

News

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****UT Southwestern announces \$10.5 million research endowment challenge

DALLAS -- Challenged by a \$10.5-million gift announced today, supporters of The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas are setting out to raise matching funds. Their goal is to endow 21 distinguished faculty chairs in key areas of biomedical research.

An \$8.4-million gift from a source that chooses to remain anonymous initiated the Southwestern Research Endowment Challenge. Dallas philanthropist Cecil H. Green contributed \$1 million to the challenge fund; the Southwestern Medical Foundation added \$1 million; and a second anonymous source gave another \$100,000 in funds to be matched.

The Southwestern Research Endowment Challenge was announced by UT Southwestern President Kern Wildenthal at a luncheon honoring the donors and the community leaders who will spearhead the fund-raising efforts.

The Leadership Committee that will raise funds to match the challenge is chaired by Robert Decherd, chairman of the A. H. Belo Corp. Committee members include Louis A. Beecherl Jr.; Jess Hay, chairman and chief executive officer of Lomas & Nettleton Financial Corp.; Morton Meyerson, a private investor; and Raymond D. Nasher, president, Raymond D. Nasher Co. Other committee members are George Poston, president of Poston Real Estate Co.; Vin Prothro, managing general partner of Southwest Enterprise Associates and chairman of the board of Dallas Biomedical Corp.; Robert D. Rogers, president and chief executive officer of Texas Industries, Inc.; A. Starke Taylor Jr., former Dallas mayor and president of Taylor Investments; Thomas B. Walker Jr., retired general partner of Goldman Sachs & Co.; and Raymond Willie Jr., president and chief executive officer of Willow Distributors, Inc.

In announcing the gift, Wildenthal said, "This is an innovative and vitally important challenge, and it comes at a critical time for the university. We have made great progress in recent years, but our competitive edge depends on an outstanding faculty. This gift goes directly to meet that need. It will make it possible to recruit key new faculty members and to provide the degree of support needed to retain outstanding existing faculty."

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Wildenthal said the goal is to provide a distinguished chair for each Nobel Laureate, member of the National Academy of Sciences and director of a major research unit on campus.

A "distinguished chair" in The University of Texas System is a faculty position endowed for \$1 million. The \$10.5-million challenge gift will match up to \$500,000 in donated funds to create an endowment for each of 21 distinguished chairs.

According to Dr. Rody Cox, dean of UT Southwestern Medical School and acting dean of UT Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, an endowed chair offers flexibility in recruiting and retaining outstanding faculty members. The income from the endowment can be used in a variety of ways: to supplement salaries, equip laboratories, purchase supplies, or employ junior faculty or technicians needed to conduct new research. An endowed chair therefore provides researchers more stability and flexibility than federal or state grants. It also allows immediate expansion or re-direction of research without time-consuming delays in applying for outside funding.

Until now, UT Southwestern had eight distinguished chairs in the fields of molecular biology, human nutrition, neuroscience, urology, reproductive biology, human growth and development, psychiatry and geriatric medicine.

The lead gift of \$8.4 million to initiate the challenge campaign is believed to be one of the five largest single commitments for research in the history of The University of Texas System. Three others in this group were also received by UT Southwestern during the past year: \$8.3 million for heart research from the Harry E. Moss Heart Trust; \$20 million for molecular genetics research and medical scientist training from Mr. Ross Perot; and \$41 million for arthritis and cancer research from Mr. Harold Simmons.

Decherd, commenting on the challenge to raise funds for endowed research chairs, said, "No single institution is of greater importance to the future of Dallas and Texas than UT Southwestern. These challenge gifts and the incentive they provide present an opportunity to help a great university achieve its full potential. I am delighted to be part of this effort."

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Note: The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas comprises Southwestern Medical School, Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Southwestern Allied Health Sciences School.