolfe’s research focuses on identifying novel virus agents and preventing future pandemics. He is the founder and CEO of Metabiota, based in San Francisco, a profit-making company focused on furthering scientific research, and the non-profit Global Viral, aimed at further exploration of the microbial world.



An alumnus of Harvard University, Wolfe received his doctorate in Immunology & Infectious Diseases in 1998. A recipient of a Fulbright fellowship in 1997, he was awarded the National Institutes of Health (NIH) International Research Scientist Development Award in 1999 and the prestigious NIH Director's Pioneer Award in 2005. In 2009, Wolfe was chosen as a National Geographic Emerging Explorer and in 2010 was named a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum.

Wolfe has been recognized by TIME magazine's "2011 Time 100" and Rolling Stone's "100 Agents of Change" in 2009 as well as many others. He is the author of *The Viral Storm: The Dawn of a New Pandemic Age*. More information can be found at nathanwolfe.net.

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CTSA Forum showcases full spectrum of UTMB research

More than 400 people attended UTMB's second Annual Clinical & Translational Research Forum on February 12 in Levin Hall. The Office of the Provost and the Institute for Translational Sciences (ITS) co-sponsored the event, showcasing the full spectrum of research at UTMB, as well as the resources provided by the institution's core laboratories, centers, and institutes.

Approximately 140 projects were featured, ranging from laboratory and animal experiments, to patient studies and clinical trials, to community and outcomes research. By sharing information and encouraging collaboration, the forum supports translation of lab discoveries towards new diagnostics or treatments as well as the translation of feedback from patient populations and communities.

This year's Forum featured scientific advances related to asthma, infectious disease, burn injury, aging, cancer, addiction, and obesity, among others. Of 136 abstracts presented 67 were supported by the ITS. The winners follow (those associated with the ITS are marked with asterisks).

Students and Postdoctoral Fellows competed for two Outstanding Poster Awards, sponsored by the GSBS and Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society, UTMB Chapter. ITS-sponsored Research Excellence Awards went to students and fellows conducting research in various aspects of translation.

Outstanding Postdoctoral Fellow Poster

Carla Kantara - TP508 Mitigates Radiotherapy-Induced Brain Tissue Damage by Stimulating the Proliferation of Neuroprogenitor Cells

Outstanding Student Poster

****Jesse Erasmus*** (HPTM Graduate Program) - Eilat Virus as a Vaccine Vector

Research Excellence Awards

T0: Basic Science Discovery, T1: Translation to Humans, T2: Translation to Patients, T3: Translation to Practice, T4: Translation to Population.

T0, Fellow - ***Yonju Ha*** - Endoplasmic Reticulum Stress-Regulated CXCL10/CXCR3 Pathway Mediates Inflammation and Neuronal Injury after Retinal Ischemia

T0, Student - ****Latham Fink*** (MD/PhD Student, Addiction MTT) - A Predisposition Toward Inherent Impulsivity is Associated with Elevated 5-HT_{2A}R Expression

T1, Fellow - ****Gul Mehnaz Mustafa*** (Hepatitis/Hepatocellular Ca MTT) - Discovery and Validation of Serum Protein Biomarker Candidates for Early Detection of Hepatocellular Carcinoma (HCC)

T1, Student - ****Maria Chondronikola*** (Aging MTT) - The Functional Role of Brown Adipose Tissue in Whole-Body Lipid Metabolism in Humans

T2/T3, Fellow - ****Jessica Tanksley*** (Burn MTT) - The Combined Administration of Insulin and Propranolol Controls Post-Burn Hyperglycemia in Pediatric Patients

T2/T3, Student - ***Zakkoyya Lewis*** - Activity Monitor-Based Health Intervention Increases Fitness in Older Adults: A Pre-Experimental Pilot Study

T4, Fellow - ****Gabriela Vargas*** (Recent Graduate, Clinical Science Graduate Program) - Timing of Chemotherapy and Primary Tumor Resection in Older Patients with Stage IV Colorectal Cancer

T4, Student - *Elizabeth Jaramillo (Clinical Science Graduate Program) - Variation among Primary Care Physicians in Prostate-Specific Antigen Screening of Older Men

For more information about the research, research categories and resources presented at the event, visit http://www.its.utmb.edu/CTR_Forum/abstracts.html.

– Institute for Translational Sciences

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Hellmich and Soong receive GSBS teaching excellence professorships

Mark R. Hellmich (far left), PhD, professor in the Departments of Surgery and Neuroscience & Cell Biology, and Lynn Soong, MD, PhD, professor in the Departments of Microbiology & Immunology and Pathology, recently accepted appointments to professorships for teaching excellence in the Graduate School.



Professor Hellmich holds the Dr. Leon Bromberg Professorship for Excellence in Teaching for academic years 2014 and 2015. Professor Soong is the Mary and J. Palmer Saunders Professor for Excellence in Teaching for the same term. The endowments provide funding for special teaching projects they choose to undertake.

