

State of the AHC 2002, Academic Health Center at the University of Minnesota

Core Priorities in a New Era

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Welcome to the Fourth Annual State of the Academic Health Center presentation--our opportunity to pause and reflect on the year past--and to refocus on our forward momentum. This year provides an especially poignant opportunity for reflection--last year, we met as a community on Sept. 12, just a day after this country was changed forever.

For the past month or so, we've paused, as a nation, to reflect on the changes caused by Sept. 11. In this institution and in the country at large, we did what our disciplines and our training--as well as what our history and tradition--have prepared us to do. We returned to our core values and sought to enhance the meaningful. Here at the University, we focused on our unique or significant roles within this new era. We've learned that what we do here matters--and the way we do it matters, as well

There are the obvious changes that have been implemented specifically because of the events of that day. We began intense work around security for our people, security for our buildings and labs, security for the people we serve, as well as security for our data and information. We're redirecting resources to fund more locks and secured access to formerly open facilities. We've learned the difficult lesson that the same chemical and biological agents we use to develop treatments and cures for disease can also be used to scare and hurt the public. We are taking precautions to lock those substances down, preventing their misuse.

In this institution--whenever we focus on our areas of core concern--the needs of our students quickly come to the forefront. We are, after all, schools and colleges committed to preparing the next generation of health professionals on behalf of Minnesota. And students come into our programs with the anticipation that they will help them perform successfully on behalf of their patients and with their colleagues when they leave here.

This year, we have accomplished much for students to meet those expectations. Under the leadership of Dr. Barbara Brandt and her team within the Office of Education, we've worked with numerous groups and individuals throughout the AHC and University. These include academic deans, student services directors, experiential education directors, and individual faculty members within each school, to enhance the tools and resources we provide our students.

Some of the work is very tangible--like the soon-to-open Intercollegiate Education and Resource Center. In 1999 an AHC-wide task force recommended this Center to serve as a resource on interdisciplinary education and clinical skills. This Center will house 18 fully equipped, state-of-the-art exam rooms designed to provide students with a facility in which to learn and be assessed on their professional knowledge and skills. This facility is where the concepts of treating patients become the reality of actually doing so. We already have more than 2,200 students scheduled to work in this space through the end of the academic year.

Another tangible facility for students reaches into undergraduate and high school programs--it's the Health Careers Center that introduces the potential and possibility of health professional careers to students still exploring their future goals. This is a collaborative effort that began this fall with our colleagues throughout the University--in CLA, CBS, and even Admissions. As soon as Coffman Union reopens, and the bookstore leaves the 2nd floor of Moos Tower, the new Center will really begin to take shape.

Some of our work for students moves beyond any one facility, which is important since we have students in nearly 500 different affiliated locations around the state. I'm speaking of the work to protect our students from blood born pathogens--or other types of potentially dangerous biological exposure. The response policy has been in effect for about one year and we are working on an immunization registry with Boynton Health Service. That will allow us to comply with the federal privacy regulations by moving personal information out of individual schools. Overall, the policy provides clarity around the steps to take when a needle stick or other exposure occurs.

Concerns about bioterrorism and the food chain, along with shifts in funding priorities by federal agencies, have refocused interest into these areas. These are not new areas of academic interest for this institution. Before Sept. 11, we were gathering significant expertise in infectious diseases and in the policy surrounding public health responses. Our Center for Animal Health and Food Safety, as well as the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy, were established in the summer of 2001 to add to the existing strength present in the School of Public Health's epidemiology division as well as the Medical and Veterinary Schools' infectious disease faculty. Since 9/11, both centers have drawn significant national attention through their aggressive efforts on behalf of the public's health. And now, as some Minnesotans nervously prepare for hunting season, our Vet Med students have been called to help the Department of Natural Resources as they gear up to test for Chronic Wasting Disease in the state's deer population. That's an important recognition of the role our Veterinary Medicine school plays on behalf of Minnesota's health.

The final change I've observed this past year connected to the events of Sept. 11 involves a change in culture. I need to clearly state that culture changes very slowly in this--and other academic institutions. In fact, much of the intrinsic value of this and other academies stems from our ties to the past and to tradition. Yet, the attitudes and culture of this large research University are beginning to shift. Once it seemed a normal course of business to prop open lab doors, or disable keyed locks so that a student or lab assistant could easily get in. That's no longer true. We do seem to be more conscious of what each of us can do to make things more secure. Now we're working to expand that consciousness to our computer data and information. The issue of personal privacy has been of significant concern for the public for several

years.

