The year 2013 has brought dramatic and historic change to the Texas Medical Center, to Baylor College of Medicine (BCM), and to the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery. Leading the list of changes is the $2 billion purchase of St. Luke’s Episcopal Health System (St. Luke’s Hospital and its regional hospital network) by Catholic Health Initiative (CHI)—one of the nation’s largest health care systems with 90 hospitals, $13 billion in annual revenue, and 85,000 employees in 18 states. Then, in January 2014 we announced a joint venture between BCM and CHI that includes 50:50 governance and partial ownership of the newly created Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center. The joint venture is a unique partnership that provides BCM with ownership rights to the success of a major hospital partner and an opportunity to collaborate on the national stage with a major healthcare provider. For Baylor and our department, this extremely exciting news represents a “once in a lifetime” opportunity to lead healthcare innovation in a big way. The simultaneous announcement of an affiliation between CHI and the venerated Texas Heart Institute (THI) likewise creates an ideal opportunity for our department and BCM to partner with the physicians and scientists at THI in advancing cardiac care. The joint venture envisions the opening of our beautiful new hospital on the McNair campus initially as a 250-bed facility, and plans to add up to 400 additional beds as a full-service Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center.

This phenomenal clinical opportunity commands that we take great strides in rebuilding our clinical program, and we have been hard at work in accomplishing that goal. We began with the recruitment of Dr. Steven A. Curley, head of GI Surgery at MD Anderson for 20 years, as our new chief of the Division of Surgical Oncology and associate director of Clinical Affairs for the Dan L. Duncan Cancer Center. Under Dr. Curley’s direction, this march, we opened a new multidisciplinary clinical cancer
LEADERSHIP - APPOINTMENTS AND ENDOWMENTS ANNOUNCED

In the past year, the department has welcomed several major new additions to its leadership. We have three new division chiefs, a new vice-chair of Network Development, a chief of the new Section of Trauma Surgery, and a new chief of the Section of Renal Transplant. Furthermore, five members of our faculty have received endowed chairs. Please, join us in recognizing these new members of the department and congratulating our new endowed chairs.

STEVEN A. CURLEY, MD is our new chief of the Division of Surgical Oncology and associate director for Clinical Affairs in the Dan L. Duncan Cancer Center. Dr. Curley comes from The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center where he served as chief of Gastrointestinal Tumor Surgery and medical director of the MD Anderson Gastrointestinal Cancer Multidisciplinary Care Center. Dr. Curley is also professor of Mechanical Engineering and Materials Science at Rice University. A graduate of The University of Texas Medical School at Houston in 1982, he completed his residency at The University of New Mexico Hospitals, Albuquerque, NM in 1988 and his Surgical Oncology Fellowship at MD Anderson Cancer Center in 1990.

Dr. Curley will also join the new chief of the Division of General Surgery, William Fisher, MD, in leading a new, collaborative GI and Metabolic Surgery Group of surgeons from the Divisions of Surgical Oncology and General Surgery that will be responsible for acute surgical care of benign and malignant disease of the gastrointestinal and endocrine systems in adult patients.

WILLIAM E. FISHER, MD, tenured professor in the department, is our new chief of the Division of General Surgery following a highly productive national search chaired by Dr. Kenneth Mattox. Dr. Fisher is also the new George L. Jordan, MD Chair, named in honor of Dr. DeBakey’s venerated colleague and former chief of staff at Ben Taub Hospital and chief of surgery at the Veteran’s Affairs Medical Center.

In addition to his building one of the largest clinical programs for the surgical treatment of pancreatic disease in the Houston area, Dr. Fisher has over the past 15 years led a team of surgeons and scientists examining the genetic basis of pancreatic cancer. His highly successful collaboration with the Human Genome Sequencing Center at Baylor College of Medicine has led to seminal new discoveries recently published in Nature. In addition to his responsibilities coordinating the general surgery programs at the Ben Taub Hospital, the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center and the new BCM Medical Center, Dr. Fisher will continue in his role as head of The Elkins Pancreas Center.