These are the highest honors the Graduate School bestows in recognizing outstanding faculty for extraordinary efforts in teaching and mentoring students.

Dr. Hellmich, after earning a BS in biology from the University of Oregon in 1982, headed east to Boston, where he worked as a research technician in the Department of Cardiovascular Research at Brigham and Women's Hospital until 1985. At that time, he started studying for his PhD in human physiology at Boston University and received his degree in 1990. After postdoctoral research fellowships at the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, MA and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) at Bethesda, MD, he joined the UTMB faculty as a tenure-track Assistant Professor in the Department of Surgery in 1996. Dr. Hellmich became a member of the GSBS faculty in 2000. In 2001, he received tenure and was promoted to Associate Professor in the Departments of Surgery and Neuroscience & Cell biology. His appointment as full Professor followed in 2010.

Since 1996, Dr. Hellmich has sustained a productive research laboratory where he has successfully mentored two junior faculty members, 16 postdoctoral fellows and 11 graduate students, as either their primary or secondary advisor. He has published over 80 peer-reviewed research articles, many on the cellular and molecular pathophysiology of gastrointestinal malignancies. Dr. Hellmich is a member of the Sealy Center for Cancer Cell Biology, Director of research in the Department of Surgery, PI of an NIH T32 training grant and Director of the Human Pathophysiology & Translational Medicine (HPTM) Graduate Program, which received the *Award for Innovation in Research Training and Education* from the Association of American Medical Colleges in 2012.

One nomination said that three aspects of Professor Hellmich's teaching career stand out: "1) his instinct for and record of innovation in graduate education, 2) his strong, earnest commitment to training future biomedical scientists, and 3) his track record of meaningful teamwork to achieve goals of graduate student learners." One of the HPTM graduate students wrote that "he is an outstanding example of a professor who is immensely knowledgeable about what he teaches, who cares deeply about motivating his students to exceed expectations and who is truly passionate about training future translational scientists." Another of several student nominations said, "A good mentor will point out your errors, but a great mentor will guide you to discover them for yourself. I can always rely on Dr. Hellmich to provide candid feedback that drives me toward self-discovery."

Professor Soong earned her medical degree in public health in 1983 and master of science degree in virology in 1986, both at Shanghai Medical University in China, and her doctor of philosophy degree in immunoparasitology in 1992 at the University of Georgia at Athens. After graduation, she was appointed to a postdoctoral fellowship/research associate position at Yale University School of Medicine, also in immunoparasitology, from 1992 through 1997. She came to UTMB in 1998 as an assistant professor in the Departments of Microbiology & Immunology and Pathology and as a member of the World Health Organization Collaborating Center for Tropical Diseases. In 2002, Soong was promoted to associate professor

and appointed a member of the Center for Biodefense and Emerging Infectious Diseases and associate scientist in the Sealy Center for Vaccine Development. The next year, she received tenure and in 2006 was appointed a full professor. She was associate director of the Institute for Human Infections and Immunity from 2004-2010 and this year was appointed vice chair for research in the Microbiology & Immunology Department.



During her years at UTMB, she has mentored 16 postdoctoral fellows, 9 graduate students, including two who had received their PhD training from foreign universities and UTMB, 18 rotation students, 2 master's degree students, and 7 high school or undergraduate students. The graduate students in her lab have a history of publishing at least two first-author papers and other papers as co-authors.

One of many graduate student nominations said Soong "embodies all the hallmarks of an exceptional educator..." Another nomination said she asked her students to post their presentations on Blackboard, as a reference for others. "This illustrated the open access and inter-collegiality she fostered and represented herself, both much-needed traits in science and academics." A former student quoted Benjamin Franklin in his nomination: "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn," saying she embodies student involvement. "She would involve us in every aspect, from experiment design, reagent selection, data analysis, manuscript preparation and even manuscript submission. ... As future scientists who aspire to lead our own research groups, it is not only great to get the opportunity to learn how to do a PI's job, but most importantly to learn it by example, and from a great one."

The two professors will be recognized May 9 at the annual Faculty Awards Luncheon.

The Bromberg Charitable Trust Fund established the Dr. Leon Bromberg Professorship for Excellence in Teaching in 2001 to honor the late Truman G. Blocker Jr., former UTMB president, gifted teacher, researcher and administrator. The Bromberg Fund, with its primary mission of supporting medical and educational institutions, was created by his will. The fund has been a generous supporter of the university.

J. Palmer Saunders, PhD, dean of the GSBS from 1974 to 1987, and his wife, Mary, endowed the Mary and J. Palmer Saunders Professorship for Excellence in Teaching in 2002. They also have generously supported the Graduate School. Dr. Saunders died in 2006; his widow lives in Maryland.

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Coppenhaver joins retiree ranks

Dorian H. Coppenhaver, PhD, Senior Associate Dean for Student Affairs in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) and Associate Professor, announced his intention to retire from UTMB in June 2014. His career at the university encompasses more than three decades of service in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology and the GSBS.



