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Joe G.N. "Skip" Garcia,
MD

A Statement from UA Senior Vice President for Health Sciences

Joe G.N. "Skip" Garcia, MD
Dr. Merlin K. DuVal Professor of Medicine

Dear Colleagues,

On Monday, President Ann Weaver Hart requested that the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) complete an independent analysis in response to comments by ABOR President Eileen Klein at the beginning last Friday's (8/12/16) ABOR Health Affairs Committee meeting. I was not aware of the allegations made by President Klein in advance of her opening comments and continue to be unaware of the specifics of the allegations. I will not reiterate those comments, as President Klein provided no material facts or substantive evidence, and there was no further discussion related to her comments during the more than four hours of committee deliberations.

At President Hart's urging and with her support, I am pleased to provide this additional update and remain deeply committed to advancing the mission of the UA Health Sciences in a collaborative and rich working environment. The two recently completed ABOR Health Affairs Committee meetings provided a public forum to address questions about the operation and the direction of the Colleges of Medicine. Together with Dean Chuck Cairns and Interim Dean Ken Ramos, the UA Health Sciences and the Colleges of Medicine made a compelling case for our current direction based upon a presentation of the facts and in thoughtful response to substantive questions.

I am deeply troubled by the continued focus on third-party allegations that divert focus from our mission and threaten the morale of so many dedicated people. Furthermore, the media is not the appropriate forum for these matters to be discussed, but rather as part of an internal dialog and evaluation to determine how we can improve and move forward. As shared with the Regents, we are absolutely committed to advancing that dialog.

I stand firm in defense of the UA Health Sciences accomplishments and I am proud of the overwhelmingly positive outpouring of support from UA faculty, students, and staff and our many community partners. We took seriously President Hart and ABOR's expectation that we be attuned and responsive to various concerns and perspectives. In doing so, our recent Health Affairs Committee presentations specifically addressed the following:

Education

Both Colleges remain focused on delivering the highest quality educational experience to our medical students. Our partnership with Banner Health provides tremendous new opportunities to position UA graduates as the next generation of health-care leaders. The leadership, oversight and responsibility for our education programs remains singularly with University of Arizona under the authority of the Deans.

Clinical Service

Our 30-year affiliation agreement with Banner Health creates an extraordinary platform that will enable the UA Colleges of Medicine to move forward with plans to develop a world-class academic health center in two cities. We've created an integrated statewide academic health center providing the highest quality of care for Arizonans and the greater desert southwest region.

The partnership with Banner, like almost any merger and acquisition experience, has not been without challenges. The wisdom of ABOR in forming this partnership, however, remains solid. There is no better example of this reality than the recent awarding to the University of Arizona Health Sciences and Banner Health of the landmark, five-year \$43.3 million Precision Medicine Initiative® Cohort Program grant from the National Institutes of Health. The other three organizations are among the “who’s who” of heavyweights in academic medicine – Columbia University Medical Center, Northwestern University, and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. These organizations are no longer simply our aspirational peers; we are now their equals.

Research

Discovery, innovation and new knowledge creation drive everything we do as an academic health sciences center, contributing to the growth and development of our state’s life sciences and biotechnology economy. By any measure of accomplishment, our research programs have been overwhelmingly successful and we are only just beginning.

Finance

Managing the financial resources of a multi-million dollar operation is never an easy task. Factor in the complexity of our tripartite mission, the specialization that exists across five health sciences colleges, and the logistical challenges of maintaining operations on campuses in Arizona’s two major cities, and one can appreciate the dizzying effect. Nevertheless, the UA Health Sciences is a part of the University of Arizona and all of our units follow the same budget processes, accounting methodologies and reporting requirements as all other units of the University.

To address definitively again, financial resources allocated to Phoenix-based programs are used exclusively in support of those programs and the same holds true in Tucson. Just as University-wide units (such as legal counsel, purchasing, real estate, etc.) provide support for certain functions and activities, UA Health Sciences also maintains and provides such operations.

Leadership

There are many schools of thought as to what makes an effective leader and certainly within the University of Arizona there are many different types of leaders. We engage in lively discussion and we solicit, value and respect the input of a wide range of stakeholders. In the recruitment of so many new leaders to the University of Arizona over the past three years, one feature stands out – they all share a deep passion for and alignment with our mission to improve the health of Arizona.

In closing, I want to reiterate that with all the great success and rapid change, we realize that we still have additional work to do. We will be working actively over the next several weeks to provide additional communication forums for discussion with all constituent groups. I encourage any concerned party or interested stakeholder to review the publically available materials covered in our Health Affairs Committee presentations. This information can be found on the ABOR website at: <https://www.azregents.edu/board-committees/health-affairs>.

I believe that the presentations speak loudly and clearly to our successes and clear path forward. I welcome your thoughts and suggestions and thank you for your many contributions and continued support.

Sincerely,

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UA Senior Vice President for Health Sciences
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