



News

HSC recognizes past, explores future growth in academic convocation

Posted on: 2008-01-16 09:55:08

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Texas A&M Health Science Center Communications

HSC recognizes past, explores future growth in academic convocation

(COLLEGE STATION, TX) — Reflecting on its rapid growth while also looking ahead at new opportunities to meet the health-related needs of Texans, the Texas A&M Health Science Center hosted its third-ever academic convocation Wednesday, Jan. 16.

With a theme of “Blueprint for the Future” and a keynote by former Surgeon General Dr. Antonia C. Novello, the convocation at the Leonore and Walter Annenberg Presidential Conference Center in the George Bush Library Complex at Texas A&M University celebrated the renewed vision and reaffirmed commitment to providing quality programs and services throughout the state.

Divided into “Following the Master Blueprint,” “Establishing a Strong Foundation” and “Building for the Future,” it included several references to the new HSC Bryan campus.

“None of the changes that have occurred throughout the Health Science Center, nor the effects of these changes, have happened by accident,” said Nancy W. Dickey, M.D., President of the Texas A&M Health Science Center and Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs for the Texas A&M University System.

“They have been a result of support by our State Legislature, the oversight of the members of our Board of Regents and guidance of A&M System officials. But most critical, these changes and accompanying outcomes have been the result of the enthusiasm, unwavering dedication and innovative minds of our faculty, staff, students and administrators throughout our university.”

In her Presidential Address, Dr. Dickey reviewed the goals and accomplishments related to the 2015 Strategic Plan. She also highlighted its impact on the state’s economic and health of its citizens.

“Our scientists, teachers, staff members and students are making a difference,” Dr. Dickey said.

“Scientific discoveries are leading to the establishment of biotech organizations, committed to preventing and curing disease. Individuals from underserved communities have access to invaluable health care – and health education – that was not previously present. Those living on limited means are being helped to get access to much-needed prescription medications. Members of the aging population are leading more active and healthier lives. And, every day, researchers from throughout the Health Science Center are contributing in meaningful ways to assure our active duty soldiers and returning veterans are receiving the care and attention they deserve.”

Keynote speaker Novello, M.D., M.P.H., born in Puerto Rico and the first woman and first Latina Surgeon General, shared her insight on “Health Not for All: Disparities in Our Midst” during the “Building for the Future” portion of convocation.

“The world needs to know the Texas A&M Health Science Center serves the poorest, the neediest, the disenfranchised – those who often feel they have nowhere else to turn,” Dr. Novello said. “You are serving people of all colors and all languages, no matter if they were born in this country or arrived yesterday by foot. You are working hard to eliminate the health disparities of all Texans through compassionate care, superior science and exceptional health education. The Texas A&M Health Science Center is the glue that holds the art of health care together.”

During her tenure as Surgeon General from 1990-93, Dr. Novello advised the public on health matters such as smoking, AIDS, diet and nutrition, environmental health hazards, and the importance of immunization and disease prevention. A board-certified pediatrician, she is a clinical professor of pediatrics at Georgetown University School of Medicine and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, as well as adjunct professor of pediatrics and communicable diseases at the University of Michigan and adjunct professor of international health at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health.

According to Dr. Novello, there are many reasons the health status of racial and ethnic minorities still lags far behind non-minorities. This includes existing socioeconomic health disparities (poverty, lack of education and/or health insurance), access to high-quality health care for minority children and their parents, the lack of comprehensive minority data, and the need for increasing minority representation in health care professions. There also are issues of institutional racism – the maintenance of disparities caused by actions and/or institutional practices – and lack of a comprehensive research agenda.

Dr. Novello then offered several approaches to “earning” community trust – fund projects that start with commitment to solve community problems; fund organizations with a history of collaboration; define the problem broadly and comprehensively; offer long-range, multi-year grants; demand outcome data; and be a partner in your community.

“As we listen and talk to one another here today and as we go about our daily lives tomorrow, let’s remember to watchdog the process and participate in the outcome,” Dr. Novello said. “Those of us who have the privilege of speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves have the ultimate responsibility to speak loudly and clearly. We must never forget that we owe something back to the community where we live.”

During the "Foundation" portion, Dr. Dickey awarded six Presidential Awards for Excellence to individuals or groups who personified servant leadership in the areas of community outreach, health care services and delivery, research, institutional enhancement, education and mentorship, and administrative support. She also acknowledged multiple faculty and research awards – some of which were presented at an earlier faculty luncheon – along with Regents Professors and distinguished and emeritus professors.

Additional remarks were provided by A&M System Chancellor Michael D. McKinney, M.D.; Bill Jones, J.D., A&M System Board of Regents Chairman; Catherine Hawes, Ph.D., Speaker of the Faculty Senate; and Nina M. Williams, HSC-School of Rural Public Health graduate student and 2008 Chair of the President's Student Advisory Board.