A native of Pennsylvania, Dr. Coppenhaver received an undergraduate degree in zoology and botany in 1969, and a doctorate in zoology and anatomy in 1976, both at Duke University. After a postdoctoral fellowship at Northwestern University and research at the National Museum of Kenya's Institute for Primate Research, Dr. Coppenhaver began his UTMB career in 1978 as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Human Biological Chemistry & Genetics.

He progressed through the research ranks at UTMB, working with Cary Cooper, PhD, former dean of the GSBS and others, and in 1989 he was appointed Associate Professor in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology. Dr. Cooper said, "Dorian was one of my very best hires. He is extremely smart and a talented teacher." During the 1990s, Dr. Coppenhaver demonstrated multifaceted capabilities as he balanced teaching duties with service on numerous departmental and GSBS committees.

In 2001, Dr. Coppenhaver accepted the responsibility of overseeing the Basic Biomedical Science Curriculum (BBSC). The next year, he was appointed Assistant Dean of Student Affairs for the GSBS. Cooper said, "Dr. Coppenhaver joined the GSBS when the BBSC had recently been implemented, and has served

admirably as its director through the years. I know the students agree he has been a superb student affairs dean.”

GSBS students agree, demonstrating their appreciation for Dr. Coppenhaver in 2010 and again in 2013 with the Graduate Student Organization (GSO) Award for Student Advocacy. Matt Huante, a former GSO president, maintains students who need help or advice are immediately put at ease by Dr. Coppenhaver’s open-door policy and ready smile. Current GSO president, Brian Mann said, “Dr. Coppenhaver is a committed, driving force within the graduate school. His unique brand of humor is matched only by his seemingly limitless support and commitment to the academic success and professional development of his students.” He also was awarded the Dr. Leon Bromberg Chair for Excellence in Teaching from 2009-2011.

In addition to successfully mentoring hundreds of graduate students, Dr. Coppenhaver made substantive contributions to the GSBS by spearheading projects like moving from paper to electronic dissertations for graduate students and utilizing commercial services to enhance student recruitment efforts. Dr. Coppenhaver also developed professional coursework to help successfully launch and continually advance the postdoctoral scientist certificate program at UTMB. Dr. Cooper calls him a “key player,” as evidenced by his familiar presence and valuable contribution to the work of myriad implementation and review teams, task forces, oversight, advisory, governance, curriculum, search and steering committees.

David W. Niesel, PhD, Vice President and Dean of the GSBS, views Dr. Coppenhaver as the heart and soul of the student experience in the GSBS. “He has affected a tremendous number of students’ lives over the years in his role as Student Affairs Dean. He’s respected as an advisor, counselor and mentor by graduate students and faculty.” Niesel added, “Dr. Coppenhaver has represented the GSBS tremendously well among the schools at UTMB and peer institutions across the state and country—his wit and wisdom will be genuinely missed.”

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Bremer retires from UTMB

Joanna (Jo) Bremer, director of the Office of Postdoctoral and Postgraduate Affairs, retires from UTMB April 4, 2014. Her career at the university spans 15 years, including five in her current position in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS).

“When Jo agreed to come to the Grad School in 2009, the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and the postdoc certificate program were just ideas – recommendations from a task force convened by the UT Board of Regents,” said Cary Cooper, PhD, former Dean of the GSBS. “But in her hands, the ideas became the new reality at UTMB. Jo’s steadfast approach and deft collaboration skills resulted in a career development program for postdoctoral scientists that stands as a paragon in the campus research community today.”



Cooper said Bremer’s track record of success establishing new programs and seeing concepts through to completion spurred him to recruit her for his staff. She was instrumental in the launch of UTMB’s Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Women’s Health as its first administrative manager. Bremer was also well-known on campus for conceiving the first observance of National Women’s Health Week at UTMB.

“Jo’s involvement always makes such a remarkable impact – on the success of a project, the efficiency of a committee, even routine tasks,” said David W. Niesel, PhD, Vice President and Dean of the GSBS. “Her career at UTMB is marked by innovation and steady forward progress, across the board. So saying ‘Jo Bremer will be missed’ is more than just a sentimental remark – it is a fact.”

Prior to coming to UTMB, Bremer’s career focused on journalism and media relations. After a 3-year stint as the women’s editor for the local newspaper in Wyandotte, Michigan, Jo began as an editor for the *Detroit Free Press* in 1972. While there, she earned her BA in Journalism from Wayne State University. In 1989, Bremer moved on to media relations consulting, eventually forming her own firm, Joanna Charles, Communications.

Bremer and her husband, Jim, relocated to Galveston in 1995, where she maintained the momentum her business had established in health, fitness, science and business writing, adding clients in Houston and

Galveston. In 1999, she stepped into a new arena, accepting an offer from the Office of University Advancement at UTMB.

