

Health Matters

What Matters to Your Health, Matters to Us

November 2018

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Message from the Dean



Earlier this month, I and others from the School of Medicine had the opportunity to attend the Association of American Medical Colleges' annual meeting, where we shared the accomplishments of our young school and learned what our colleagues are doing to advance medical education.

Throughout the conference, I was reminded how our mission—to educate a diverse group of medical students and future biomedical scientists, develop physicians who will serve across all disciplines of medicine, bring hope to patients and communities by advancing biomedical knowledge through research, integrate education and research that advances the quality and accessibility of healthcare, and engage with the Rio Grande Valley communities to benefit Texas and the world—already is being realized in the Rio Grande Valley.

The UTRGV School of Medicine has:

- Launched its clinical practice, UT Health RGV, which provides patients with primary and specialty care, and brings subspecialties to the area that have not existed here before;
- Provided primary care to thousands living in underserved communities through its UniMóvil mobile clinic; and
- Expanded access to care in three underserved communities—in Cameron, Hidalgo and Starr Counties—by establishing Area Health Education Centers.

All of this could not be done without the cooperation and support of all our faculty, staff, residents and students, who have committed themselves to serving the community. Most recently, Dr. Marsha Griffin, professor of Pediatrics, and director of the Division of Child and Family Health and Community for Children program at the School of Medicine, was given the Clifford G. Grulee award for her work caring for immigrant and migrant children, as well as her lifelong work of advocating for underserved communities. And several of our students participated in community outreach events—the Walk to End Epilepsy and the Lone Star Survival bleed control training and education event—showing their dedication to serving the community so early in their medical careers.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank all of our students, residents, faculty and staff who have served and who currently served in our armed forces. Their commitment to serve and defend our country is inspiring and the School of Medicine is grateful to have each and every one extend that desire to serve here.

Thank you all for your devotion to serve the community and contribute to the transformation of healthcare in the Valley.

John H. Krouse, MD, PhD, MBA
Executive Vice President, Health Affairs
Dean, School of Medicine

[About the Dean](#)

In the Spotlight

Honoring our Veterans



The UTRGV School of Medicine would like to thank all of our students, residents, faculty and staff members who have served and who currently serve in the Armed Forces.

**First-year medical student
McCoy called to serve others**

**Military service confirmed
Nelson's career path**



Ronkino McCoy, a first-year medical student at the UTRGV School of Medicine, pursued his dream of serving patients by serving his country first.

McCoy, who grew up in Malden, Missouri, and earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from St. Edwards University in Austin, served eight years as a medic, mostly with the 82nd Airborne Division of the U.S. Army.

In addition to caring for soldiers throughout the United States, McCoy also served as a medic while serving in Iraq and Korea.

Working with patients in a holistic way confirmed his decision to become a doctor, he said.

"I used to always try to tell and teach my medics that 90 percent of your job is psychological," he said. "Whatever role they need you to play, whether that's father figure or best friend, because it's a hard job. They have nowhere to turn."

In addition to treating physical ailments and wounds, McCoy said he and his fellow medics also helped their fellow service members with psychological issues, as many of them experienced trauma while serving and some struggled with coping.

"I've always wanted to be a physician ... because I know I can help people like this and, honestly, I grew to love dealing with the people and their mental conditions, and we dealt with a lot of basic human conditions too," he said. "I learned to love the public health part of it."

McCoy said he chose to study medicine at the UTRGV School of Medicine because of its commitment to serve and engage with the community.



Dr. Robert Nelson, senior associate dean of Faculty Affairs and chair of the Department of Pediatrics at the School of Medicine, had to put his residency training aside to serve his country, but he said the experience helped confirm his desire to help young children and their families.

Just a year into his residency in pediatrics, Dr. Nelson was drafted to serve in the U.S. Army.

"Vietnam was still going on and we had a lottery," he said. "I don't even remember what my number was...it didn't matter what your number was, they could take you anywhere they needed to, which is what they did."

Nelson treated service members and their families at Fort Polk in Louisiana from 1971 to 1973.

"I got lucky because they needed some pediatricians also, so half the day for most of my two years I got to do pediatrics in the afternoon," he said. "On the positive side, I learned a bit more medicine."

Among the pediatric patients he saw was a 3-year-old child with metabolism problems and a younger child who had biliary atresia, a condition in which the bile ducts of the liver are scarred and blocked.

"It taught me about how, sometimes, parents focus on the immediate," he said.

