

## The Dental Branch, the HSC and the TMC: An Historic Connection

By Erika E. Durham, Public Affairs

Imagine what it takes to recognize a human need, develop a plan of action, gain support for that plan, fight opposition to the effort, and continue to persevere until the need is ultimately met. Even today that is a daunting feat.

Now stop. Rewind 100 years – and imagine trying to do it then.

A century ago the founders of what is now The University of Texas Dental Branch at Houston struggled to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles when faced with a lack of trained dentists in the state. The quality of the community's oral health, and therefore overall health, was at stake.

On Feb. 11, 1905, after much preparation, planning and perseverance, the Texas Dental College, later renamed the UT Dental Branch, was born. The Dental Branch cel-

brates its Centennial this year and celebrates its mark in history as the first dental school established in Texas.

It is unlikely that the founders imagined the great strides in dental education, discovery and community service that would come to fruition in the years to follow. More inconceivable would be the role the Dental Branch would play in the development of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, an educational umbrella organization, located in the world's largest medical center. After a shaky start, the two organizations would blossom together, each the better because of

the other.

Catherine M. Flaitz, D.D.S., dean of the UT Dental Branch, partly credits the school's connection with the health science center and the Texas Medical Center for its strong educational and research collaborations, access to specialized human and technological resources, a constant stream of patients, and the opportunity to expand the role of dentistry in medicine and public health.

When the health science center was created in 1972 to mainstream the administration of the UT schools in Houston, the Dental Branch had nearly 70 years of existence to its credit. With its longev-

ity and track record of stable leadership, the Dental Branch was poised to take a leading role in the development of the new health science center. And it did.

The late John Victor Olson, D.D.S., who became dean of the UT Dental Branch in 1952, was appointed the health science center's first acting president in 1972. As acting president he continued to serve as dean of the Dental Branch, and would remain so for another 10 years. While serving as dean of the Dental Branch in Houston, Olson also became the first dean of the UT Dental Branch at San Antonio from 1969-1972.

He maintained his role as Dental Branch dean, serving as both dean and president in Houston until 1974. Historical accounts of Olson's appointment credit him with an abil-

*continued on page 3*



Dental training – the past, the present. Founded in February 1905, the Dental Branch celebrates its Centennial this year.

## UT Health Science Center Brings Funding Concerns to Texas Legislature

By Pamela Lewis, Public Affairs

Funding for debt service on tuition revenue bonds to pay for three major construction projects tops the list of UT Health Science Center priorities before the 79th session of the Texas Legislature, which opened last month and continues through May 30. Over the next three and a half months – providing a special session isn't called by the governor – legislators will decide the state-funded portion of the budget of The University of Texas System and its components for fiscal years 2006 and 2007, as well as budgets for the many other state-funded or -supported entities.

The three priority projects include a replacement for the nearly 50-year-old Dental Branch

building, completion of the build out and equipment for laboratory space in the Regional Academic Health Center Building at the School of Public Health Brownsville campus, and expansion of the School of Public Health main building in Houston.

"It's important to continue to build the structural resources to position this university to recruit the very best scientific and clinical faculty we can, to be the very best we can be," said James T. Willerson, M.D., president. "I admire the members of the Legislature, their great concern for Texas and its educational and research growth, and I know they'll do the very best they can with available dollars."

Also among the health science center's legislative priorities are requests to restore baseline funding from the 5 percent cut mandated last year by Gov. Rick Perry and to increase funding to cope with the institution's projected growth over the FY05 base period as well as inflation adjustment. Funds to continue to recruit world's best scientists also are being sought. Willerson and other health science center officials are working in concert with UT System leaders on these issues even as state leaders talk of a possible 6 percent budget cut for the next biennium.

Texas is one of only six state legislatures with biennial vs. annual legislative sessions

— Arkansas, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon are the others, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures — during which funding for two years, rather than one — must be decided.

The health science center's biggest push this session will be for funding for debt service on tuition revenue bonds for the three major construction projects, and to allow the continued recruitment of world's best scientists. To replace the current Dental Branch building, which no longer meets the needs of modern dental education, plans call for a 225,000-square-foot facility to accommodate teaching operatories, classrooms, research space and offices.

*continued on page 3*

### Inside:

Volunteer Call ..... Page 2

Stem Cell Panel ..... Page 2

DB's First Black Faculty

Grad Remembers ..... Page 3

### Barnes & Noble Holiday BookFair Numbers Are In

The annual scholarship Holiday BookFair at Barnes & Noble, held during the first week of December, enjoyed even greater participation this year than during its first offering in December 2003.

More than \$17,500 worth of merchandise was purchased at the store by those turning in voucher requests to support the scholarship fund-raising efforts. The result is a contribution from Barnes & Noble of \$4,500 to fund health science center student scholarships. Each school received a portion of the proceeds based on the designations recorded by customers on the vouchers.

Special thanks go to the members of the steering committee, faculty, staff and students, and the Medical School Organization of Faculty Wives and Female Faculty for their concerted efforts towards the success of the BookFair.



THE UNIVERSITY  
of TEXAS  
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER  
AT HOUSTON