The Academic Health Center is an integral component of the University of Cincinnati. It also plays a significant role in providing health care to the region and educating nurses, pharmacists, allied health professionals and physicians. Collectively, it contributes more than three-quarters of the university's overall research funding.

Findings: recently posed several questions to Dr. Jeremy Ono, Dr. Donald C. Harrison and Dr. Suzanne Boyce, PhD, presenting and providing pertinent information regarding the Academic Health Center. The entire interview can be found online at healthnews.uc.edu/findings.

Can you define the Academic Health Center? What is it, and who is a part of it?

“The Academic Health Center at the University of Cincinnati encompasses the colleges of medicine, nursing, pharmacy and allied health sciences, Hospital, Heart and Vascular Center, the UC Cancer Institute, UC Cardiology Institute, UC Diabetes and Endocrinology Institute, UC Neuroscience Institute and the programs and institutes at the UC Reading Campus. It also has strong ties to UC Health, which includes University Hospital, West Chester Hospital, UC Biomedical Campus and the Drake Center. University of Cincinnati Physicians is a multispecialty practice group for physicians within the UC College of Medicine. Partners also include Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, the Veterans Affairs Medical Center and Shriners Hospital.”

What is your vision for the Academic Health Center?

“The UC Academic Health Center must continue to serve as the nexus for health professions education and biomedical sciences at the university Students within any of the UC colleges should ultimately benefit from programs offered here. I envision an Academic Health Center of the future where there is increased intercollegiate and interdisciplinary activity and strong affiliations with numerous hospitals within the region. As a primary site for clinical care in Cincinnati, the health center should also lead the way in patient care in the region, innovating care delivery by making use of cutting edge technologies and functionalities. The Academic Health Center of the future must retain a strong basic science portfolio to ensure that innovations stem from our faculty. We need to ensure that we streamline translational research, facilitating the translation of laboratory discoveries to the bedside. This will require a self-critical analysis of the continuum from basic science to experimental models and then to humans. Investments need to be made to ensure that there are no critical gaps that might impede the translational paradigm. It will also be important to evaluate our strengths in genomics, computational biology and chemistry, structural biology and our high-throughput screening capabilities to ensure that we have the research infrastructure to compete with other leading academic health centers. This will be critical for drug discovery, predictive medicine and personalized medicine.”

What are some of the important challenges facing the Academic Health Center?

“The leaders of the key members have not met regularly since Dr. Jane Henney stepped down as senior vice president and provost for health affairs in 2008. She and Dr. Donald C. Harrison had convened regular meetings while serving as provost for health affairs. This lack of regular communication and planning in the interim has been a key challenge to the Academic Health Center. I have recently re-convened the Provost Senior Leadership Group and am pleased with our communications. There are also challenges with respect to cost pressures from public and private payers, increasing care of the uninsured in our primary patient group and balancing our teaching and research missions with the delivery of patient care. There are also specific challenges such as the portfolio of scientific and clinical disciplines represented at the Academic Health Center, as well as infrastructure for both research and clinical care.”

What are key strengths of the Academic Health Center?

“The breadth of scientific and clinical disciplines represented at the site and the quality of faculty and students that call it home. There are not many academic health centers that have such strong colleges of nursing, pharmacy and allied health co-located with a college of medicine that has physicians working in such a broad array of medical and surgical specialties.”

Goal of Wider Access Spurs Speech Technology Work

By Katy Cosse

Although we use speech every day, researchers who study it know it’s much more than the words we choose. But when they look for technology to measure the acoustics of pronunciation, pitch, breathiness and other elements, their options are limited.

With a grant from the National Science Foundation, College of Allied Health Sciences Professor Suzanne Boyce, PhD, was able to expand the discussion around those options. Boyce’s grant was used to bring the field’s top software developers from around the world to a one-day workshop titled, “Software to Empower Learning and Research in Speech (STELARS).” A Workshop for Developers and Teachers,” held on January 31.

The event, also attended by an international group of researchers and teachers specializing in speech, was focused on making speech analysis technology more accessible to educators.

“The problem is that most software that analyzes speech acoustics is designed in research labs for a specific research focus,” says Boyce, a professor of communication sciences and disorders. “The research labs make it open-source, but it isn’t user-friendly for the speech language pathologists, neuroscientists, audiologists, linguists and engineers who study and teach about speech every day.”

