College of Medicine Clinical Department Heads Support Regents’ Efforts to Create World-Class Academic Health Center at UA

The Heads of all 14 clinical departments strongly support the efforts of the Arizona Board of Regents to help us create one of the nation’s top academic health centers here at the University of Arizona.

The faculty of these departments provides nearly all physician care at University Medical Center (UMC), University Physicians Hospital at Kino Campus and the clinics and surgery centers associated with University Physicians Healthcare (UPH).

"UA Healthcare," the new parent company formed last summer to better support the UA College of Medicine, promises to expand patient care and medical research, as well as train a much-needed future generation of physicians and other health-care professionals for our state. By better aligning the patient-care enterprise affiliated with the UA College of Medicine, UA Healthcare seeks to develop groundbreaking new approaches to health promotion and disease prevention in order to keep Arizonans more healthy, while at the same time providing outstanding patient care when required.

Building on the integration of two excellent organizations - UMC and UPH - and working closely with the University and its health colleges, UA Healthcare will develop innovative approaches to pressing health-care issues and collaboratively share these statewide to help Arizona become the national leader in improving health while reducing medical costs. Caring for our patients is our first priority, and this new structure will enable us to provide that care more effectively and efficiently.

However, UA Healthcare, specifically its organizational structure, has garnered extensive public debate in recent days. We believe efforts to
the University would be devastating to the future success of a premier academic medical center. This integration has been discussed publicly for more than two years, and the time has come to take key actions to realize the full potential of UA Healthcare so that we can better serve the people of Arizona.

A national search for a CEO to lead UA Healthcare has been under way for some time. As we continue this search, we unanimously support the recent proposal of the Arizona Board of Regents to strengthen UA Healthcare’s ties to the University by combining the positions of UA Vice President of Medical Affairs and UA Healthcare CEO. The deans of the UA College of Medicine - Tucson and the UA College of Medicine - Phoenix, as well as the CEOs of UMC and UPH Hospital, all would report to this new executive, who in turn would report to the UA Healthcare Board and the UA President. This structure is a standard governance model at most U.S. academic health centers. It creates a shared responsibility to work collaboratively and is essential to operate a complex academic health center in these fast-changing times. The intent is to hire a world-class executive with substantial business experience in hospital-system management and a track record of leading innovation in medical education, research and healthcare delivery.

We believe the success of UA Healthcare is essential to the future of our state and its citizens. The UA College of Medicine and University Medical Center were created to serve the people of Arizona. We now have the historic opportunity for UA Healthcare and its partner, The University of Arizona, to reform the delivery of healthcare in our state and become a national model for success. Let us not miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Steven J. Barker, MD, PhD, Anesthesiology
Achyut Bhattacharyya, MD, Pathology
Rainer Gruessner, MD, Surgery
Harvey Meislin, MD, Emergency Medicine
Francisco Moreno, MD, Psychiatry
Thomas Boyer, MD, Internal Medicine
John Ruth, MD, Orthopedic Surgery
Tamsen Bassford, MD, Family and Community Medicine
Fayez Ghishan, MD, Pediatrics
Tim Hunter, MD, Radiology