

McKinney, Brust Provide 'Talk Show' Format Q&A at UCSC Workshop

Editor's Note: Michael McKinney, M.D., senior executive vice president of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, called for a more pleasant workplace and aggressive employee development and announced an across-the-board pay raise this fall, to cheering and applause at the University Classified Staff Council workshop, May 20.

McKinney's opening address, held in a talk show format with 'host' Jane Brust, assistant vice president for Public Affairs, touched on several issues of importance to the university. It also allowed the 300-plus crowd of classified employees a chance to learn about McKinney as a person — sweet-tooth and all.

Brust: Dr. McKinney, you've been with us two years now. How would you characterize your time at the Health Science Center?

McKinney: "I like my job. I like it more on Fridays than I do on Mondays," he said jokingly. "But seriously, I enjoy what I do."

"I came here originally on a 90-day assignment. But within the last two years we have made a lot of progress. We were having financial problems, and it was hard to find people who smiled at work. I think we'd simply lost focus. We were doing good things, but we had forgotten what it was that we signed up to do. Since then I think we have refocused on our mission: excellent teaching, research and patient care."

Brust: Someone else who really enjoys his job is not here with us today, and that is Dr. James T. Willerson, president of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. He was called away today to testify in Austin before the Legislature. Say a few words about how you two work together and what your roles look like.

McKinney: Well, we are different, and we have different skill sets. But the good thing is that we are willing to share those skill sets. I'll admit that we disagree on some issues. I've talked him out of some things, and he's talked

me out of some things, but that is what good team work is all about.

Dr. Willerson is the best person I have ever seen with the Development Board and with various fundraising arenas, while on the other hand, that is not one of my strong points. He is much more of a philosopher and visionary, while I am more of a doer. I like to be the one doing what it takes.

Brust: Well, certainly one of Dr. Willerson's highest priorities is campus growth. Would you comment on why campus growth and updating our facilities is so important at this time?

McKinney: Research is totally different now than it was 50, or even, 30 years ago. In order to progress and grow with the changes, we need to have state-of-the-art facilities — and we will. Also, this helps in faculty retention and recruitment, which helps student recruitment.

Brust: Dr. McKinney, you have been very outspoken about your vision for having all personnel feel better about the level of respect and appreciation they receive. You have consistently been on message about wanting us all to feel better about where we work. How do you think we can accomplish this?

McKinney: It's not that I just want you to feel good about coming to work. It's that I want you to be able to feel good about coming to work. If you choose not to, but you are able to, then that is different. The basic solution is simple. We have to respect one another, and I don't know if that is something that can or should be taught in the workplace. Frankly, if your Mama and Daddy didn't teach you how to be nice to people, I am not sure that you can be taught that now. If you don't want to be nice to people, you might want to think about getting a different job. Don't make it bad for everyone else.

Secondly, employee development is important. When I first came here, I asked to see all

the personnel records. It was surprising that they didn't all exist in one place. It was like going on a scavenger hunt. People were telling me they hadn't had an evaluation in three years. That is unacceptable. An evaluation is not just for pay raises, it is for charting progress.

An evaluation should be an opportunity to sit down and say "This is where I am, and this where I want to be." An evaluation is for the employee and supervisor to develop a plan of progress together. Recently we've changed the A&P appraisal form. Every person I sat down with during the A&P evaluation process, we wrote goals together. One of their goals was to nurture their employees to their fullest potential. Therefore, it has now become their job to help you with your job. They are no longer judged just by how they do their own jobs, but how the people who work for them do their job. That is a very, very, very serious goal to me.

Question from the audience asked at the end of the segment: What can be done if a supervisor says they don't have enough money for training?

McKinney: Often managers like to say that they don't have enough money for this or that, when the truth of the matter is that this university is going to spend \$630 million in the next fiscal year. We do have enough money. We just choose to do certain things with it, and everybody has to own up to that. Training should be one of the advantages of going to a health science center. I can tell you now that it won't be 100 percent of the supervisors who comply with this evolution, but if you are having a problem with advancement and growth, feel free to send me a letter telling me the situation. And feel free to put your name on it and the name of the supervisor. No one is going to retaliate against you.

We are also looking at where we place supervisors. We have found that we will hire a great scientist and then put him in an administrative position. Well managing paper and

managing people are two different things. We often don't equip people with certain skills and then get mad at them when they fail. That is not right.

Brust: Now to switch gears, Dr. McKinney, you are often saying, "Get a Life," and I think what you mean is work hard, but also play hard. I want to know what you do to play hard.

McKinney: Well, first of all, I think it's important to remember that the job is what you do, not who you are. So go home and get a life. I still have a farm in Centerville. The bad news is that it takes two hours to get there and the good news is that the cell phones don't work. I have a garden, where I go and dig in the dirt. I drive around, look at the chickens and look for deer. And as most of you know, I am a football fan.

Brust: Yes, we also know that family is very important to you. Your parents were both educators, you grew up with a brother and sister and you've been married to your high school sweetheart, Lou Ann, for 34 years. You have three boys and four granddaughters. Tell us how your family plays into your life.