HARI R. MALLIDI, MD, FRCS, associate professor of surgery, has been appointed chief of the Division of Transplant & Assist Devices at Baylor College of Medicine, and has just recently been named the inaugural Lester Smith Chair of Surgery. Dr. Mallidi succeeds George P. Noon, MD, who brought great distinction and honor to Baylor College of Medicine and to the Division of Transplant & Assist Devices during the 14 years he had served as its inaugural division chief.

Dr. Mallidi was recruited to Baylor College of Medicine in 2011 from Stanford University to lead the College’s programs in lung transplantation, adult heart transplantation, and the surgical management of advanced heart and lung disease. Dr. Mallidi has also been a leading surgeon in the Heart Transplant and Ventricular Assist Devices Program at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center working with O.H. Frazier, MD, chief of Cardiopulmonary Transplantation and the Center for Cardiac Support, and Director of Cardiovascular Surgery Research at the Texas Heart Institute.

DANIEL ALBO, MD, PhD, tenured professor of surgery and Dan L. Duncan professor in the Dan L. Duncan Cancer Center, has been appointed vice chair for Network Development at Baylor college of Medicine.

In his new role, Dr. Albo will seek to expand the Department’s clinical program and regional referral base. He will identify, analyze, and help establish new surgical practice opportunities for the Department of Surgery and for Baylor College of Medicine beyond the Texas Medical Center.

Through his research focused on translational and health services research in colorectal cancer, he has developed a unique and highly reproducible retraining program that has successfully led to the conversion of open colorectal surgical units into minimally invasive ones. Dr. Albo will continue to serve as director of the Gastrointestinal Oncology Program in the Dan L. Duncan Cancer Center, a role which will avail patients of Dr. Albo’s clinical expertise in minimally invasive gastrointestinal surgical oncology, with special emphasis on colorectal malignancies.

BRADFORD G. SCOTT, MD, associate professor of surgery and medical director of the Ginni and Richard Mithoff Trauma Center at Ben Taub Hospital, is also chief of the newly-created Section of Trauma Surgery in the Division of General Surgery. In this role, Dr. Scott will expand the outreach and academic focus of our trauma program, which, under the leadership of Dr. Kenneth Mattox, has become one of the most highly respected programs in the world.

Dr. Scott’s clinical and research focus involves studies of resuscitation of the trauma patient, care for the open abdomen, methodologies for complex abdominal wall reconstruction, and surgery of the foregut.
CHRISTINE A. O’MAHONY, MD, assistant professor of surgery and surgical director of Kidney Transplantation at Texas Children’s Hospital, Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center, and the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center, has been appointed chief of the Section of Renal Transplant in the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery, Division of Abdominal Transplantation.

Dr. O’Mahony’s dual responsibilities within the Department and at our affiliate hospitals will enable her to maximize her collaborations with colleagues to further the growth and development of the renal transplant program at Baylor College of Medicine.

LARRY H. HOLLIER JR., MD, professor of surgery and pediatrics and chief of the Division of Plastic Surgery at Texas Children’s Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine, has been named the inaugural S. Baron Hardy Endowed Chair in Plastic Surgery. Dr. S. Baron Hardy (1906-1990), a leader in the field of plastic surgery, became Baylor College of Medicine’s chief of Plastic Surgery in 1952 at the request of Dr. Michael E. DeBakey. In this position, Dr. Hardy laid the foundation for our current Pediatric Plastic Surgery division. Dr. Hollier specializes in pediatric craniofacial surgery, hand surgery, facial fractures, cranial vault remodeling, and mid-facial and mandibular distraction.

*Texas Children’s Hospital

JOHN A. GOSS, MD, professor of surgery and chief of the Division of Abdominal Transplantation has been named the inaugural JLH Foundation Chair in Transplant Surgery at Texas Children’s Hospital. This endowed chair has been established in memory of John L. Hern, who was hospitalized for 252 days while awaiting a heart transplant. During that time, he befriended other patients also on the transplant waiting list—many of them people who could not afford the costs associated with a transplant, such as temporary housing, meals, and parking at the hospital.

To help these patients Mr. Hern created the JLH Foundation whose mission is to support the financial needs of transplant patients and their families, to promote the need for organ donation, and to support transplantation programs such as ours.