Nelson said he received enough experience in outpatient pediatrics to determine he would best serve children and their families as a neonatologist.

"When I went back to finish to do the additional year of residency I was certainly more open to considering specialty training," he said. "I enjoyed doing hospital medicine more than outpatient and

“I want to give back to the people,” he said. “I can do the lab and, I know for a fact, that I can do the medical skills... I want to go back to the people and I want to be at a school that puts me back to the people.”

neonatology was just becoming its own specialty. As I started going through training, it had the combination of things that interested me and inspired me. I had mentors that I admired and pulled me in that direction and so that I have no regrets whatsoever.”

Accolades

Dr. Marsha Griffin receives Grulee Award at annual AAP meeting

Dr. Marsha Griffin, professor of Pediatrics, director of the Division of Child and Family Health and of the Community for Children program at the UTRGV School of Medicine, was given the Clifford G. Grulee award at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Saturday, Nov. 3, in Orlando, Florida. Named after one of the founders of the AAP, the Grulee Award is given to members for outstanding service to the academy. At the ceremony, Griffin was praised for her work caring for immigrant and migrant children, as well as her lifelong work of advocating for underserved communities.



News and Events

SOM faculty, students attend AAMC annual conference

The UTRGV School of Medicine showcased the talents of its faculty and students at the Learn Serve Lead 2018 [AAMC annual meeting](#) in Austin Nov. 2-6. Medical students Michael LaPelusa, Leah Bryan, Vania Nwokolo, Sarah Miller, Lauren Roddy, D'Andrea Ceaser, Shawn Izadi, Kat Longoria, Julien Mahler, Joy Alvarado, and Shea-Lynn Hopson presented their posters at the conference:

- A Podcast in Your Ear
- Safe MD
- Big Sib Lil Sib
- Minority Advancement in Medicine
- Student Run Clinic



SOM participates in Walk to End Epilepsy

SOM students host training on how to stop bleeding



UTRGV School of Medicine students and Dr. Randy Williamson, clinical associate professor of Pediatrics and a pediatric neurologist for UT Health RGV, participated in the Epilepsy Foundation Central & South Texas' Walk for Epilepsy Saturday, Nov. 3, at Fireman's Park in McAllen. The School of Medicine was a proud sponsor of this event.

UTRGV Photo by David Pike



UTRGV School of Medicine students participated in the statewide, student-led Lone Star Survival bleed control training and education event Saturday, Nov. 3, at the Mercadome Flea Market & Alamo Dance Hall in Alamo. Students showed the community different ways to stop bleeding, including how to wrap a tourniquet.

UTRGV Photo by David Pike

UT Health RGV, UTRGV Athletics partner to offer health care services to student-athletes



UT Health RGV, the clinical practice of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine, has formed a partnership with the UTRGV Department of Intercollegiate Athletics to offer health care services to the university's student-athletes.

As part of the agreement, Jimmy Gonzales, MD, clinical assistant professor of Family Medicine, has been appointed as the university's NCAA Health Care Administrator for UTRGV Athletics.

Under the agreement, UT Health RGV providers will handle all aspects of health care services for student-athletes, including:

- Sideline coverage for all full-contact and collision sports, such as men's and women's basketball and soccer;
- At minimum, on-call coverage for all non-contact and limited-contact collision sports, including men's and women's golf, track and field, cross country and baseball and women's volleyball;
- Two scheduled half-day clinic sessions per week at UTRGV Athletics' training facilities

AAMC Survey

StandPoint™ Surveys

The School of Medicine is encouraging all faculty and staff to participate in the [AAMC StandPoint Engagement Survey](#). This survey is specific to the needs and issues of medical school faculty, and has been used by almost 50 medical schools in the U.S. and Canada.

The faculty survey closes November 16 and staff survey closes December 14.

The advantage of such a survey is that it focuses on the unique attributes of medical schools. It therefore allows benchmarking in a variety of areas that can be used for comparison across schools, as well as to evaluate changes over time. It is currently used by three Texas Schools: UTSouthwestern, UT Medical Branch at Galveston, and UTHealth San Antonio.

To learn more about the survey, visit

<https://www.aamc.org/services/standpointsurveys/>.



Great things are happening at the UTRGV School of Medicine. Learn more about the SOM Strategic Plan.

[UTRGV SOM Strategic Plan](#)

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Your gift to the School of Medicine supports our mission to educate a diverse group of medical students and future scientists to benefit the Rio Grande Valley and the world.

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