Due to the high cost of commercial software, she says teachers are often forced to use research-focused software in their classes. With more accessible, user-friendly software, Boyce believes more students will become interested in speech, teachers can teach it better and both can pursue better research focused on it.

“The ultimate aim is user-friendly software that students from high school to graduate levels can download themselves and work through exercises at their own pace without needing a lot of hands-on guidance,” she says.

Boyce says the workshop organizers—herself and collaborators from three other universities in Europe and the U.S.—received an “amazing” response from the participants, who are making plans to continue the discussion at future conferences.

Potential steps include having speech educators spend a sabbatical in a computer programming lab, where they can suggest simple ways to make programs applicable to the classroom—such as making it easier to adjust the parameters of a test or model.

“It’s not always obvious how to change those parameters in the software,” says Boyce, “but when you’re teaching, you want that very transparent for students. It allows them to get a glimpse into the guts of the concept and a glimpse into the guts of the computer program, without being computer programmers themselves.”

The group has now established a website, and various interested members are using it for an exchange medium. The group plans to meet again at the InterSpeech Conference in Italy in October.

Uses for Speech Analysis Technology

• For speech language pathologists: To evaluate voice and speech disorders and help patients track their progress.

• For neuroscientists: To investigate how the brain processes speech.

• For audiologists: To evaluate the effectiveness of hearing aids and cochlear implants.

• For linguists: To study dialect and social differences in speech.

• For engineers: In speech recognition systems and in improving speech transmission devices.

Annual Nightingale Awards Program Honors Nurses

The 2011 Nightingale Award recipients (left to right): Sara Krzywkowski-Mohn, Mary Burch, Cathy Frank, Amy Kimble, Tresandra Pope, Taylor Grooms

At this year’s College of Nursing’s Nightingale Awards dinner, more than honorees were announced: Now, the recognition program is supported with a dedicated endowment. Read more on page 2.
Tow Humanism Honoree Mentors and Patients as Inspiration in Delivering Care

By Katie Pence
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In the eyes of a patient, sympathy and compassion can make a good doctor great. Carl Fichtenbaum, MD, professor of clinical medicine and infectious diseases expert, is epitomizing this as the 2011 Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award winner, being given to him on May 22 during the annual Honors Day Program.

This distinction, presented by the Arnold P. Gold Foundation, is awarded annually to a student, graduate student and one graduating medical student at 85 medical schools nationally and recognizes the value of the humanity in the delivery of care to patients and their families.

“I’ve had a number of important mentors that I have considered outstanding healers and physicians, including Peter Frame, Russ Little and Morris Wessel, to name a few,” Fichtenbaum says. “The quality I valued the most in these physicians was their ability to treat each person in a caring, compassionate and humane manner.

“This award is shared with them and the patients who help me become a better person every day.”

Also being honored... Laura Pareso is a fourth-year medical student at UC. Pareso, who is a member of the Gold Humanism Honor Society, previously received the UC Spirit of the Community Award for her coordination of a medical mission trip to Mexico through the Christian Medical Association, was an intern at the Health Resource Center for Urban Health Project and was a mentor for UC Med Mentors through the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative.

Urban Health Project Marks Anniversary, Receives Key Gift

By Angela Koenig
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Maintained for over two decades by a strong compassion for the less fortunate and funded by the generosity of private donors and foundations, and not to mention a whole lot of bake sales, the medical student-run Urban Health Project (UHP) marked its 25th anniversary Thursday, May 12, with another significant achievement to toast.

A lump-sum, $50,000 grant from the Jacob G. Schmidlapp Foundation Trusts, Fifth Third Bank, Trustee, to seed an endowment to help sustain the program into the future. The gift is connected by history to Jacob G. Schmidlapp, a prominent Cincinnati banker and philanthropist whose Union Savings Bank merged with Fifth Third in 1919.

The trust has contributed over $1.6 million toward art, health and community initiatives.

“We haven’t finalized all of the numbers yet, but it looks like this is going to be one of our most successful fundraising years ever, and we are grateful for the contributions from individuals and foundations who have recognized the value of our work in the community,” says UHP Co-Director Michelle Shible, a second-year medical student at the UC College of Medicine.

The UHP is an eight-week summer program that pairs second-year medical students with nonprofit in the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky areas such as Off the Streets, Tender Mercies and Lighthouse Youth Crisis Cen-

For more information about attending the event or how to donate to UHP call (513) 569-6153 or visit med.uc.edu/uhp.
Imagine becoming extremely ill, being hospitalized and diagnosed with a chronic condition that you may not know much about, and daily being sent out on your own with prescriptions and well wishes.