McKinney: My family is exactly the reason why I get up and go to work every morning. I'll never retire. I am going to die on a job somewhere. Taking care of my family is important. They are my reason for existing.

Brust: I understand that there have been quite a few times when Lou Ann has had the intention of making chocolate chip cookies, but the chocolate chips didn't stay around long enough to become a part of the cookies. That's a mystery in the McKinney household. Any light you can shed on that?

McKinney: Well, I put out DeCon, I just don't know what keeps happening. But seriously, you can tell I don't miss a whole lot of meals. I love chocolate. I had hip replacement surgery a few months ago and someone called

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More Than a Job — My Alma Mater

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We put a lot of effort into the students here, and we're so proud of them. As members of the Alumni Association, we want to keep track of them and know what they are doing — and as faculty members we have a lot of hope for them just like a parent," Kellaway explains.

Easing into the faculty role

Some see being an alumnus as an asset to becoming a faculty member. "These folks know the ropes intuitively and learn how to become a faculty member here with ease," Strobel says.

The path also may be smoother for the new faculty member once on the job. "They have more stroke with the students because they've been through it and know what it's like through the 'when I was here' model that is easy for students to identify with," Strobel says.

Brent King, M.D., '83, who has been on faculty of the Medical College of Pennsylvania in addition to the UT Medical School, agrees that it is easier to transition to a faculty position at one's alma mater.

"I think it's easier to work here having gone to school here because you know the place and the culture and don't have to

adapt to that in addition to adapting to a new job," King says.

And although the rate of alumni faculty has remained about the same over the last several years, Gunn predicts that it may increase in the future.

"As our students are getting better and better training and are trained in more advanced subspecialties, they are coming back to our academic center because it's one of the only places to find a home for that advanced knowledge," Gunn says.

Homegrown not ingrown

But there is a negative connotation associated with a faculty body too heavily weighted with graduates.

"Some see it as a weakness to have too many alumni on faculty because you're supposed to have cross-fertilization. But, I think at 10 percent we're getting a diverse group," Gunn says.

Strobel concurs, "It's one thing to be homegrown; it's another to be ingrown. With 10 percent of our faculty as graduates, I don't think ingrown is a fear here."

Some alumni would not consider staying on faculty at their alma mater because of a perception they may be treated differently.

"A lot of people fear staying at the same institution because of the 'made-here' syn-



Holly Smith, M.D., '96

drome. Their opinion may have a lower value with their chairman," Strobel explains.

However, none of the alumni faculty interviewed associated a negative feeling from colleagues as a result of having risen through the student ranks.

"Maybe I was nurtured more (than other junior faculty) because I know whom to ask and everyone is interested in seeing you come along," says Lisa Armitige, M.D., Ph.D., '98.

King acknowledges that it is possible for alumni faculty to suffer from the "made-here" syndrome. "There is an artificial line between your last day as a resident and your first day as a junior faculty member — you just cross it as the day changes, but it takes some people a while to get over that," he says.

Having alumni as faculty shows current students that such a faculty role can be a career option, points out Andrew Harper, M.D., '84.

"If the students saw that no one ever stayed here who graduated from here then that would send a very different message about what kind of institution this is," he adds.

Giving back

Most faculty alumni began thinking about teaching during residency.

"During my chief residency year I saw the academic side of medicine and liked what it had to offer, teaching students and residents, taking care of a large number of indigent patients, and the personality of UT," says Holly Smith, M.D., '96.

Alumni faculty express the need to not only pass along the UT spirit to the next generation but to show their appreciation to the Medical School.

"There is a sense of ownership in helping the school grow and a sense of giving something back since they gave you so much growing up as a young pup," says Richard Smalling, M.D., Ph.D., '73.

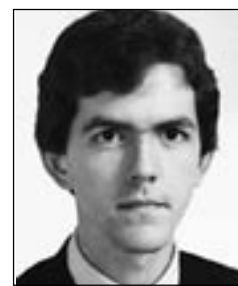
"It's easier for me to be effective and passionate about doing a good job for the school because it's not just my job, it's my Medical School, my alma mater," King adds.

Some faculty alumni, like Kellaway, who was born at Hermann Hospital and worked there as a teen-ager, seem destined to be on faculty here.

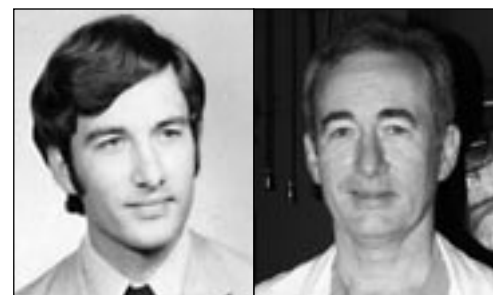
"I have a history here and with the hospital. I've never looked to go anywhere else — I plan to die on the seventh floor of Hermann," she says with a laugh. ★



Lisa Armitige, M.D., Ph.D., '98



Andrew Harper, M.D., '84



Richard Smalling, M.D., Ph.D., '73