

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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## COBB NAMED NEW DEAN OF UT SOUTHWESTERN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

DALLAS – Jan. 2, 2003 – Dr. Melanie H. Cobb, professor of pharmacology at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, has been named dean of Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, effective Jan.1.

She replaces the late Dr. John P. Perkins, who served as dean from 1989 to 2000. Dr. Philip Perlman, who served as acting dean since Perkins' declining health forced him to retire, will resume his position as associate dean while continuing his research as a professor of molecular biology.

"UT Southwestern is fortunate that Melanie Cobb has agreed to become our new graduate school dean," said Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern. "She has been a superb faculty member and mentor of students, and her ideas for attracting the very best Ph.D. candidates and postdoctoral fellows to our institution and providing them with unsurpassed research and educational opportunities are very exciting. UT Southwestern has no higher priority than for our graduate school to be second-to-none, and the faculty and I are thrilled that she will be leading our efforts toward that crucial goal."

Cobb, who joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 1983, said Perkins "revitalized" the graduate school and Perlman continued to move it forward in his interim service.

"It's extremely flattering and quite an honor to take up where they left off," Cobb said. "Dr. Perkins created an integrated graduate curriculum and revitalized graduate training at UT Southwestern. I admired him and his contributions to our graduate school greatly."

One of Cobb's objectives is to establish a placement office to help give trainees a competitive edge in pursuing the scientific careers of their choice. In addition, she will focus on developing a program for postdoctoral fellows to foster a sense of belonging to UT Southwestern.

"Postdoctoral fellows currently have little opportunity to feel as though they are part of our institution," Cobb said. "I believe it is very important for institutions like UT Southwestern to have more impact on training and career advancement, not only of our graduate students but also of our postdoctoral trainees."

Dr. Alfred Gilman, Nobel laureate and chairman of pharmacology, said Cobb will be a tremendous asset to the graduate school and its students.

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“Dr. Cobb is a superb scientist,” Gilman said. “She has trained many students in her lab and cares about them deeply. She also is a very nurturing person with strong feelings about the great importance of the graduate school.

“I share her belief that the graduate school is incredibly important to the research faculty at UT Southwestern,” he said. “We must have excellent graduate students if our faculty is going to continue to be successful. Students bring fresh and creative approaches to research problems, and they do a great deal of the actual lab work.”

Cobb was selected from hundreds of potential candidates during an extensive, two-year national search by a five-person committee chaired by Dr. James Stull, chairman of physiology.

“Dr. Cobb is recognized nationally and internationally for her spectacular research contributions and trains graduate students to become outstanding independent investigators,” Stull said. “Her activities in graduate student education – including advising first-year students on how to get started in research – show commitment and concern for dealing with the difficulties in successfully training the next wave of biomedical scientists.”

Cobb’s research examines how molecules convey messages to each other to determine cell growth and differentiation.

Cobb has received the prestigious Max Planck Research Award and the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics Goodman and Gilman Award in Drug Receptor Pharmacology.

She earned her doctorate in biological chemistry at Washington University in St. Louis, working with Dr. Garland R. Marshall, who studied the actions of peptide hormones. Her postdoctoral training was completed at Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University in New York under the late Dr. Ora Rosen, a member of the National Academy of Sciences noted for her work on the regulation of protein kinases. Cobb received her undergraduate degree in biological chemistry from the University of Chicago.

With two children, Ian, 17, and Meredith, 10, she is one of a small number of women deans among the nation’s top 25 medical research graduate schools, which include institutions such as UT Southwestern, Harvard, Yale and the University of California, San Francisco, based on 2003 rankings by *U.S. News and World Report*.

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