In today's society--with the ease of sharing information over wires and waves--Americans are very interested in controlling who knows what about them. The Minnesota Department of Health recently experienced that concern when they moved to collect health information about all insured Minnesotans. It didn't work the way they'd hoped. At the national level, public concerns have led to new federal laws that impose significant penalties on individuals who violate the confidentiality of private information. Those new regulations go into effect next April and are contained within the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act--or HIPAA, as it's called. We're working to make certain all of you know about HIPAA, and the responsibilities you take on with the knowledge of someone else's personal health information. Ross Janssen is leading that charge for the AHC and the University.

Let me state this quite clearly--this University's Academic Health Center is committed to maintaining the privacy of personal information and the confidentiality of private information. And we're backing up that commitment by developing privacy training for faculty and staff, as well as curriculum for students.

That HIPAA law contains one of the key words driving much of our energies over the past several years. That word is "Accountability." As we know very well--accountability simply means doing what you say you're going to do. In today's society, the responsibility contained within the idea of accountability has great resonance and meaning--particularly for people who've put their trust in you.

This University--this Academic Health Center is fortunate to have a number of friends and partners who have put significant trust in our ability to follow through on our promises. That trust is embodied in this very building that was built through public bonding authority granted to us by the Minnesota Legislature--and authorized by the signatures of Governors Carlson and Ventura. I'd like to publicly thank the Legislature and both governors for their trust in our follow through. With that trust comes a significant set of expectations.

I believe we've met the first expectation hurdle--this building was completed on time and on budget--and is housing who we said it would house, and facilitating the type of research we promised during project hearings. The remaining expectations require us to provide excellent education to students from the College of Biological Sciences and from medicine well into the future. In addition, I suspect the public would like a few major discoveries to come out of the labs housed upstairs. Based on what I've seen so far, I suspect we can meet that accountability measure as well.

And now I'd like to move to another set of expectations we've been working to fulfill over the past several years within the AHC--the strategic vision and plan that has charted the major framework of the course we're on. Our vision--of preparing the new health professionals who can improve the health of our communities and families, who can discover and deliver new treatments and cures, and who will enhance the economic vitality of our health industries--has definitely moved closer to realization over the past year.

A quick review of the work of our plan shows the momentum. We're a little more than two years into our six year plan and we've made real progress. The first area involved balancing the operating budget of the Medical School. Why only the Medical School? Quite simple, it was most at risk two and a half years ago. Now, however, thanks to the funds generated from the AHC Education Endowment established in 2001 with tobacco settlement proceeds, the Medical School is on stable ground. Having said that--I don't want to imply that all is financially rosy for any of our programs. In fact, we have a significant amount of work to do as we wrestle with the best way to fund health professional education in the future.

A significant source of that income is generated from the clinical practice of our faculty. One of the most developed practices, is the University of Minnesota Physicians. UMPHysicians is moving quickly towards a spring deadline to take over the management of their clinics, on its way to ownership. Our dental clinics are reaching out to underserved communities through targeted services--as well as through our new mobile dental van. And we can't forget the clinical enterprise of the vet med school--there are 72 million animals to be served in this state--and we're determined to treat them all.

Our second area of emphasis involves gaining broad community--and legislative--support for increased funding for health professional education and research. We've been pleased with the number of friends of the Academic Health Center who have been willing to step to the plate on our behalf and work with us to gain the support we need. Our friends and you--our faculty, staff, and students--have been strong advocates and ambassadors for the value of the work we do in this state--and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of you once again for all you do and continue to do. Thanks--and to be clear, we will be calling shortly as we definitely need your support in the year ahead. This next year will require significant work on everyone's part with the tough fiscal situation in the state's budget--and with all the newly elected officials to educate and inform. We're just glad you, too, believe that the work we do is important for the health of Minnesota.

Our third area of emphasis is the implementation of interdisciplinary health professional education opportunities that truly build on the strengths of each discipline on behalf of the health of our families and our communities. To do that means we have to work closely with care communities throughout the state. This year, through an effort led by Jeny Stumpf Kertz, we successfully competed for an AHEC grant, which stands for Area Health Education Center. Those federal dollars will strengthen our ability to work with providers in the Northeastern and Southwestern parts of the state to recruit students from those areas, educate and train them in those communities, and, hopefully, have them stay and practice in those communities.

In addition, we're working closely with several city neighborhoods on sustainable models of community-based, experiential education. The beauty of these models is that they simultaneously serve underserved families while providing interdisciplinary work opportunities for students. Great work, and, I believe for us, part of the definition of a land grant institution.