In a short time, Bremer left her stamp on that department as its first stewardship officer. In 2002 she undertook a challenge at the newly established Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Women's Health, serving as its first administrative manager. During this time, she began work on an MA in Medical Humanities at UTMB, focusing on health policy.

Bremer's last career move at UTMB before the GSBS was in Research Services, in the development section of the Office of Sponsored Programs. There she redeployed her writing skills, working as a science writer/editor and completing her MA in 2008.

In retirement Jo says she is looking forward to more travel time with Jim, honing her cooking skills and golf game, learning to play piano and to paint watercolors, and simply living life at a slower pace. "It has been a great pleasure and privilege to work with so many smart and dedicated people at UTMB," she said. "I definitely will miss them all, but it's time to move on to my so-called 'golden years' of travel and leisure."

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Gifts to GSBS in 2013-2014 equal more than \$330,000

Alumni and friends of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences made 382 contributions totaling more than \$330,000 to the school for scholarships, greatest needs and endowments in 2013 and thus far in 2014. They are listed below:

Ann Anderson Scholarship Fund

Anonymous

Drs. Barbara and Samuel N. Kolmen

Drs. Sharon O. and Odd S. Steinsland

Mr. Patrick H. Welsh

Barrett Scholarship (Arthur and Dorothy))

Dr. and Mrs. Alan D. Barrett

Biochemistry Student Organization Scholarship

Dr. and Mrs. Bruce A. Luxon

Dr. Lavanya Rajagopalan, and Dr. Krishna Rajarathnam

Dr. Mary Faggard Kanz Travel Award for Environmental Toxicology

Tammy R. Dugas, PhD

Elferink Scholarship for Academic Excellence

Drs. Lisa A. and Cornelis J. Elferink

GSBS Greatest Needs Fund

AstraZeneca

Mary E. Abreu, PhD

Advance Asthma & Allergy Center

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Marinel Ammenheuser, PhD

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Dr. and Mrs. Jacques A. Berlin

Dr. and Mrs. Thomas N. Blankenship

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Juanita P. Bray, PhD

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The Thomas M. Crisp, Revocable Trust

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Anonymous

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Garcia-Gallegos

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Dr. Shivali Gupta

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Dr. and Mrs. Ralph J. Henderson, Jr.

Dr. Nina Hengen and Mr. Stephen E. Hengen

Jacob P. Hieble, PhD

Ting-Lin Kao, MD, PhD

Carla J. Kinslow, PhD

Dr. Priscilla A. Koester and Mr. Peter A. Koester

Oleg Lavrukhin, PhD

Simon A. Lewis

Dr. Jaclyn F. Low and Mr. William B. Low

Hongbao Ma, PhD

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Dr. and Mrs. Charles E. Stager
Drs. Sharon O. and Odd S. Steinsland
Drs. Kathryn S. Stream and the late Richard W. Stream
Dr. Christopher C. Striebich and Ms. Tanya S. Argo
Dr. Melissa Tasse and Mr. Daniel Tasse
Dr. Ana C. Triana and Dr. Gustavo A. Valbuena
Lisa Velasquez
Dr. and Mrs. Lewis E. Westerfield IV
Robert R. White, PhD
Dr. Denise M. Wilkes and Mr. Robert D. Wilkes
Rev. Dr. Joyce M. Wilkinson, PhD
Nikeeta Wilson, PA-C
Dr. and Mrs. Mark L. Winter
Dr. and Mrs. Michael E. Woods
Dr. and Mrs. Lee C. Woodson
Hong Xie, MD, PhD
Dr. Yumei Ye and Mr. Yansheng Xie
Yong Zhang, PhD
Feng Zhou, PhD

GSBS Tuition Scholarship Fund

Dr. Maria A. Micci and Dr. Giulio G. Tagliatela
University Federal Credit Union
Anonymous

**Harold T. Sanders Fellowship in Vaccine
Development**

Dr. and Mrs. J.P. Sanders

J. Palmer Saunders, Ph.D. Professorship

Dr. and Mrs. Stewart I. Adam

Janet and David Niesel Scholarship Endowment

Dr. and Mrs. David W. Niesel

Jeane B. Kempner Scholar Award

Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund, Inc.

