

Events to Know

September

25 14th Annual Scholarship Golf Classic. 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Timber Creek Golf Club, Friendswood.

25 Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Seminar: Dr. C.S. Raman to present "From Vioxx to Plant Volatiles: Visualizing Lipid Mediators in Action." Noon, MSB 2.135.

26 Cultural Humility in Medicine series: "Treating African American Patients." Noon-1 p.m., MSB 2.006.

30 Women and Liver Health Seminar 2006. 8 a.m.-3:50 p.m., Hilton Post Oak Hotel in Houston. Register at www.UTcme.net.

October

9 Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Seminar: Dr. Vasanthi Jayaraman to present "Structure and Function of Glutamate Receptor." Noon, MSB 2.135.

16 Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Seminar: Dr. Farrah Kheradmand (Baylor College of Medicine) to present "Adaptive Immunity in Smoker's Lung Disease." Noon, MSB 2.135.

18 Faculty Honors Convocation. 5-7 p.m., Beth Robertson Auditorium in the Faye S. Sarofim Research Building.

Research Retreat approaches

The 7th Annual Medical School Research Retreat will be 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 5 and 8 a.m.-noon Friday, Oct. 6 at the Faye S. Sarofim Research Building. Activities will include a data blitz session and four symposia sessions on signaling, technology transfer, mouse models of human disease, and neuroscience. The keynote speaker will be **Dr. Jack Elias**, Yale University School of Medicine, who will present "Transgenic Modeling of IL-13 and Asthma in the Lung." For more information or registration materials, contact kimberly.j.campbell@uth.tmc.edu.

Lee chosen for prestigious Pioneer Award by NIH

Deemed a true pioneer in groundbreaking research, **Dr. Cheng Chi Lee**, associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, is one of only 13 winners of the prestigious 2006 National Institutes of Health Director's Pioneer Award. **Dr. Elias Zerhouni**, director of the National Institutes of Health, announced winners Sept. 19 at the Pioneer Award Symposium in Bethesda, Md.

"The 2006 Pioneer Award recipients are a diverse group of forward-thinking scientists whose work could transform medical research," Zerhouni said. "The awards will give them the intellectual freedom to pursue exciting new research directions and opportunities in a range of scientific areas, from computational biology to immunology, stem cell biology, nanotechnology, and drug development."

From the award, Lee will receive \$2.5 million in direct costs over five years to study suspended animation in non-hibernating mammals. Lee said the award is not only a win for himself but represents an even bigger win for science and for the Medical School.

"I felt very excited for the school itself to have science at this level," Lee said. "I hope this award will also highlight the quality of science that's coming out of UT."

Making the cut to win a Pioneer Award is a challenging process, which began with 465 applicants from across the United States. NIH reviewers evaluated the eligibility of applicants before turning them over to a group of scientific experts who decided the top 25 finalists. A second league of experts then interviewed each finalist in August. For Lee, getting to that stage of the competition was exhilarating.

"You basically realize you're looking at the top 2 percent of the applicants," Lee said. "To be

(Cont'd. on back)



Dr. Cheng Chi Lee

Facilities update, theft were town hall hot topics

Interim Dean **Jerry Wolinsky** gave his first town hall meeting Sept. 14, by delivering an upbeat account of progress at the Medical School Building and Replacement Research Facility but switching to a more serious tone to address theft at the school.

This was not only Wolinsky's first town hall meeting as interim dean, but it was also the first for the Medical School community in quite some time – with the last one taking place more than one year ago.

Wolinsky's goal was to keep the meeting traditional in form, and he invited the audience to freely ask questions throughout his talk. The first item on his agenda was to confirm the stories about former Dean **Stanley Schultz**, who has been spotted recently at the Jesse H. Jones Library Building.

"There are rumors of increased sightings of Stan Schultz," Wolinsky said, adding that Schultz is back working at the Medical School in the afternoons and has taken office space in the library building.

Wolinsky also noted the search for a new Medical School dean is still under way. "The dean's search is alive, happy, and ongoing," he said.

In addition, plans to move the dean's office from the library back to the Medical School continue. "I hope the minor construction will be completed, so that the office can move back in early November," Wolinsky said.

The next order of business was a thorough update on facilities, specifically the RRF. Wolinsky noted the RRF was an \$80.5 million project and that the university was still \$16



Interim Dean Jerry Wolinsky gave his first town hall meeting to a well-attended audience.

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Boga named senior executive director of development, alumni relations

At the Sept. 14 town hall meeting, Interim Dean **Jerry Wolinsky** announced that **Shernaz Boga** was named the senior executive director of development and alumni relations for the Medical School, effective immediately.

Boga stepped in to lead the development and alumni relations office on an interim basis in February of this year, while also retaining some responsibilities in her role as executive director of development for the health science center.

