As the University of Mississippi’s 16th chancellor, Dr. Dan Jones follows a rank of educators, lawyers, ministers and military leaders to become the first physician to lead the university.

His historic investiture ceremony will be at 10 a.m. on Friday, April 9, at the Gertrude C. Ford Center for the Performing Arts on the Oxford campus.

Jones has chosen “Transformation through Service” as the theme for his inauguration and tenure, reflecting an area of deep commitment for him as an educator and physician.
Dedicated to the Community

Students, Faculty Back Commitment to the Underserved

Caring for the medically underserved is part of the fabric of the University of Mississippi Medical Center and that commitment continues to grow through the work of dedicated faculty and students.

Services range from providing dental care to children in Jackson and the Delta to helping longtime smokers kick the habit to treating patients who have little or no insurance.

"Every one of our students comes through. I’ve found that if students will come, they will want to come back," he said.

Located in the Jackson Medical Mall Thad Cochran Center, UMMC’s ACT Center opened in 1999 with a mission to help Mississippians quit using tobacco - and to stay tobacco-free - through education, training and research. Dr. Karen Crews, director of the center, spearheaded the project while she was on faculty in the School of Dentistry.

The center sees about 240 new patients each month through its multisite network of 27 ACT Center-supported locations at hospitals and universities across the state. The intensive treatment program consists of an initial intake session followed by six sessions of education, cognitive-behavioral counseling and, where necessary, medication.

The GOAL OVER THE NEXT YEAR is to offer treatment to 8,000 to 10,000 patients.

The School of Nursing operates several outreach programs that help children and adults. Nurses staff school-based clinics at Johnson and Brown elementary schools and Rowan Middle School in Jackson. They provide health-care education to underserved populations across the state via the Mercy Delta mobile health-care van, and nurse practitioners operate the UNACARE clinic in Midtown Jackson five days a week.

"Combined, they make a strong statement relative to the commitment of the School of Nursing to the community among all age groups," said Dr. Terry Doddatto, associate dean for administrative affairs and practice.

An annual event for the School of Dentistry, Give Kids a Smile Day provides free preventive dental treatment to hundreds of children from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade at Galloway and Johnson Elementary Schools in Jackson and a selected elementary school in the Delta. It’s part of the national Give Kids a Smile founded by the American Dental Association to provide care and raise awareness of the importance of access to dental care for underserved children.

Foster, who will enter residency training in internal medicine/pediatrics this fall, said the clinic instills the principles of community service in students in the practice of medicine before they leave medical school.

"I DON’T HAVE SOME IDEA OF GRANDIOSITY that I’m changing the landscape of Mississippi’s medical problems, but I do feel I make a difference in individual lives," Foster said.

Opened in 2002, the clinic draws 18-25 patients on any given Saturday, and the clinic services are booked a month or two in advance. Foster, who will enter residency training in internal medicine/pediatrics at UMMC, said the clinic is a valuable resource for patients and a fertile learning ground.

Michael Foster, an M4 who works in the Jackson Free Clinic, rotates Saturday afternoons at the clinic with his fellow medical students to care for disadvantaged patients who often need treatment for chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol. The clinic instills the principles of community service in students in the practice of medicine before they leave medical school.

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"This day has become the experiential learning endeavor that anchors the school’s service learning curriculum. This four-year curriculum seeks to train a different kind of dental practitioner, a technically competent, socially conscious and community-minded dentist who is determined to make a difference in his or her world," Eklund said.
UMMC students embrace ‘obligation’ to statewide community

By Jack Mazurak

Pick any day and, guaranteed, members of the University of Mississippi Medical Center’s 2,400-person student body will be working on a volunteer project or engaged in community service.

Pick any day and, guaranteed, members of the University of Mississippi Medical Center’s 2,400-person student body will be working on a volunteer project or engaged in community service. From spending an hour between classes volunteering in a hospital to arranging toy drives for patients at the Blair E. Batson Hospital for Children to organizing supply donations for nurse stations at Jackson elementary schools, student commitment to community service runs deep at the Medical Center.

"AT THE END OF THE DAY, care is much about service," said Dr. Jerry Clark, assistant vice chancellor for student affairs. "As an institution particularly related to the health sciences, we accept responsibility for it in our very purpose. It should come as no surprise when our students embrace this obligation to our community and fellow man."

Whether through the Associated Student Body, health-care specialty interest groups, Student Affairs or on their own volition, students organize, fund raise, drive and pull together myriad events every year.

ONE OF THE MOST VISIBLE community-service projects involving UMMC students begins again in April with the start of construction on a Habitat for Humanity house. On April 9, physical therapy students from the School of Health Related Professions plan to be the first group to dig into the Medical Center’s 12th Habitat House. It’s commonplace to see students representing all of UMMC’s six schools sweating through Habitat service work alongside faculty and staff members.