Leroy J. Olson, Ph.D. Memorial Scholarship Fund

Dr. and Mrs. Eric L. Olson

Purgason Memorial Scholarship (Michael Gilles)

The Michael Gilles Purgason Foundation

Dr. and Mrs. Thomas J. Purgason

Robert Shope Presidential Scholarship – Operating

Anonymous

Ms. Wendy Baker

Anonymous

Rolf Konig, PhD

Donna and Scott Weaver

**Sharon Nelson, PhD and Odd Steinsland, PhD
Endowed Scholarship**

Drs. Sharon O. and Odd S. Steinsland

Satish Srivastava Endowed Scholarship

Dr. J. Mark & Mrs. Kelly Petrash

Summer Undergraduate Research Program
American Society for Pharmacology & Experimental
Therapeutic

**The Dennis William Bowman Scholarship for
Biomedical Research**

Pamela and Dennis Miller

UTMB GSBS Associates

Dr. Linda W. Anderson and Mr. Stephen R. Anderson
Nicole C. Arrigo, PhD
Serena M. Aunon, MD, MPH
Jacques & Gwen Baillargeon
Xiaoyong Bao, PhD
Blue Bay Dental
Juanita P. Bray, PhD
Dr. and Mrs. Robert N. Bryan
Roosevelt V. Campbell, PhD
Mr. and Mrs. Jack Carlile
Linda M. Cecil, MD
Dr. Li Chen and Mrs. Jummin Du
The Thomas M. Crisp, Revocable Trust
Ernestine H. Cuellar, PhD
Margaret Das, PhD
Richard De La Garza II, PhD
Dr. Natasha G. Deane and Mr. John Deane
Drs. Molly A. and Michael H. Droge
Paul M. Evans, MD, PhD
Dr. and Mrs. Robert C. Fader
Dr. Penelope A. Fenner-Crisp and Dr. Thomas M. Crisp
The Fleischmann Family Fund
Mr. and Mrs. David C. Flynt
Christopher S. Fry, PhD
Dr. and Mrs. A. Martin Gerdes
Bridget E. Hawkins, PhD
Dr. and Mrs. Ralph J. Henderson, Jr.
Dr. Nina Hengen and Mr. Stephen E. Hengen
Dr. Cynthia J. Hess and Mr. Philip W. Hess
Dr. Donald Z. Huang and Mrs. Lin Zhang
Mr. Sathya Jaganmohan
Dr. Rohit K. Jangra and Mrs. Sushma Bharrhan
Mr. and Ms. Andrew J. Johnson
Dr. Jonghoon Kang and Ms. Myung S. Lee
Carla J. Kinslow, PhD
Dr. and Mrs. Garner F. Klein
Dr. and Mrs. George C. Kramer
Anonymous
Mrs. Elizabeth G. Lawhorn and Mr. Scott Cryder
Jiejian Lin, MD, PhD
Dr. Amy C. Madril and Mr. Adrian Madril
Dr. and Mrs. David D. Michie
Dr. Eliana E. Ochoa and Mr. Aldo R. Moro
Catherine A. Partridge, PhD
Dr. Linda C. Perkowski and Dr. W. Robert Fleischmann,
Jr.
Debra L. Phillips, RN, MSN
Dr. Taylor S. Riall and Mr. Charles C. Riall
Frances M. Sansone, PhD

Drs. Sharon O. and Odd S. Steinsland
LaMonica V. Stewart, PhD
Dr. Melissa Tasse and Mr. Daniel Tasse
Dr. and Mrs. James R. Templer
Dr. and Mrs. Jason R. Thonhoff
Dr. and Mrs. Charles N. Verheyden
Dr. and Mrs. John E. Wolf, Jr.

UTMB GSBS Associates Endowment

Marinel Ammenheuser, PhD
Dr. and Mrs. Thomas N. Blankenship
Linda M. Cecil, MD
Drs. Molly A. and Michael H. Droge
Anonymous
Dr. Deborah V. Harbour and Mr. Robert J. McMenamin
Dr. and Mrs. Ralph J. Henderson, Jr.
Marilyn M. Hurt, R.N., M.S.N.
Linda-Jane Irwin, MD
Bijay K. Khajanchi, PhD
Dr. and Mrs. Garner F. Klein
Craig M. Klugman, PhD
Lillian H. Lockhart, MD
Dr. and Mrs. Robert L. Massey
Elisabeth A. Murray, PhD
Dr. and Mrs. Syed Omer
Dr. Sun Hye Paik and Dr. Earl W. Ferguson
Mr. and Mrs. Mike Poulin

Taylor and Charles Riall
Drs. Kathryn S. Stream and the late Richard W. Stream
Dr. and Mrs. Jason R. Thonhoff
Edna E. Tirado, PhD
Dr. and Mrs. Charles N. Verheyden
Dr. and Mrs. Michael E. Woods

UTMB GSBS Associates Lifetime Endowment

Ernestine H. Cuellar, PhD
Mr. and Mrs. David C. Flynt
Dr. and Mrs. A. Martin Gerdes
Bridget E. Hawkins, PhD
Dr. Cynthia J. Hess and Mr. Philip W. Hess
Mr. Sathya Jaganmohan
Mr. and Ms. Andrew J. Johnson
Dr. and Mrs. Felix C. Koo
Han Li, PhD
Jiejian Lin, MD, PhD
Dr. and Mrs. John M. Nickerson
Dr. Nicole C. Powell-Dunford and Mr. Mike D. Dunford
Frances M. Sansone, PhD
Drs. Kathryn S. Stream and the late Richard W. Stream
Hong Xie, MD, PhD
Zelda Zinn Casper Endowed Scholarship Fund
Natalie Haar, PhD

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Rudkin gives annual Dean's Lecture at Homecoming

Laura L Rudkin, PhD, Professor and Centennial Chair of the UTMB Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health, gave the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences' annual Dean's Lecture during Homecoming 2014 on March 28 in Levin Hall.