The convocation concluded with the unveiling of several renderings of the new HSC Bryan campus, for which a groundbreaking occurred earlier in the day. The future Bryan campus will ultimately allow the HSC to consolidate its academic programs and administration currently located throughout Bryan and College Station onto a single campus. The first buildings are expected to open in 2010.

In academia, "convocation" is a ceremonial assembly of the members of a college or university. Traditionally, it celebrates a special event, such as the beginning of the academic year or the anniversary of an institution.

The HSC conducted convocation ceremonies in 2002 for the inauguration of Dr. Dickey and in 2006.

The Texas A&M Health Science Center provides the state with health education, outreach and research. Its six colleges located in communities throughout Texas are Baylor College of Dentistry, the College of Medicine, the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, the Institute of Biosciences and Technology, the Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy, and the School of Rural Public Health.

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Texas A&M Health Science Center Presidential Awards for Excellence

The following individuals and/or groups were recognized with Presidential Awards for Excellence during the HSC academic convocation Wednesday, Jan. 16:

- Community Outreach – HSC Health Circus. A student-organized and student-run partnership utilizing the HSC-College of Medicine, HSC-School of Rural Public Health and local nursing students with regional health providers, the Health Circus is a traveling health fair designed for underserved children and adults in Brazos Valley. The award recognizes those who exemplify the mission and vision of the HSC and contribute to the health and well being of underserved and/or rural populations or communities.
- Health Care Services and Delivery – Lamar McNew, M.D., professor of family and community medicine at the HSC-COM. Having served thousands of patients during his years of practice and extensive overseas travel, Dr. McNew has been a volunteer faculty member for 30 years and was instrumental in creating the Brazos Family Residency Program.. The award acknowledges exceptional commitment and innovation to the provision of health care over time.
- Research – The late Richard "Dick" Ewing, Ph.D., vice president for research at Texas A&M University. A world-renowned scientist in mathematics, engineering and computational sciences, Dr. Ewing generously provided support for HSC faculty researchers, especially in proposal development and research compliance. He also recognized the HSC Office of the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies as a full partner in decision-making processes that affected HSC research programs. The award honors significant contributions that enhance, facilitate or accelerate the HSC research enterprise.
- Institutional Enhancement – City of Bryan. Earlier in the day, the HSC hosted a groundbreaking for a future Bryan campus, with approximately 200 acres donated by the City of Bryan. The award honors an individual or foundation demonstrating outstanding commitment to the mission of the HSC by providing significant support to one or more areas within the institution.
- Education and Mentorship – Stephen Griffin, D.D.S., associate professor and director of clinics at HSC-Baylor College of Dentistry. An invaluable resource in information technology, Dr. Griffin implemented a totally electronic patient record system for HSC-BCD. The award honors exceptional contribution and achievement as an educator or mentor and is reflective of the breadth of educational and mentoring activities across the HSC.
- Administrative Support – Eric Solomon, D.D.S., executive director of the HSC Office of Institutional Research. Nationally known for his expertise in strategic planning and institutional research, Dr. Solomon has facilitated various accreditations, ensured appropriate program funding and guided strategic planning efforts. The award acknowledges individuals who have made distinguished contributions to the HSC through their dedication, initiative, outstanding achievements, enthusiasm and attitude in their work.

Texas A&M Health Science Center Convocation and Component Awards

The following individuals were recognized with college awards during a luncheon preceding the HSC academic convocation Wednesday, Jan. 16:

- Baylor College of Dentistry Alumni Association Dental Teacher of the Year – Mark E. Gannaway, D.D.S., associate professor of restorative sciences
- BCD Alumni Association Dental Hygiene Teacher of the Year – Keri Pearson, B.S., assistant professor of dental hygiene
- College of Medicine Distinguished Achievement Awards in Teaching – Gary McCord, M.D., associate professor in neuroscience and experimental therapeutics and assistant dean for student affairs; Kathleen Jones, M.D., assistant professor in pathology and laboratory medicine; and Sharyl Santema, M.D., assistant professor in pediatrics
- Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy Dean's Award for Excellence – Mansoor A. Khan, Ph.D., distinguished visiting professor
- Institute of Biosciences and Technology Distinguished Service Awards – Magnus Höök, Ph.D., director of the Center for Extracellular Matrix Biology and Regents Professor, and Wallace McKeethan, Ph.D., director of the Center for Cancer and Stem Cell Biology and Regents Professor
- School of Rural Public Health Excellence in Education/Teaching – Jane Bolin, R.N., J.D., Ph.D., assistant professor in health policy and management
- SRPH Excellence in Research – Ming Tai-Seale, Ph.D., assistant professor in health policy and management
- SRPH Excellence in Service – Kirby C. Donnelly, Ph.D., head and professor of environmental and occupational health
- SRPH Excellence in Administrative Support – Linnæ Hutchison in research

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