A bowling tournament in March organized by pharmacy students raised $2,000 for the American Red Cross. Second-year medical student Bobby Tullos led a book collection for Afghanistan. An annual winter coat drive by M.D./Ph.D. student Chin Owubiko through the ASB keeps needy people warm. The ASB recently organized a drive benefitting Toys for Tots.

M.D./Ph.D. student Kim Gannon and 2009 School of Nursing graduate Ashley Flynt organized a campus visit by the crew of the movie Darius Goes West in 2009 for a screening and fund-raiser for Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. The massive undertaking paid off as students and community members packed an auditorium for the event.

School of Dentistry students help clean and floss the teeth of hundreds of Jackson’s elementary school students every year during Give Kids a Smile Day, an event founded by the American Dental Association. Dental, dental hygiene and nursing students volunteered to serve about 800 children during the 2009 Smile Day.

Many of the educational programs at UMMC require community service, a fact that sparks some students to become lifelong givers.

The School of Nursing began a partnership in fall 2009 with UMMC’s Volunteer Services to provide opportunities for community service. Undergraduate nurses are required to complete eight hours of service a year.

“Nursing students help escort patients through the hospital for visits and exams and they staff busy waiting rooms. You’ll see nursing students acting as runners, bringing flowers and gifts to patients. Maybe a family in an ICU waiting room has been up all night with a loved one and they haven’t had a chance to eat. The student may go and get food for them,” said Christina Vanderloo, director of student affairs in the School of Nursing.

A group of 17 students from the School of Medicine Class of 2012, led by the enthusiastic Sam Love, spent an afternoon last spring at Jackson’s Neighborhood Christian Center introducing schoolchildren to medical careers, just one of many medical student community service activities.

GRADUATE STUDENTS PARTICIPATE in the Jackson Heart Walk and keep a relationship ongoing with Gleaners of the Jackson Metro area, an organization that rescues food that would otherwise go to waste and donates it to charities. Representing just one venue for SHRP’s many service activities, students regularly volunteer at Stewpot Community Services. In 2009, more than a dozen third-year occupational therapy students volunteered to work with homeless people during a homeless fair at Stewpot.

At UMMC, giving back to the community is a daily occurrence, a tradition that’s sure to continue long into the future.
Dispensing Service
Pharmacy project improves health quality in Mississippi Delta

Ask any School of Pharmacy faculty member and they’ll say being a pharmacist is about more than dispensing medications. A pharmacist, they’ll say, is first and foremost a health care provider.

With that in mind, a University of Mississippi School of Pharmacy research project is looking to maximize the long-term impact pharmacists have on the overall health and quality of life of their patients. It’s part of a transition the practice of community pharmacy is undergoing, and it puts the Mississippi Delta on the frontlines of that shift.

“The primary mission of the School of Pharmacy is education, but we also have a service mission,” said Dr. Leigh Ann Ross, associate dean for Clinical Affairs in the School of Pharmacy. “Since the late 1960s, pharmacy’s practice model has been evolving from solely a dispensing role to more involvement in direct patient care. This project helps us move toward that goal.”

The School of Pharmacy is deeply committed to improving the health of Mississippians, said the dean of the school, Dr. Barbara Wells. “Citizens of the Mississippi Delta have phenomenal health care needs and very little resources for meeting them,” Wells said. “The Delta Pharmacy Patient Care Management Project, funded through the Delta Health Alliance, is specifically designed to improve clinical and economic outcomes.”

Wells said the school is working with community pharmacists already practicing in the Delta to help them develop their practices to better meet health needs through Medication Therapy Management (MTM) and disease-specific education.

The project is now in its second year and preparing for year three.

Ross, the principal investigator of the study who also serves as chair and associate professor of pharmacy practice, says MTM is a concept aimed at achieving positive outcomes through the effective use of medications, patient education and the prevention of drug complications or interactions. In other words, it’s a more comprehensive approach to patient care.

“The Delta region is one of the most underserved areas in the country,” said Dr. Tommy Spell, a faculty member who serves as the project’s clinical coordinator of community pharmacy development. “It’s a poor area in a state with few resources. This (project) is a small part of bringing more resources to the area.”

Spell maintains a pharmacy practice three days a week at a store he owns in Crystal Springs. Pharmacists, he says, have always been taking care of patients. But what’s unique about this project is that it provides a structure for that direct care, which is particularly important in rural areas like the Delta where there are fewer physicians and primary caregivers to go around.

“There are communities where a pharmacist is the only health care professional a patient may see,” Spell said. “This access is one of the things that’s always set us apart, and it provides opportunities to improve care.”