For some patients, this is a recipe for disaster that results in additional medical emergencies and return stays in the hospital.

For a heart failure patient, which affects about 4.8 million people in the U.S., readmission rates at UC Health University Hospital are about 30 percent, with the national average at about 24 percent.

In an attempt to lower this number, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, an initiative of the summer of 2010 to reduce readmissions for heart failure nationally. Stephanie Dunlap, DO, director of UC Health’s heart failure program, was appointed project leader for the initiative at University Hospital.

For patient education, an arm of this initiative, a team of nurses and staff at University Hospital launched a program in February to educate these patients about heart failure about caring for themselves after leaving the in-patient setting.

“We call our team ‘Your Heart’s Connection,’” says Justin Foreman, clinical manager of 6 South (Cardi- ac Telemetry Unit) in the hospital and a core member of the team. Mary Colliner, clinical nurse leader of the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit, and Monica Worrell, nurse clinician in 6 South, are the team leaders.

Foreman says the team is a care support resource, focused on educating the patient. The team visits patients in their rooms prior to discharge and hands out resources to help them manage their health at home.

“We take the time to go through the materials, allowing patients to ask questions,” he says, adding that the packet includes information about the importance of patients weighing themselves daily as well as dietary management, prescription education and follow-up care.

The team also has created a hotline available for patients to call if they have questions or need further education once they’ve left the hospital setting.

“Someone is on-call to offer support and education to optimize the best possible outcomes for our patients,” Foreman says. “Their lives could depend on it.”

Dunlap says patient education is key in bringing down the readmission rates and improving overall patient outcomes.

Clearly, the most expensive part of caring for patients with heart failure is during hospitalization,” she says. “With nearly a 30 percent readmission rate, the drain on public health dollars is tremendous. With the Robert Wood Johnson Project, we aim to not only increase the health and well-being of the patient with heart failure, we also stand to decrease our public health dollars for this dreadful disease.”

The team is now collecting data to be announced in coming months in hopes of showing that this patient-centered initiative is making a difference in care at University Hospital.
Centralized Cancer Tumor Bank Created, Now Open for Researcher Use

New System Allows Scientists Access to More Than 3,000 Biologic Samples and Associated Clinical Data

By Amanda Harper
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Cancer doesn’t wait or discriminate. When a new research idea sparks, time is of the essence. But gathering enough human tissue samples for testing can take years, delaying potentially critical progress. This is where access to an established tumor bank is so critical to any major cancer research program.

Under the direction of Hassana Fathallah, PhD, the UC Cancer Institute’s tissue banking program has been transformed into a robust, strictly organized and structured operation that gives researchers access to thousands of human tumor specimens, including paired normal tissues, blood and urine— as well as associated clinical data.

“Having a comprehensive tumor bank linked to clinical, pathological and research data allows the rapid introduction of information into the bench into everyday treatment,” says Fathallah, scientist-director of tumor banking at the UC Cancer Institute and research assistant professor at the College of Medicine.

Fathallah was recruited from Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in 2009 to create—essentially from the ground up—a central tumor bank for the UC Cancer Institute. Previously, there were numerous individual efforts to collect tumor specimens, with the goal of eventually including all cancer types, including hematologic malignancies.

“People have been enthusiastic and want to be part of the process, which has made progress possible. This has—and will continue to be—a monumental team effort that we could not have achieved without collaboration from the surgeons, nurses and pathologists as well as administrators at UC and University Hospital,” says Fathallah.

The hidden leader behind the effort, she says, is George Atweh, MD, director of the UC Cancer Institute and Herbert F. Koch Chair and professor of hematology oncology.

“Atweh sees the big picture and his support and guidance have allowed us to connect with resources and troubleshoot issues faster. Without his support and vision, this couldn’t have happened,” adds Fathallah.

The seventh annual Looking Upstream for Environmental Links to Breast Cancer public education forum will take place Saturday, May 21.

Audra Weiss, MD, a nationally known speaker and author, will present “Taking Care of Your Girls.” The forum also offers attendees timely information on potential environmental links to breast cancer and an update on research initiatives.