Dr. Goss is surgical director of Texas Children’s Hospital’s liver transplant program, which is now the largest pediatric liver transplant program in the United States. In 2012, program surgeons performed more than 39 transplantations and the clinical outcomes exceeded national standards for patient and graft survival according to the Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients.

LARRY H. HOLLIER JR., MD, professor of surgery and pediatrics and chief of the Division of Plastic Surgery at Texas Children’s Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine, has been named the inaugural S. Baron Hardy Endowed Chair in Plastic Surgery. Dr. S. Baron Hardy (1906-1990), a leader in the field of plastic surgery, became Baylor College of Medicine’s chief of Plastic Surgery in 1952 at the request of Dr. Michael E. DeBakey. In this position, Dr. Hardy laid the foundation for our current Pediatric Plastic Surgery division. Dr. Hollier specializes in pediatric craniofacial surgery, hand surgery, facial fractures, cranial vault remodeling, and mid-facial and mandibular distraction.

*Texas Children’s Hospital

JOHN A. GOSS, MD, professor of surgery and chief of the Division of Abdominal Transplantation has been named the inaugural JLH Foundation Chair in Transplant Surgery at Texas Children’s Hospital. This endowed chair has been established in memory of John L. Hern, who was hospitalized for 252 days while awaiting a heart transplant. During that time, he befriended other patients also on the transplant waiting list—many of them people who could not afford the costs associated with a transplant, such as temporary housing, meals, and parking at the hospital.

To help these patients Mr. Hern created the JLH Foundation whose mission is to support the financial needs of transplant patients and their families, to promote the need for organ donation, and to support transplantation programs such as ours.

Dr. Goss is surgical director of Texas Children’s Hospital’s liver transplant program, which is now the largest pediatric liver transplant program in the United States. In 2012, program surgeons performed more than 39 transplantations and the clinical outcomes exceeded national standards for patient and graft survival according to the Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients.

RENOVATED THORACIC SURGEON RECRUITED

David J. Sugarbaker, MD joins us as the inaugural chief of our new Division of General Thoracic Surgery and director of the Lung Institute at the Baylor College of Medicine. Dr. Sugarbaker brings to Baylor College of Medicine his 25 years of experience at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women’s Hospital where he made significant contributions to patient care, research, and teaching involving the treatment of thoracic surgical disease, including the establishment of the first lung transplant program in New England.

Dr. Sugarbaker first joined Brigham and Women’s Hospital in 1979 as a surgical resident. After completing his residency in 1986, he left to obtain cardiothoracic training at the University of Toronto. He returned to the Brigham in 1988 as chief of the newly formed Division of Thoracic Surgery, a program which is now recognized as one of the best in the nation.

Since 1988, Dr. Sugarbaker has focused his career on the treatment of pleural mesothelioma and his contributions have helped countless patients and families with no other options. In 2002, he founded the International Mesothelioma Program with the central goal of finding a cure for this disease. The program is the largest of its kind and attracts patients from all over the world.

In 1989, Dr. Sugarbaker was a leader in the establishment of the Tissue and Blood Repository at Brigham and Women’s Hospital. One of the first tissue repositories in the US, the Tissue and Blood Repository has led to extremely fruitful collaborative research projects. Dr. Sugarbaker has mentored hundreds of residents and fellows during his time at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, a reflection of his deep commitment to teaching the next generation of physicians. His contributions to education also include establishing a unique fellowship in thoracic oncology, a minimally invasive thoracic surgery fellowship, and a visiting scholar program for thoracic surgery.
ALUMNI MEETING

On May 16-17, 2014, we will be celebrating 60 years of excellence in resident education with the Alumni Symposium & the 20th Congress of the Michael E. DeBakey International Surgical Society on the Texas Medical Center campus in Houston. This activity has been designated up to 7.75 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s) designation available. Registration is now open at bcm.edu/surgery-60th.

We invite you to join this very special event that will highlight the state-of-the-art work taking place at the Michael E. DeBakey Department of Surgery. Our faculty, alumni, trainees, and guest speakers will present an exciting program of specific topics from each of our ten divisions covering the specialties of abdominal transplantation, cardiothoracic surgery, congenital heart surgery, general surgery, pediatric surgery, plastic surgery, surgical oncology, surgical research, transplant and assist devices, and vascular surgery and endovascular therapy.