"Preventive Medicine and Public Health at UTMB: Past Contributions, Future Possibilities" was the topic of Dr. Rudkin's lecture, recognizing the recent centennial anniversary of the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health (PMCH) at UTMB.

Dr. Rudkin is Project Director for *Primary Care Plus* at UTMB, a program that integrates primary care and public health training for medical and physician assistant students. Responding to the 2011 National Prevention Strategy, Dr. Rudkin developed *Primary Care Plus* to foster effective partnerships between health care professionals and community groups that share the goals of improved population health and reduced health disparities.

"Dr. Rudkin's initiative has made *Primary Care Plus* the vanguard for MD and MPAS students committed to careers in primary care," Dr. David W. Niesel, Graduate School Dean, J. Palmer Saunders Professor, and Lawrence E. Ethridge, Jr. Professor, said. "This new cross-trained workforce has the potential to spearhead changes that can fundamentally improve the landscape of public health in the communities they serve."

Her national preeminence in today's pivotal fields of public health and preventive medicine is reflected by her service as president of the Association for Prevention Teaching and Research and as the Public Health and Preventive Medicine Representative to the Council of Faculty and Academic Societies of the Association of American Medical Colleges.

In 2013, Dr. Rudkin received the University of Texas System Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award for Health. The Association for Prevention Teaching and Research recognized her department in 2012 with the Outstanding Educational Program Award for Public Health Education. In 2008, she was elected to the UTMB



Academy of Master Teachers, followed by an appointment as Distinguished Teaching Professor by the UT System. The Graduate Student Organization honored Dr. Rudkin in 2009 with the GSO Student Advocacy Award, acknowledging her role in the unequivocal success of her students.

Dr. Rudkin graduated from the University of Iowa, where she earned a BA in journalism with High Distinction and an MA in sociology. From there she went on to earn her PhD in sociology and demography from Princeton University, where she received the MacArthur Foundation Award in 1990 and was appointed to a MacArthur Fellowship in Population and International Affairs in 1991. She continued her post-doctoral research at the University of North Carolina before coming to UTMB in 1993.

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Minutes
GSBS Associates Executive Committee Meeting
August 20, 2013
Open Gates Conference Center, Galveston

Participants: Drs. James Templer, Chair, Bob Fader, Chair-elect, Chris Allen, Ralph Henderson, Carla Kinslow, Andy McNeese, Vicente Santa Cruz, David Shine, Lee C. Woodson, Cary Cooper, David Niesel, Dorian Coppenhaver, Kristen Peek, and Larry Krcma, Associate VP for Special Events, Brian Mann, GSO President, Dixie Mullins, Jo Bremer

WELCOME

- I. Dr. Templer introduced new members.
- II. Changing of the Gavel. Dr. Templer transferred meeting to Dr. Fader.
- III. Minutes were approved for last meeting.
- IV. Dr. Cooper announced his retirement after 32 years of service at UTMB. He thanked the committee for their participation and helping GSBS students. Dr. Fader thanked Dr. Cooper for his efforts throughout his career at UTMB.

REPORTS

- I. Dr. Cooper reported that funding from NIH remains low and that there has been a reduction in class size for the two years. UTMB admitted about 75 new students to the GSBS. This reduction has also proven to improve the quality of students. With reduction in funding, average graduation time for students will be expected to decrease from 5 ½ years to closer to 4 years. Dr. Niesel indicated that while there is some concern for the present, the long range view for research is good. UTMB continues to have some of the best funded programs in the nation.
- II. Dr. Peek told the committee that applicants have decreased by approximately 20%. The Graduate School stopped paying stipends and tuition for non-US applicants, essentially eliminating applicants from abroad. 18 students were accepted to the BBSC and include a very diverse group. Discussion followed about attending minority conferences for under-represented students and also focusing on GRE targets. Presidential Scholars receive up to \$3000 in addition to their stipend. Dr. Kinslow expressed how important it is for graduate students to plan for an internship within their graduate studies. Students need to program this time off with their advisors as they prepare for future job opportunities.
- III. Dr. Coppenhaver applauded the great leadership within the student organizations. Time to graduation has been excellent in recent years. There was discussion about publicizing student highlights/CVs on the website, Hire a Biomedical Scientist (<http://gsbs.utmb.edu/HireABiomedicalScientist/Basicsciences.aspx>), for potential employers to visit.
- IV. Brian Mann talked about the GSO being a service-oriented organization. He said the student group added a new position for science and outreach. He talked about elevator speech competition among students in which they have 90 seconds to present themselves and their research at different levels based on their audience. This has proven to be successful.
- V. Jo Bremer presented on behalf of Dr. DiNuzzo, and said that the online CV seminar was a hit. Texas Workforce Solutions is working with UTMB to ID opportunities for grad students and postdocs. She also asked for different ideas on fundraising for GSBS. Discussed having a special social event, Gala

style. Idea of targeting a community for fund raising, but would need to form a committee to search for scope and also carry out the execution of such event. Dixie mentioned student phone-a-thon, as this is low cost: 18 phones already are available to help solicit.