The forum is presented by the Cincinnati Breast Cancer and the Environment Research Program and the Breast Cancer Registry of Greater Cincinnati. Registration is $20 and includes a buffet breakfast and educational materials. Parking is free. For more information, contact Veronica Ratliff at (513) 636-8507 or veronica.ratliff@uc.edu.

Environmental Links to Breast Cancer Forum
The seventh annual Looking Upstream for Environmental Links to Breast Cancer public education forum will take place Saturday, May 21. It will take place on the UC Health West Chester campus. For information, visit lunghoncointer.com.

Ride Cincinnati, a family-friendly cycling event benefiting breast cancer research and patient care, is being held Sunday, June 12. It is being held atVectman’s Cove, along the Cincinnati riverfront. Attendees can participate in rides of various lengths, including a kid-friendly rally ride. To participate or for more information, visit ridecincinnati.org. Registrations are required by June 6.

PhASe Conference May 20
This year’s Presentations of Research and Innovative Scholarly Endeavors (PhASe) conference at the College of Allied Health Sciences will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Friday, May 20, at the French East Building and Medical Sciences Building.

The PhASe conference allows students to showcase their research through poster displays and oral presentations. At 11:30 a.m., there will be a presentation of awards to distin-
guished alumni in Kriese Auditori-
um, and at noon, the day’s keynote speaker, Ralf Schlosser, PhD, will present, “Evidence-Based Practice in the Allied Health Fields.” Schlosser is chair and professor of speech language pathology and audiology at Northeastern University.

Second Annual Research Week May 23-27
To recognize the contribution of doctors, nurses and patients who conduct and participate in hospital-based research, University Hospital’s Research Committee will host the second annual University Hospital Research Week, May 23-27.

The week will kick off during a ceremony in the hospital lobby at noon, Monday, May 23. The rest of the week will include presentations of ongoing hospital-based research in the dining area across from Starbucks. Investigators will answer questions and provide information about research at the hospital.

For more information and a schedule of presentations, visit healthnews.uc.edu.

Vontz Core Imaging Lab Open House May 20
The Vontz Core Imaging Lab (VCIL) will host an open house from 2 to 5 p.m., Friday, May 20. Any researcher interested in utilizing this core facility is welcome to attend and learn about the non-invasive imaging services available. The VCIL is equipped with multimodal systems tailored specifically for use in small animals and capable of 3-D imaging and nuclear medicine techniques. Information at (513) 558-7930.

Faculty Awards Celebration May 19
Join your colleagues in recognizing winners of the 2011 Faculty Awards. A ceremony honoring winners of this year’s awards will begin at 3 p.m., Thursday, May 19, in Tangeman University Center’s Great Hall East. All are invited to attend. A light reception follows.

Airing Lecture May 18
David Holtzman, MD, will give the 25th annual Airing Lecture, presented by the department of neurology, at 7 p.m., Thursday, May 18, in Medical Sciences Building Room 5015. His topic will be “The Brain and Protein Metabolism: Provide Insights Into Alzheimer’s Disease Pathogenesis, Diagnosis and Treatment.”

Holtzman is professor and chair of neurology at the Washington University School of Medicine.

Tissue Access Requests
Any researcher affiliated with the UC Cancer Institute can apply for access to the tissue bank. All requests will be reviewed by a research committee prior to approval.

At this time, there is no charge for access. To obtain a tissue request form, contact Hassana Fathallah, PhD, at hassana.fathallah@uc.edu.

Day of Service Provides Experience

The Initiative on Poverty, Justice and Health (IPJH) held the UC Col-
lege of Medicine’s first Day of Service on Saturday, April 2. Seven
groups, comprising 81 students, faculty and residents, lent a hand to community service organizations, including Su Casa, St. Vincent de Paul, Redwood, Anthony House, Matthew 25 Ministries, Mercy Franciscan at St. John and Habitat for Humanity.

Colleen Marty, second-year medical student, and Morgan Brown, first-year medical student, serve as chairs for IPJH, say the day was a valuable experience.

“Everyone seemed very happy and excited about their experienc-
es,” says Marty. “This type of event removes us from our bubble and lets us see what is actually happening in our community.

“Most students were involved in their community before coming to medical school, and as future physicians, we want to help people,” adds Brown. “This is a way for us to get back to our roots and show our dedication to the Cincinnati community as a whole.”

For more information on IPJH, email Marty at colleen.m.marty@gmail.com or Brown at morganbrown89@gmail.com.

To hear Marty and Brown explain more about the day’s events, visit healthnews.uc.edu/video.