In particular, we are delighted to honor Dr. O.H. “Bud” Frazier on the occasion of the implantation of the 1000th ventricular assist device (VAD) at the Texas Heart Institute, and Dr. Kenneth L. Mattox as the recipient of the DeBakey Surgical Award.

We will have a special guest, Vice President Dick Cheney, who will give the keynote address on Saturday, May 17th. After having his fifth heart attack in 2010, Vice President Cheney was implanted an LVAD as ‘bridge to transplantation.’ Twenty months later, he received a heart transplant at Inova Fairfax Hospital, Virginia. One of the three surgeons in the transplant team was Dr. Alan Speir, who had trained under Dr. Denton Cooley at Texas Heart Institute.

Dr. O.H. Frazier has reached a major career milestone: the 1000th VAD

O.H. Frazier, MD, professor of surgery and director of the Center for Cardiac Support at the Texas Heart Institute, has dedicated his career to the treatment of severe heart failure and to the advancement of the fields of heart transplantation and cardiac assist devices. In his 30-year-long journey, he has performed more than 1,300 heart transplants and implanted over 1,000 ventricular assist devices (VADs). No other surgeon in the world has reached these major milestones.

In recognition of Dr. Frazier’s professional accomplishments, Texas Heart Institute and the Department of Surgery are delighted to join together to celebrate the implantation of the 1000th VAD (and counting), and to honor Dr. Frazier with the Distinguished Faculty Award. This ceremony will take place during the upcoming Michael E. DeBakey Alumni Symposium & 20th Congress of the Michael E. DeBakey International Surgical Society, on May 16-17, 2014 at the Texas Medical Center campus in Houston.

RESEARCH: THE ROAD TO DEVELOP BETTER AND SMALLER DEVICES

During the 1970s and the 1980s, Dr. Frazier focused his experimental work on developing a left ventricular assist device (LVAD). One of the first implantable LVADs, the HeartMate I, was a pump that worked by mimicking the pulsatile motion of the biological heart. In 1986, Dr. Frazier implanted the first HeartMate I in a human patient as a bridge to heart transplantation. Although the HeartMate I successfully supported patients, Dr. Frazier was not satisfied with its size or durability. It was too large for an average-sized person and often failed within 2 years because it had too many moving parts.

Dr. Frazier’s research resulted in a new generation of smaller VADs that had only one moving part, a spinning rotor, and that produced continuous rather than pulsatile blood flow. In 1988, he successfully implanted the first of these devices (the Hemopump) in a patient and proved that humans could live without pulsatile blood flow, ie, without a pulse.

continued on page 5 >>>

Chairman’s Message

Chairman’s Message continued from page 1

center that integrated side-by-side medical and surgical practices at the Baylor Clinic on Main Street. This new center will eventually reside at the new McNair facility.

Dr. William Fisher, director of the Elkins Pancreas Center and our new chief of the Division of General Surgery, joined Dr. Curley in leading a unique, jointly managed general surgery-surgical oncology service group.

This past month, we also announced the recruitment of world-renowned thoracic surgeon Dr. David A. Sugarbaker from Brigham and Women’s Hospital to lead a newly created Division of General Thoracic Surgery and the Lung Institute at the Baylor College of Medicine. Dr. Sugarbaker plans to model his program at BCM after his pioneering work at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, where he built a 13-surgeon, 4,000 case-per-year unit. Dr. Sugarbaker, who will arrive in July, was enticed to join our faculty through the leadership of cardiothoracic surgery chief Dr. Joseph S. Coselli. The Department is honored to have both Dr. Sugarbaker and Dr. Coselli. They represent the historic presence of not one but two presidents of the prestigious American Association of Thoracic Surgery.
In 2000, he implanted the first Jarvik 2000, another early continuous-flow VAD. The next continuous-flow VAD Dr. Frazier worked to develop was the HeartMate II. The HeartMate II is durable and reliable for long-term use, which allows patients to return to full and active lifestyles. In 2003, Dr. Frazier first implanted the HeartMate II in a US patient. More than 15,000 patients worldwide have now had this device implanted.

