

It's All in a Day's Work for the Office of International Programs

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additional opportunities for other researchers and students at that same institution. For example, Anil Kulkarni, Ph.D., professor of surgery-research, at UT Medical School, initiated a relationship with the University of Tokushima in Japan for research with a 10-year exchange of researchers and students. After this collaboration was formalized in an Agreement of Cooperation that covers all six health science center schools, Amy Ridall, D.D.S., Ph.D., assistant clinical professor of prosthodontics, Dental Branch, developed an exchange program for dental students.

Such formal agreements are necessary to define the terms of the relationship and limit its liability, Dr. Chang explains. The negotiation can be complex, involving verifying

credentials and validity of the programs, diplomacy, cultural sensitivity and many international e-mails. It is the main but not the only function of the office.

Everything about international collaborations comes through this office, said Dr. Chang. "I never know what the next e-mail will request.

The Office of International Programs:

- responds to requests for assistance in negotiating agreements, facilitating programs, organizing official visits, providing information to government entities and hosting international scholars;
- serves all schools, centers and institutes;
- provides reports to the governor's office and UT System;

- fosters international cultural awareness; and
- reaches out to the consular community in Houston.

The office also helps faculty members trying to establish cooperative programs by negotiating the exchange of data and the placement of students and researchers. "Smoothing the process on both sides takes persistence, patience and skillful maneuvering in a culture that may be unfamiliar," Dr. Chang explains.

This kind of support has been very beneficial for researchers like Herbert L. DuPont, M.D., holder of the Mary W. Kelsey Chair in Medical Sciences and director of the Center for Infectious Diseases at the UT School of Public Health. Dr. Dupont has an extensive

research program in several countries, including Mexico and Thailand, looking at the spread of infectious intestinal diseases.

When Dr. DuPont encounters roadblocks to his international program, either at home or in the partner nation, Dr. Chang is often able to speed the process along, cutting through red tape and getting things to happen. Without this support, he said, projects might be unnecessarily delayed or even derailed when timing is critical.

"The work is urgent," he says. "The problems in other countries are very much our problems as diseases in developing countries are introduced into the United States. We are only one 747 flight away from any disease. What helps us solve these problems in other countries, helps us solve them here." ★

Thinking Globally Can Provide International Collaborations

To help students, teachers, or researchers explore potential opportunities for international study or research collaboration, the Office of International Programs provides background information, help with institutional approval, and other support.

The office fosters expansion of the partnerships under a legal Agreement of Cooperation by developing Program Agreements for additional collaboration with a specific institution. This protects the interest of the faculty, students and school. International Programs facilitates the development of these agreements, and can help make necessary connections.

- An example of this expansion is the

program agreement Frederick Moeller, M.D., professor, department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Medical School, negotiated with Maastricht University in the Netherlands to bring a student researcher from Maastricht to work under his supervision. The agreement was developed under the agreement of cooperation originated by Dean Guy Parcel, Ph.D., of the School of Public Health (SPH), who has had an ongoing relationship with Maastricht University for the past 10 years. His collaborative research has resulted in a book and several other scientific publications.

- Another mode for students to engage

in international education is a program called the Vietnam Education Foundation, an independent agency of the U.S. government that coordinates with the National Academy of Sciences to recruit and enroll Vietnamese students in universities here. The SPH and the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences each have an agreement with VEF to do so.

- Universidad Autonoma de Guadalajara has an agreement with the health science center that began with Herbert L. Dupont, M.D., who has worked in collaboration with the Mexican

university for more than 30 years. He is facilitating a similar arrangement with Mahidol University in Thailand. Both agreements allow for exchange of students and faculty. Students and faculty can visit the International Programs Web site at <http://www.uth.tmc.edu/internationalprograms> to view the entire list of institutions that have negotiated agreements of cooperation. Most are live links directly to each institution. For questions about the specific collaborations at an institution, contact Graciete Marques-Tavares, coordinator of Special Programs, 713-500-3559 or internationalprograms@uth.tmc.edu.

—Leslie S. Gerber ★

International Programs' Annual Awards

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- **Kamal Busaidy, D.D.S.**, clinical assistant professor, Dental Branch, for creation of a program agreement with the Ministry of Health of the Sultanate of Oman to develop oral and maxillofacial surgical services;

- **Andrew Springer, Dr.P.H.**, postdoctoral fellow, School of Public Health (SPH), for a collaborative study with Universidad Autonoma de Tamaulipas Medical School on obesity in elementary school children in Latin America;

- **Sharon Ostwald, Ph.D.**, holder of the Isla Carroll Turner Chair in Gerontology, School of Nursing, for research on families of persons with dementia and replication of intervention research in Sardinia, Italy;

- **Robert Roberts, Ph.D.**, professor, Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences, SPH, for a study concerning disturbed sleep among adolescents in the United States and Japan;

- **M. Sriram Iyengar, Ph.D.**, assistant professor of Health Informatics, School of Health Information Sciences, for a collaborative software development project on the physical structure of mammalian cells with the Indian Institute of Science, India;

Students

- **Hui Zhao, M.D.**, student, SPH, for a survey of smoking behavior in medical students in China and the

creation of a smoking cessation program;

- **Serena Rodriguez**, student, SPH, for a trip to Kenya to research the nutritional status of adolescents orphaned by HIV/AIDS; and

- **Thien Chinh Vu**, student, SPH, for a conference in Vietnam to exchange training and research with SPH to develop a Vietnamese public health system.

Commencement Speakers Announced



Texas First Lady Anita Perry will be principal speaker at the School of Nursing Commencement Ceremonies, May 4.

- **School of Health Information Sciences**, 4 p.m., Thursday, May 3, Beth Robertson Auditorium, Faye S. Sarofim Research Building: Featured speaker is C. Thomas Caskey, M.D., chief operating officer and director-/CEO-elect of The Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine for the Prevention of Human Diseases

- **School of Public Health**, 2 p.m., Friday, May 4, Edwin Hornberger Conference Center: Speaker is Houston Mayor Bill White. Now in his second term, Mayor White has assembled a task force of experts, including UT School of Public Health faculty, to help with ongoing efforts to reduce air quality health risks in Harris County.

- **School of Nursing**, 7 p.m., Friday, May 4, George R. Brown Convention Center: Principal speaker is Texas First Lady Anita Perry. Perry, who earned a master's degree in nursing from the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, spent a 17-year career in the health care profession that included nursing in the areas of surgery, pediatrics, intensive care and administration.

- **Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences**, 10 a.m., Saturday, May 5, Edwin Hornberger Conference Center: Principal speaker is Robert Wells, Ph.D., professor of biochemistry and biophysics and director of the Center for Genome Research at the Institute for Biosciences

and Technology, of the Texas A&M University System Health Science Center.

- **Dental Branch**, 4 p.m., Thursday, May 24, Cullen Performance Hall on the University of Houston campus: Speaking will be University of Texas System Chancellor Mark Yudof, LL.B.

- **Medical School**, 7 p.m., Tuesday, May 29, George R. Brown Convention Center: Principal speaker will be Wiley W. "Chip" Souba Jr., M.D., Sc.D., professor of surgery and dean of the College of Medicine at Ohio State University. Souba is a 1978 graduate of the Medical School. ★



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