Meeting Adjourned at 8.39 PM

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Graduate School dates to remember for 2014-15

May 2 Commencement, 4 pm

August 25-27 Orientation for New Graduate Students

August 26 (tentative) GSBS Associates Executive Committee meeting

August 27 (tentative)

Community of Scholars Ceremony

GSBS Open House

September 2 Classes begin for Academic Year 2015

November 21 Scholarships and Awards Luncheon, San Luis Hotel, 12-1:30 pm

May 1-2 Homecoming 2014

May 1

Dean's Lecture, Levin Hall, 4-5 pm

Dean's Reception, GSBS Suite, Levin Hall, 5-6 pm

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Class Notes

1990s

Andrew G. McNees, MBA, PhD (Human Biological Chemistry & Genetics, 1997), recently was appointed administrator for the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Office of Regulated Nonclinical Studies, which was recently established to provide scientific, regulatory and good laboratory practice support to our research and development programs. He adds responsibility for these two entities to his role as Administrator for Basic Sciences II. Since joining UTMB nearly 25 years ago, Dr. McNees has assumed increasing levels of responsibility.

News Briefs

Students

Adam Boretsky (Human Pathophysiology & Translational Medicine) is first author on a recent paper on the cover of *Lasers in Surgery and Medicine* and featured as the editor's choice that month. The citation is: Boretsky A, Khan F, Burnett G, et al. In vivo imaging of photoreceptor disruption associated with age-related macular degeneration: A pilot study. *Lasers in Surgery and Medicine* 2012;44:603-610.



Centers and Institutes

The City of Galveston recently recognized the UTMB Center for Addiction Research with a Proclamation in support of National Drug Facts Week Jan. 27-Feb. 2. This initiative, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, encourages teens to ask questions about drug abuse and addiction, and, in return, receive scientifically based answers from top experts in the field. For the past several years, the Center has partnered with the Bay Area Council on Drugs & Alcohol to support NDFW activities at local middle and high schools.

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10 GSBS professors retire from UTMB

After a cumulative 271 years on the faculty at UTMB, 10 senior Graduate School faculty members retired between September 1 and March 1 this year. Their contributions leave an indelible mark on the university, on the GSBS and, most of all, on their students. They are:

Name	Department	Title	Hire Date
Ahmed E Ahmed	Pathology	Professor	01/17/1977
Darrell H Carney	Biochemistry & Molecular Biology	Professor	08/15/1978
Thomas Jackie Collins	Neuroscience & Cell Biology	Professor	09/08/1980
John J Fraser Jr.	Preventive Medicine & Community Health	Professor	07/01/1997
Charles F Fulhorst	Pathology	Professor	04/01/1995
Simon A Lewis	Neuroscience & Cell Biology	Professor	01/01/1987
Sankar Mitra	Biochemistry & Molecular	Professor	12/30/1995
CJ Peters	Microbiology & Immunology	Professor	12/01/2000
Frank C Schmalstieg Jr.	Pediatric Immunology - Allergy	Professor	06/26/1972
Chandrasekha Yallampalli	Obstetrics & Gynecology - Endocrine	Professor	04/22/1988

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UTMB ranks 50th in NIH funding for FY 2013

The NIH recently published national ranking information based on grant awards for federal fiscal year 2013. UTMB's School of Medicine ranked 50 out of 139 academic research centers, just one measure of research productivity. Nine of the 18 School of Medicine departments maintained or improved their rankings. The Departments of Microbiology & Immunology and Pathology finished in the top 10, respectively ranking at #5 (out of 99) and #10 (out of 91). Two other departments, Obstetrics & Gynecology and Pharmacology & Toxicology, finished in the top 25 percent for their departments, ranking 11th (out of 65) and 20th (out of 96), respectively.

The School of Health Professions ranked 8th among its 51 peer institutions.

Nine UTMB faculty members rated in the top 50 (five in the top 20) for their disciplines:

- James LeDuc, PhD, Professor of Microbiology & Immunology
- David Walker, MD, Professor and Chair of Pathology
- Cornelis Elferink, PhD, Professor of Pharmacology & Toxicology
- Gary Hankins, MD, Professor and Chair of Obstetrics & Gynecology
- Chandrasekha Yallampalli, PhD, Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology
- David Herndon, MD, Professor of Surgery
- Allan Brasier, MD, Professor of Internal Medicine
- Kathryn Cunningham, PhD, Professor of Pharmacology & Toxicology
- Benjamin Gelman, MD, PhD, Professor of Pathology

In announcing the results, Provost and Executive Vice President Danny Jacobs said, "These are superior accomplishments ... which are especially noteworthy given the current funding environment."