THE FUTURE

Dr. Frazier’s research continues and is currently focused on developing a reliable and durable total artificial heart. In March 2011, Dr. Frazier and Dr. William Cohn, also at the Texas Heart Institute and an associate professor of surgery, successfully implanted the first pulseless total heart replacement device in a human patient. Dr. Frazier and his colleagues are currently developing a totally implantable continuous-flow total artificial heart (the Bivacor) that has shown feasibility in animal experiments.

The journey to achieve the 1000th VAD and the total artificial heart has been tremendously challenging and not without its share of disappointments. However, Dr. Frazier hopes that surgeons will see in every failure they encounter an opportunity to learn and improve the care they provide for their patients.

Dr. C. Anne Morrison, a surgery instructor and a physician in the BCM Global Health Corps, organized the visit. For the last two years, Dr. Morrison has been one of the five physicians—and the only surgeon—at Sengerema Hospital, a facility that serves about half a million people. And these surgeons have learned to make do with meager resources.

Disposable supplies, such as gowns and drapes, are typically reused, and antibiotics and anesthetic agents are limited. There is only one suction machine; there is no X-ray or ultrasound equipment readily available in the operating theater; urgent pre-operative laboratory data only include hemoglobin, ABO blood typing, and a rapid malaria test. Improvisation is an essential skill for a surgeon practicing in Sengerema Hospital. On occasion, patients needing a surgical drain could only be treated with a Foley, or a nasogastric tube. Sometimes the only solution was cutting off the fingers of a sterile glove to use it as a drain. Fortunately, the visiting team brought along 22 large boxes of supplies donated by Medical Bridges and Texas Children’s Hospital.

On the day that the Baylor team members arrived, they met scores of patients waiting to be evaluated for surgery. The team diligently assessed everyone present and triaged them for surgery based on what could be safely accomplished with the available resources. The cases ranged from benign head and neck lesions, to inguinal hernias, cervical teratoma, and posterior sagittal anorectoplasty for imperforate anus. For residents Drs. Jatin Anand and Yan Shi, this has been an eye-opening experience. They have now a greater appreciation for the medical resources they have taken for granted at the Texas Medical Center.

The trip was supported in part by the Department of Surgery of Baylor College of Medicine, and the Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative (BIPAI) and the Surgery Department of Texas Children’s Hospital.

OUR FIRST “MISSION ABROAD” RETURNS FROM TANZANIA

Department faculty members and residents had an extraordinary experience in the Sengerema Designated District Hospital in Tanzania. The team traveled to this rural area hospital to provide specialized surgical care to patients and to train local assistant medical officers under conditions that are dramatically different from what they have experienced at Baylor College of Medicine.

The group included Oluyinka O. Olutoye, MBChB, PhD, professor of surgery, pediatrics, and obstetrics & gynecology – BCM, and co-Director, Texas Children’s Hospital Fetal Center; Jed G. Nuchtern, MD, professor of surgery and chief, Division of Pediatric Surgery – BCM; Jatin Anand, MD, categorical resident in research – Department of Surgery; Yan Shi, MD, categorical resident in research – Department of Surgery; Stephen A. Stayer, MD, professor of pediatric anesthesiology, associate chief, Pediatric Anesthesiology, division director, General Anesthesiology & Pain Management; Oluoyin A. Olutoye, MBChB, associate professor of Pediatric Anesthesiology; and Filomina George, RN, nurse manager in the post-anesthesia care unit at Texas Children’s Hospital.
ABSITE PREP AND SURGICAL JEOPARDY PUNCTUATE BANNER YEAR

ABSITE Review Utilizes Audience Response System, Jeopardy-style competition

Surgery residents went through intensive preparations to succeed in their American Board of Surgery In-Training Examination (ABSITE) on January 2014. One of their activities consisted in participating in an innovative approach that included weekly interactive, audience-response-based sessions.

This strategy, piloted by associate program director for General Surgery Dr. Eric J. Silberfein, tracked response trends for each topic, and enabled residents and faculty to identify collaborative areas of strength and challenge to enhance learning.

These review sessions culminated in a Surgical Jeopardy on January 22, 2014 held before the entire department and moderated by Dr. Rosengart. During Surgical Jeopardy residents engaged in a friendly team-based competition with their colleagues and with a faculty team.

