

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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WORLD-RENOWNED NEUROBIOLOGIST JOINS UT SOUTHWESTERN AS DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR

DALLAS – Dec. 26, 2001 –Dr. William Maxwell Cowan, former chief scientific officer of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and a world-renowned neurobiologist known for research on brain function, has joined the UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas faculty.

Cowan, who will become a distinguished adjunct professor in the Dallas institution's Center for Basic Neuroscience and Department of Neurology, brings 40 years of experience and expertise in the study of neurobiology to Dallas, said Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern.

"Dr. Cowan is one of the most distinguished and highly regarded neuroscientists in the world," Wildenthal said. "He is a far-sighted leader in all of medical science and particularly neurobiology and, having recently concluded his tenure as the head of all of the Howard Hughes Institute's scientific programs, he's uniquely well-informed."

Because basic and clinical neuroscience are key research priorities at UT Southwestern, Cowan's experience and guidance will enhance the university's neuroscience and neurology programs and solidify the medical school's role as a leader in these areas, Wildenthal said.

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) is one of the world's largest philanthropies, with an endowment of \$13 billion. In its laboratories across the United States at host medical centers – including UT Southwestern – 350 HHMI investigators, a number that tripled under Cowan's leadership, conduct research in cell biology, computational biology, genetics, immunology, neuroscience and structural biology.

HHMI investigators, led by Cowan for the past 12 years, have been involved in many recent advances, from the discovery of genes related to cancer, heart disease, obesity, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy and other diseases to new insights about how organisms develop, cells communicate or learning occurs.

And these researchers have been honored for their accomplishment by being inducted

(MORE)

NEUROBIOLOGIST - 2

into the prestigious National Academy of Sciences. Their number grew from five to 70 during Cowan's tenure.

Cowan said he aims to recruit scientists of the same caliber to Dallas.

"I'm very excited about this new association with UT Southwestern, an institution for which I have the greatest admiration," said Cowan. "Neuroscience has the potential for becoming one of the strongest and most influential areas in science. There's nothing more exciting than understanding how our brain works. It's equally important to understand the disorders of the brain – both neurological and psychological."

Cowan has collaborated with researchers at UT Southwestern for several years, and currently serves as chair of the external advisory committee for the medical center's Endowed Scholars Program in Medical Science.

"Dr. Cowan is one of the most imposing figures in neurobiology," said Dr. Thomas Südhof, director of the Center for Basic Neuroscience. "We are exceptionally privileged to have him join our faculty." Südhof has had a professional relationship with Cowan for the last 15 years through UT Southwestern's HHMI.

Cowan's duties at UT Southwestern will include helping identify and recruit key investigators, mentoring junior faculty members, instructing graduate and medical students, and presenting seminars and lectures.

A native of Johannesburg, South Africa, Cowan received a D.Phil., a B.M., B.Ch. and an M.A. from Oxford University. He is a Foreign Associate of the National Academy of Sciences, a member of the Institute of Medicine and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Great Britain.

Cowan also has served previously as provost and executive vice chancellor at Washington University in St. Louis; vice president of The Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, Calif.; and adjunct professor of neuroscience at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

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