

A campus newspaper for faculty, staff and students at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

Legislative Action Provides Funding for UT Health Science Center Projects

By Sabrina Midkiff, *Governmental Relations*

On May 29, The Texas House of Representatives and Senate finished their work on House Bill (HB) 1 and sent the state's fiscal years 2008 and 2009 appropriations legislation to Governor Rick Perry for signature by June 17. Overall for The University of Texas System, HB 1 provides an increase in state general revenue appropriations of \$331.5 million, including a 6.7 percent increase in operating funds.

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston received a 9.74 percent increase in operating appropriations, or \$23.7 million above appropriations in Fiscal Years 2006 and 2007. This increase represents growth in formula funding with a significant increase to Graduate Medical Education from approximately \$2,400 per resident a year to \$5,634 per resident a year. New funds also include additional special item funding (subject to the Governor's review) of \$5 million for the biennium for World's Greatest Scientists and \$5 million over the same period for expansion of the School of Public Health and the Institute for Health Policy.

In addition to the operating appropriations, the UT Health Science Center received \$9 million in debt service for the tuition revenue bonds for the new dental school building.

Of special note, The University of Texas Harris County Psychiatric Center received a \$7 million increase in operating funds for the biennium from the State Health Services Department budget. This additional funding represents the first increase for the UT Harris

County Psychiatric Center since fiscal years 2002-2003.

James T. Willerson, M.D., president of the UT Health Science Center, is pleased with the funding results. "I am especially grateful to the members of the Legislature for their time and attention to our broad-based and divergent financial needs. We fared very well this year compared to the average of the UT System as a whole. In particular, the significant increases to World's Greatest Scientists, the School of Public Health and the UT Harris County Psychiatric Center will enable us to continue to move forward in several key areas."

Guy Parcel, Ph.D., dean of the School of Public Health, said, "We are very pleased for this additional funding support from the Texas Legislature to expand our regional campuses. This funding will enable us to add faculty and staff to the regional campuses to expand public health education and research to address critical public health needs in the regions where our campuses are located." Dr. Parcel is also the John P. McGovern Professor in Health Promotion and holds the M. David Low Chair in Public Health at the school.

The health science center also benefits from other items in the appropriations bill. Of special interest is a new mental health crisis program funded with \$82 million for distribution throughout the state. These new funds, combined with the specific increase for the psychiatric center, open additional doors for serving the mental health needs in the community.

In response to the additional focus on

Role within Operating Budget

While the Legislature provided the health science center with a significant increase, the state appropriation provides only 27.2 percent of total dollars expended for the annual operating budget. Increased state funding will be used to meet existing budget needs such as the recent escalation in utility costs due to increased utility charges and the opening of new space, depreciation, and funding of programs already underway across the institution.

Kevin Dillon, executive vice president, administration and business affairs, and chief financial officer, added, "We are extremely grateful that the Legislature answered our requests for

increased funding in numerous key areas. The final development of our operating budget is now under way and these funds will be added to our other revenue sources to develop an operating budget that meets our growing needs and addresses the increased cost of some critical items such as utility expenditures."

While the Legislature did not provide for an across-the-board increase in employee salaries for institutions of higher education, the operating budget will address employee increases by establishing merit pools from existing funds for determination and distribution at the departmental level.

mental health needs, Robert Guynn, M.D., executive director of the UT Harris County Psychiatric Center and professor and chairman of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, said, "The Harris County Psychiatric Center is a very important resource for the citizens of Harris County as the uninsured population grows and with it the number of seriously mentally ill. Too often such individuals end up inappropriately in the criminal justice system because there are too few psychiatric beds available in Harris County. The increased funding will be a step in the right direction."

The Texas Emerging Technology Fund

received \$175 million for the biennium. The health science center benefits from this fund through increase in available sources of revenue for technology transfer and recruitment funding.

For nursing, \$8.7 million, more than doubling the dollars currently available, was added to the Professional Nursing Shortage Reduction Program. This fund is distributed to all nursing schools for performance in growth in the number of nursing graduates.

The Legislature created a new "Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas" and authorized \$3 billion in bonds (to be issued in increments of \$300 million per year)

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Thirty Years of Success in Transplantation

By Leslie S. Gerber, for *Institutional Advancement*



Transplant recipients celebrate. Photo by Scott Holmes

The phoenix is the symbol for the Division of Immunology and Organ Transplantation of the Department of Surgery at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston. It's symbolic of rebirth, according to Barry Kahan, M.D., Ph.D., professor of surgery,

who directs the division. And it couldn't be a more apt image for the lifesaving procedure of organ transplantation.

"For many with chronic illness, without organ transplantation, they would not survive or have a good quality of life," Kahan said.

He and the members of the division are celebrating the 30-year anniversary of the program that began at UT in 1977. In those 30 years, the center has celebrated many milestones in caring for patients, training the next generation of physicians and researchers and undertaking treatment research.

To mark the anniversary, the division held a conference May 18-20, inviting all 250 physicians and researchers who trained at UT as well as patients and their families to the event that offered presentations on the present and future horizons in the field.

Kidney transplant recipient Guy Butaud was a featured presenter. Celebrating 28 years with a kidney donated by his mother, Butaud radiates a deep appreciation for all the gifts of life he's received in the intervening years. His marriage to Lisa, his 3-year-old son Brycen and a career as a specialized welder are all sources of gratification.

He addressed the conference on the subject of patient compliance, which is crucial for the success of the transplant, and yet the failure to comply with the post-transplant treatment regimen surpasses uncontrolled rejection in some centers as a cause of graft loss. Butaud feels his daily medications are a small price to pay for living a long and prosperous life.

"Do what the doctors tell you," he said. "It's that simple."

It's not so difficult for him now, but he does remember darker days as an adolescent when he had to be prodded to comply, and

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Save the Date

Tee time for the 15th annual University of Texas Health Science Center Scholarship Golf Classic is 9 a.m., Monday, Sept. 10, at the Bay Oaks Country Club, 14545 Bay Oaks Blvd. in Houston.

Development Board members and tourney co-chairs Jodie L. Jiles and Helen Vollmer have set a luau theme.

For more information, contact Rose Mary Betancourt-Trevino, 713-500-3209, Rose.M.Betancourt-Trevino@uth.tmc.edu.



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