The faculty team, formed by Drs. William Fisher, Kenneth Mattox and Daniel Anaya, prevailed in the final round with a (maybe a bit rigged) question about Dr. Michael DeBakey. The faculty nevertheless faced stiff competition from residents competitively selected from four teams with high scorers on the previous year’s ABSITE exam.

Resident winners, Drs. Sara Fallon, Sonia Tewani Orcutt, and Somala Mohammed, were each awarded an all-expense paid trip to a U.S. academic meeting of their choice.

Together with good old-fashioned hard work, study, and teaching, educational activities yielded some of the highest ABSITE performances in recent memory.

IN THE “OR” LIGHT

FEATURING CLINICAL PRACTICE MANAGER LISA ICARD, RN, BSN

I was born and raised in Houston where I developed a love for nursing. In high school, I became interested in anatomy and physiology, and, later, I enjoyed my first volunteer work assisting patients as a candy striper in local hospitals. I felt rewarded by these experiences and decided that I wanted to be a nurse.

I obtained a bachelor’s degree in nursing from The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston in 1996 and, for 18 years now, I have been working in inpatient, outpatient, and OR settings.

As a clinical practice manager at Baylor College of Medicine, I oversee across the range of surgery clinics and enact measures to improve the quality of clinical care. I work collaboratively with faculty, medical staff, and the Clinical Practice Committee to develop and implement a set of “Best Practice Protocols” for BCM surgery outpatient clinics throughout the Texas Medical Center.

Thanks to our outstanding team work, for instance, the Department’s Division of Plastic Surgery recently received, for its second quarter in a row, the highest Press Ganey score of any department at Baylor College of Medicine. This honor resulted from the collaboration of the dedicated clinical staff, which included Deidre Bell, RuFina McDaniel, Sandra Mendieta, Cynthia Ordaz-Rios, Connie Pulido, Contrece Reed, and Alysa Woods.

The Press Ganey score is based on statistical information about the patients’ experiences and I am very pleased that Plastic Surgery’s Press Ganey scores have reflected the clinical staff’s efforts to provide the best patient care possible.

FEATURING RESIDENT SONIA TEWANI ORCUTT, MD

My interest in surgery developed on my surgical clerkship, when I was placed on the Surgical Oncology service for my core rotation at Boston University School of Medicine. I discovered that what attracted me to the field of surgery were the surgeons’ intellectual abilities to diagnose and medically care for patients and also their technical abilities to surgically repair their patients’ conditions. I was especially intrigued by the field of surgical oncology because of the uniqueness of each tumor, the importance of multidisciplinary care and, most importantly, the intense compassion that surgeons had for these patients when they were most vulnerable. My experience on this rotation led me to choose surgery as a career.

Dr. Orcutt is planning on specializing in Surgical Oncology, and is presently applying to fellowship programs.

Sonia Tewani Orcutt, MD

Over the past 6 years, I have grown to enjoy all this city and this program have to offer. In research, I learned how to formulate a research question, how to complete a project from start to finish, how to write a manuscript (a dozen published thus far), and how to give winning oral presentations. In the clinical years, I have been a part of incredible surgical operations and patient care. From the very young to the very old; from Whipples to gunshot wounds with aorta/IVC injuries, to getting to do a Mattox maneuver with Dr. Mattox; from patients who recover from major operations, to those who die on the operating room table. Witnessing such a great breadth of the human experience has helped me develop my abilities as a surgeon and a leader.
Being born and raised in and around the Texas Medical Center, I developed a great respect for physicians. Seeing great surgeons, such as Dr. Denton Cooley and Dr. Michael DeBakey, serve as leaders to both the Houston and the world community showed me what a true physician leader could accomplish. Furthermore, as a third generation surgeon, I have felt an obligation to live up to these ideals by being a surgical oncologist and pancreatic surgeon who truly values the physician-patient relationship. Throughout my training, I had the privilege of working with tremendous physicians who further exemplified excellence and dedication to patient care through both clinical work and research.