Our fourth emphasis has been on implementing plans to meet the health professional workforce needs. There are two standouts in this

area--nursing and pharmacy. Our School of Nursing has expanded its program to Rochester, in collaboration with Mayo and MnSCU. In addition, a creative new curriculum has been developed for post-baccalaureate students who will receive a nursing certificate in 16 months. Together, these two programs have drawn 34 new students into the field of nursing so far. For pharmacy, the expansion is taking place on the Duluth campus of the University where 50 new students are scheduled to begin studying next fall. Those students represent a fifty percent increase in the class size of pharmacy and should have a significant impact on the profession in rural towns and communities.

These two expansions are direct examples of doing what we said we'd do with the tobacco settlement funds in the AHC Education Endowment--we said we'd work to meet the health needs of Minnesotans, and we are. We're doing so through the extraordinary leadership of our faculty and the strong direction of the deans.

Our fifth area of emphasis involves improving access to AHC research, information, and new technology. Now here's an area that shows great momentum. Under the leadership of Mark Paller, our seed grant programs are showing a 685 percent return on investment. That's right--a 685 percent return. For every dollar put into seed grants over the past five years, federal grants worth \$7.85 have come back to the institution. At the same time, our interscholastic faculty research development grants are showing a 228 percent return. These grants have gone to teams of faculty who needed just a bit of investment to hone in on an idea to get it ready for prime time. That's a success story.

And success builds on success--this year, with the advice and counsel of the AHC Faculty Consultative Committee, we'll be inducting the first members into the AHC Academy of Research Excellence. This new Academy will recognize those faculty who have made significant contributions and outstanding achievements in their field. We're definitely ready for this advance within this institution--and it's a great example of how effective faculty governance can work.

As you are aware, the University's campaign is being very successful. One reason for this, is that the faculty and staff of the University have contributed \$11 million to this campaign to date. That is truly amazing; I thank each and every one of you.

Another faculty kudo involves the translation of all this research success. In 2000-2001, there were 100 patents awarded, 152 licenses granted, and 15 new start-up companies University-wide. Upwards of 60 percent of these originated in the Academic Health Center. That's true technology transfer--and it's only one measure of the kinds of information and research that's regularly being shared with the state and the nation.

Speaking of sharing information with the nation--several of you have mentioned that we seem to be showing up more often in national publications of note, such as the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, PBS, and NPR. This is not an accident--it's a planned expansion of our effective regional strategy of telling the stories of our work to the people who need to know. We've targeted the talents of Sarah Youngerman within the Office of Communications on this national audience. She's working closely with the University's Federal Relations team of John Engelen and Marty McDonough to make certain the expertise of our schools and colleges is well known nationally, in Congress, and in the agencies.

Finally, our strategic plan focuses on rebuilding the AHC's research capacity. To do so requires two primary components--space and people. We've begun hiring the faculty clinician scientists--there are 13 on the docket for this year alone. And, you should know that we're being successful with our efforts as we're one of the few institutions with plans for expansion this year. We're moving forward with the design for the Translational Research Facility--the University has committed to moving this building forward. And we'll work to ensure that the new members of the Legislature and our new governor become conversant with the meaning of translational research--and of its importance.

However, we can check one thing totally off the list of our last goal--the completion of this building. We had the opportunity to dedicate this building just two weeks ago--and the sense of accomplishment was incredible. For four years, we met to guide the design and building of this structure. I'd like to thank the patience of our steering committee, and particularly of Dave Lee and Lorie Wederstrom who bore the brunt of the stress of the process. Well done all.

And now, I'd like to end where I started. A year ago, I believed that the events of Sept. 11 heralded a new era for our institution. In some ways, as I've said, that has been true. But in the core values of what we do here and of who we are, this new era simply represents a stronger focus on the importance of our work. What we do here matters. The students we prepare truly matter. Our world-class interdisciplinary centers--our Center for Bioethics, our Center for Spirituality and Healing, our Stem Cell Institute, our Cancer Center--each and all of them matter. In this new era, where the people of our country are searching for meaning--and are searching to make a difference--I sincerely hope you share my belief that the work of our schools and colleges is meaningful and truly does make a difference.

For the coming year--these are the five top priorities:

Number one--continue to improve classrooms, and implement Technology Enhanced Learning space for students, and offer support for Web-based instruction.

Number two--improve the safety and security of our environment, including compliance with the new HIPAA regulations.

Number three--promote the University's legislative request containing the Translational Research Facility and funds to offset the market losses in the tobacco endowments.

Number four--develop a vision for clinical research and the future of graduate level health professional education.

And

Number five--implement several sites of interdisciplinary education in models of community partnerships.

Thank you.

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