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National biosafety bioinformatics leader addresses UTMB symposium

On Oct. 5, 2001, shortly after the confirmation of the first fatality from inhalation anthrax, a team from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California piled onto a C-130 transport plane with their lab equipment and supplies for a 10-hour flight to Washington, D.C.

The team, including bioinformatics lead Tom Slezak, comprised an interesting mix of skills. In addition to biologists trained in specialized laboratory testing were mathematicians, statisticians and software engineers. Their mission was clear-cut and urgent: install a system for continual, reliable environmental surveillance for various airborne pathogens and do it immediately.

They installed a complex system that was up and running within two days, and the laboratory monitoring the results has been in continuous operation ever since.



Tom Slezak, bioformatics lead, and Dr. James LeDuc, director of the Galveston National Lab.

Slezak recounted this anecdote at his recent visit to the Galveston National Laboratory at UTMB as the latest guest lecturer in the Topics in Biosecurity Symposia. The series of lectures features experts at the forefront of biosecurity development and implementation.

For Slezak, the release of a pathogen in the Tokyo subway in 1993 put public health and security officials on notice that an airborne attack was possible. The threat of a mass aerosol attack at the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics, where large international crowds would be spread over a huge area indoors and out, prompted the call to develop a system to detect aerosol pathogens.

The Department of Energy national labs, Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos National Laboratory, in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency and in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, were given the task of developing the program — called the Biological Aerosol Sentry and Information System, or BASIS.

For many years, its very existence remained in the shadows. The premise of the program is that early detection of an attack, before symptoms are exhibited, will provide enough time to distribute appropriate countermeasures.

Some of the challenges in creating the program included making sure there were zero false positives and an ironclad “chain of custody” demanded by the FBI for potential criminal prosecution.

“Every single thing, from filters to tubing to bags, was barcoded,” said Slezak. “Everything is automatic so there is no room for human error.” The system enabled them to go back and track every step in the chain. He said some of his team used to joke they themselves should have their personal barcode tattooed for easier scanning.

The system is still in use today, and Slezak, who has a master’s degree in computer science, said he’s particularly pleased. It’s rare for code to still be in use after a decade. He said with his degree, he never expected to someday be involved in biological research as a career.

After 9/11, BASIS was declared a national asset, and monitoring was deployed in a number of cities across the country to sample for a small number of high-threat pathogens. The cities and pathogens remain undisclosed.

The program is known today as BioWatch, an insurance policy against large-scale attack. Deployed in more than 30 metropolitan areas throughout the country, BioWatch is a collaborative effort of health personnel at all levels of government.

Slezak explained how to navigate the bureaucracies involved at the federal, state and local levels and among the competing jurisdictions and law enforcement agencies. “All science is political,” he said, adding that communications skills and people skills are also required for success.

The UTMB symposia series features experts at the forefront of biosecurity policy development and implementation. As the only active biosafety level four research program underway on a U.S. academic campus, the program seeks to ensure students, staff and faculty have maximum participation in this ongoing discussion.

– *Maureen Bayless Balleza, Public Affairs*

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UTMB to expand research facilities

UTMB will expand its current research facilities to include 93,000 square feet of critically needed space for its growing research activities.

The University of Texas System Board of Regents on Dec. 12 approved the amendment of the UTMB Capital Improvement Plan to include a \$42 million addition to its research facilities at Building 17 on the Galveston campus. The approved action also allocated \$30.5 million of Permanent University Fund proceeds, which will augment \$11.5 million in bonds to fund the \$42 million project.

“We are extremely grateful for the Board of Regents’ continued investment in UTMB and its Galveston campus,” said Dr. David L. Callender, president of UTMB. “This project assures the future of our world-class research enterprise and provides us with state-of-the-art facilities that are resilient and that support our institution’s strategic mission.”

The ground floor of the six-story facility will house non-critical functions such as a lobby and meeting space, in compliance with UTMB’s post-Hurricane Ike mitigation standards. Two floors will house research support facilities, including veterinary and pharmacy space. One floor will be dedicated to mechanical space, and two floors will be shelled during initial construction for future use as laboratory space.

UTMB lost one of its critical research facilities, Building 18, to irreparable damage in Hurricane Ike in late 2008. That building was recently demolished, making room for the new facility at 11th and Strand.

“With this addition, UTMB will have the opportunity to improve its overall ranking in the national and international research arena by attracting National Institutes of Health and other federally-funded grants,” Callender said. “The new facility will also enhance our ability to attract top scientists to join UTMB’s research enterprise.”

UTMB expects to complete design and obtain final approval to begin construction by March 2015. The new research building should be complete and occupied by March 2017.