

STARS LIGHTS WAY TO BETTER SCIENCE EDUCATION

DALLAS—June 29, 1993—The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas responded to the crisis in science education by initiating the Science Teacher Access to Resources at Southwestern (STARS) program in 1991 to enhance science education at Dallas-Fort Worth area secondary schools.

The Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology and Government has described public science education as "a crisis become chronic." But in today's world, a good foundation in science is more important than ever.

"Excellence in public science education is necessary to America's continued progress in science and medicine," said Dr. Curtis Chubb, associate professor of cell biology and neuroscience and coordinator of the program. "American students must achieve scientific literacy in order to compete in the global marketplace."

UT Southwestern students, faculty and staff have been involved for years in ongoing projects to promote science education, but the STARS program coordinates these efforts, makes educational programs more accessible to teachers and initiates new projects.

"UT Southwestern's unique position within the North Texas academic community affords our university the opportunity to serve as a center for organizing efforts to improve science education in our area," Chubb said.

The goals of STARS are:

- To increase scientific literacy.
- To stimulate an appreciation of health-related careers.
- To provide ongoing support for students and teachers interested in science.
- To improve science education by broadening the knowledge base of teachers.
- To enhance the life science curriculum by active participation in its design and implementation.
- To provide instructional aids for science education.

One of the first projects initiated by STARS was a basic-science symposium for secondary schoolteachers on DNA in biology and medicine. Six symposiums have been held at UT Southwestern in the past 18 months,

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covering subjects in rapidly expanding areas of science—the endocrine system, developmental biology, the Human Genome Project, proteins and AIDS. During the coming school year, symposiums will address the nervous system, sports medicine, drug abuse and stress.

Invitations to the symposiums are sent to secondary school science teachers in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Each participating school receives a videotape of the symposium and a slide library its teachers can use to illustrate lectures on the material they have learned. Teachers are eligible for advanced academic training accreditation for symposium attendance.

Another STARS project is a summer research program for teachers. Three secondary school teachers worked as assistants in UT Southwestern researchers' labs in summer 1992. This summer four teachers are working at UT Southwestern, with stipends paid by scientific societies. They conduct research, attend seminars and present their research at the end of the summer. The program allows teachers to update their scientific knowledge and to rekindle their enthusiasm for science, which they can pass on to their students.

Teachers who participate in STARS projects are eligible for library cards from UT Southwestern's medical library. They can check out books, videotapes, slides and other educational materials for use in their own schools.

Existing programs under the STARS umbrella include participation in the Dallas Independent School District's Adopt-a-School program, medical center tours and programs hosted by UT Southwestern's Office of News and Public Information, a medical and graduate student speakers' bureau, and faculty members who visit classrooms as Science Ambassadors to discuss scientific topics and careers in science and medicine.

UT Southwestern has supplied judges for area science fairs. Faculty members also serve as mentors to students working on science fair projects.

Almost 1,000 teachers from more than 270 public, private and parochial schools in Dallas, Tarrant, Collin and Denton counties participate in the STARS program.

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NOTE: The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas comprises Southwestern Medical School, Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Southwestern Allied Health Sciences School, affiliated teaching hospitals and outpatient clinics.