After several years of training at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, my wife, pediatric gastroenterologist and physician Lynette Van Buren, and I were thrilled to return home to Houston and the Texas Medical Center. Furthermore, I was overjoyed to join the team of physicians at the Elkins Pancreas Center, led by pancreatic surgeon Dr. William E. Fisher. At Baylor College of Medicine and St. Luke’s Hospital, I have enjoyed the collegial interactions with our medical oncology, gastroenterology, and fellow surgeons treating patients with pancreatic adenocarcinoma and pancreatic neuroendocrine tumors.

I believe that one of the aspects that make our Department unique is how greatly we value the patient-doctor relationship. What gives me the most personal satisfaction is helping patients and families go through what can be a very scary and daunting time in their lives.
NEW RESEARCH INITIATIVES

In the last year, the Department has been very pleased to introduce two new research initiatives that offer faculty members excellent opportunities to become more successful in their research careers: the Seed Grant Research Awards and the Research Core Team.

MICHAEL E. DEBAKEY DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY FACULTY SEED GRANT RESEARCH AWARDS

The research committee of the Department, led by Scott A. LeMaire, MD, is well aware that young investigators who are trying to develop independent research projects face a tough competition for large extramural grants and has responded to this need by offering the Faculty Research Awards as “seed grants.” Seed grants are initial research support that gives junior faculty enough funds to generate data for bigger grants. “We made sure that one of the grants was awarded to a basic science project and one to a clinical science proposal, by evaluating these two types of projects separately,” said Dr. LeMaire.

To score the proposals, the reviewers considered whether the proposals had potential clinical relevance and focused on whether the proposals had potential to lead to major extramural support by generating enough data to support funds to generate data for bigger grants. The response to the call for submissions was significant. Fifteen outstanding proposals were submitted by faculty members representing seven different divisions. Each grant was assigned to a panel composed of four experts from outside our department. Other considerations included whether the proposals had potential clinical relevance and focused on collaborations between faculty members and trainees.

The Department congratulates the recipients of the 2014 Faculty Research Awards:

Yulong Liang, MD from the Division of Surgical Research, for his basic science proposal titled “Targeting BRIT1 deficiency in hepatocellular carcinoma by PARP-based single and combination therapy.”

Steve K. Singh, MD from the Division of Transplant and Assist Devices, for his clinical research proposal titled, “The IMPULSE pilot study: investigating a novel synergy. Applying ischemic preconditioning to modulate the altered physiology for contemporary continuous flow left ventricular assist devices to reduce stroke and other adverse effects.”

Sanjeev Vasudevan, MD from the Division of Pediatric Surgery, for his basic science proposal titled, “Transcriptome analysis of metastatic hepatoblastoma to identify new molecular targets.”

RESEARCH CORE TEAM

The second of this past year’s initiatives was the creation of a Research Core Team to provide faculty members expert assistance and support with each one of the steps involved in developing and conducting a research project.

“Research is a priority for the department,” said Dr. LeMaire. “We want to help our investigators be as productive as possible by providing assistance from the inception to the completion of their research projects through all the steps. These include planning and designing the study, finding funding sources, writing and editing grants, dealing with contracts, obtaining IRB approval, developing a study database, managing enrollment, collecting data and samples, performing data analysis, editing abstracts, manuscripts, and presentations, and preparing figures, graphs, illustrations, slides, posters, and animations.”

Each one of the nine Research Core team members is prepared to provide expert assistance in one or more of the steps mentioned above. Using the team’s assistance will help our investigators manage their research more effectively.

In less than a year, the Research Core team has worked with 50 faculty members providing the following assistance:

GRANT AND CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

• Managed 62 active accounts
• Provided pre-award assistance on new submissions (> $5M)

CLINICAL TRIALS

• Start-up for 5 industry-sponsored trials
• Regulatory compliance activities for 12 studies

DEVELOPMENT/MANAGEMENT FOR 10 DATABASE PROJECTS

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS FOR 19 PROJECTS

EDITORIAL SUPPORT

• 16 manuscripts—e.g., Ann Surg, JACS, PLOS ONE, Nature
• 10 grant applications—DOD, NIH (R01, R21, U54), CPRIT

The Research Core Team has also been supporting our educational program by teaching and assisting our trainees with data analysis, manuscript and grant writing and editing.

The Department encourages faculty members and trainees to use the Research Core Team. To request their support, contact Dr. LeMaire at slemaire@bcm.edu.