Over the last seven months at the Medical School, Boga and the development team completed several fund-raising projects and raised money for new endowments, including The Samuel E. Karff DHL Chair at the John P. McGovern Center for Health, Humanities and the Human Spirit; The Cheves M. Smythe, M.D. Endowed Lectureship in Education and Geriatric Medicine; The Phyllis Gough Huffington Endowed Lecture Series in gerontology and age-related issues; and The Dottie and Max Goodloe Endowed Scholarship.

"We also developed a new plan for the annual fund program that will be rolled out this fall," Boga added.

She said she is looking forward to leading the school's fund-raising efforts full time, which include raising funds for scholarships, the faculty endowment, the Dean's Excellence Fund, recruitment for the Replacement Research Facility, and the Surgical and Clinical Skills Center.

"I'm delighted to accept this position and commit to providing the very best leadership for the Medical School's development and alumni relations program that I possibly can," Boga said. "Our top goals include increasing funding for all those key areas and staffing the development and alumni relations office, so that we can build a strong and experienced team of fund-raisers."

-C. Webb

Lee award, cont'd.

picked says a lot about my own work, as well as the process and the reason they're willing to pick in this direction of biomedical research."

After the interviews, an NIH advisory committee performed a final review before making recommendations to Zerhouni.

The Pioneer Awards are a key component of the NIH Roadmap for Medical Research, and they support exceptionally creative scientists who take highly innovative approaches to major challenges in biomedical research. With the award's funding, Lee will be able to build upon an earlier molecular discovery and refine it to study suspended animation, which is a process observed in hibernating animals.

"A hibernating animal's body temperature is very low," Lee said. "The animal is not eating and not doing many of the daily activities that you and I would classify as necessary for life. Yet, when we think about it long term, these animals wake up after winter and are perfectly normal. To me, it's an incredible scientific fascination how mammals can achieve this state."

Lee's discovery of a molecule, known as 5-prime adenosine monophosphate (5'-AMP), turned on a switch in mice that induced a state of torpor, causing their body temperatures to drop. The mice slipped into an inactive state that was somewhat analogous to hibernation.

"That discovery gave us a first insight into how body temperature can be controlled," Lee said. "If we can control body temperature with 5'-AMP, it could potentially allow us to mimic the process seen in hibernating animals called suspended animation."

Town hall meeting, cont'd.

million short of funding. However, the comprehensive fund-raising campaign should fulfill the final need for funding.

"We're going forward to fill the space at the RRF," Wolinsky said, adding that a search committee for *Project Excellence for the New Replacement Research Facility* recently was formed to seek out the best and the brightest investigators.

He ended his RRF update by noting that the roof on the building is complete, and the odors should have ceased.

Progress on other building facilities, included:

- Surgical and Clinical Skills Center is effectively completed with a number of simulators on hand for training;
- New roof of Medical School Building should be completed soon;
- Fitness Center is officially closed; plans to fill the space with the Center for Clinical and Translational Science should be decided by the end of September; and
- Empty room on the ground floor to be converted into a coffee shop or "grab 'n' go" sometime during the course of the academic year.

Theft at the Medical School, specifically stolen laptops and computers, was Wolinsky's next high priority. Within the last six months, the Medical School has had close to 40 pieces of IT equipment stolen. It was recommended that users follow the university policy of not saving any confidential data to laptops or computers, unless it is encrypted.

"We have a responsibility to university and state-owned equipment that we need to adhere to," Wolinsky said.

Representatives from UT Police spoke about the enhanced security efforts they've initiated at the Medical School to reduce the problem, which included increasing the number of police officers at the school and starting a criminal investigation into the theft.

-C. Webb

FUN FEST 2006!

2-6 P.M. / FRIDAY, OCT. 6

EDWIN HORNBERGER CONFERENCE CENTER

If Lee can reproduce suspended animation in non-hibernating mammals, he said it could have enormous medical impacts for humans. By bringing body temperature down safely, treatments for brain injury, heart attacks, and other diseases and injuries could be developed.

Dr. Rodney Kellems, professor and chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, said Lee's history of research achievements and progress deserves the recognition the Pioneer Award brings.

"Dr. Lee's research has consistently been conducted in the best tradition of investigator-initiated and curiosity-driven biomedical research," Kellems said. "For nearly two decades, he has made significant and seminal contributions to human genetics and circadian biology. Very few individuals have the energy and creative talent to function at the forefront of scientific research for this length of time. Dr. Lee's creativity is sustained by a passion for science and an appetite for research discovery that shows no sign of abatement."

Lee joined the Medical School in 2003, and in the short time he has been with the school, he is regarded as a cutting-edge scientist.

"It is wonderful to know that we are recruiting young scientists at the UT Medical School who are capable of pushing the frontiers of medical research forward," said **Dr. Jerry Wolinsky**, interim dean of the Medical School.

-C. Webb