For the first year of the project, which began in 2008, faculty members visited participating community pharmacies in Batesville, Clarksdale and Yazoo City, providing Medicaid patients with MTM services and education specifically related to asthma and diabetes. Dr. Lauren Bloodworth, clinical assistant professor and project administrator, said the visits gave the pharmacists a chance to identify potential or actual medication-related problems. The pharmacists then would make recommendations to primary health-care providers.

Also as part of the project, pharmacy faculty members are working with another Delta Health Alliance project to have community pharmacy patient visits entered into the local primary-care provider’s electronic health records.

“Year one was a productive year,” Bloodworth said. “A lot of the year, she explained, was spent creating the infrastructure for the project, building relationships and training community pharmacists.

The current year, launched in July 2009, saw the expansion of the project to include more counties in the Delta and target a wider range of patients beyond Medicaid recipients. A health literacy and cultural competency component was added and a new community pharmacy residency program was created. Dr. Lauren Love Compton is the first resident in the program that will undergo accreditation in 2010.

Plans for year three are under way, and Ross said the project will grow to address other health concerns and chronic diseases in the coming year. “Expanding into additional disease states like obesity and preventing chronic issues such as smoking cessation and immunizations – may be included in year three,” she said.

Ross credits her predecessor in pharmacy practice, Dr. Joseph Byrd, with leading the way for greater involvement in the Delta. Byrd led a project to administer a community pharmacy MTM program in partnership with a health center in Clarksdale several years ago. Expanding community practice is something the School of Pharmacy has been interested in for a long time, Ross said.

With many faculty members located on the UMMC campus, the Department of Pharmacy Practice is one of six departments in the School of Pharmacy and leads the Delta project in collaboration with the school’s Department of Pharmacy Administration and the Center for Pharmaceutical Marketing and Management.

The nonprofit Delta Health Alliance funds a number of projects with the aim of coordinating health efforts in the Delta. Kakhi Wakefield, project coordinator for the Delta Pharmacy Patient Care Management Project, says they report regularly to DHA and to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and receive strong support in return.

“We have a great relationship with Delta Health Alliance and all of our Delta partners,” she said. “We appreciate the resources they provide.”

Other UMCC projects in the Delta

The Medical Center is involved in a number of other projects in the Delta region, including:

- The Mercy Delta Express Project, launched in 2004, is a community-driven research effort that provides health-care opportunities in the Mississippi Delta with the use of a mobile health clinic. Under the direction of Dr. Lisa Haynie, professor of nursing, the Mercy Delta Express Project coordinates health fairs and screenings, health screenings and health seminars around the Delta, often in collaboration with the State Department of Health. Funded by the Sisters of Mercy, Haynie said the project is geared toward reaching out to rural areas where there is low access to health care.

- Now in its second year, the Delta Health Rural Scholars Program was developed to raise awareness among medical students about opportunities for working in underserved rural areas and to give them a taste of what it’s like serving as primary-care providers in such settings. Under the direction of principal investigator Dr. Jessica Bailey, director of medical education and associate professor of medicine, the project targets fourth-year students and residents and pairs them with physicians in the Delta for a month-long rotation. Bailey said the proposal to secure funding for year three was recently submitted.

- The Mental Health Services Improvement – Telepsychiatry in the Delta Project aims to reduce disparities in mental health treatment for those living in the Delta region and to improve the quality of services they receive at local community mental health centers. The project uses two-way telemedicine connections that link community mental health service providers to offer live psychiatric services. Dr. Grayson Norquist, principal investigator for the project, says he is currently writing the renewal proposal for the next year of the study.

- Last year, University of Mississippi Health Care launched the Intensiview (DR-HELP), funded by the Institute for Improvement of Minority Health Disparities in the Delta Region, looks to impact health disparities in the Delta and other underserved areas by collaborating with Tulane University, Louisiana State University and the University of Alabama-Birmingham to attract future health-care workers and to educate local populations. Dr. Rob Rockhold, assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs, said the program aims to cultivate underrepresented students into health-care professions who then return to serve in underserved regions. Rockhold, who serves as the principal investigator, expects to begin operations soon.

- The Delta Region–Health Education Leadership Program (DRHELP), funded by the Institute for Improvement of Minority Health Disparities in the Delta Region, looks to impact health disparities in the Delta and other underserved areas by collaborating with Tulane University, Louisiana State University and the University of Alabama-Birmingham to attract future health-care workers and to educate local populations. Dr. Rob Rockhold, assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs, said the program aims to cultivate underrepresented students into health-care professions who then return to serve in underserved regions. Rockhold, who serves as the principal investigator, expects to begin operations soon.

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UMMC seeks ‘higher ground’ with health literacy campaign

To honor the new chancellor’s call to a heightened degree of service, the Medical Center’s inauguration committee, chaired by Dr. Helen Turner, associate vice chancellor for academic affairs, accepted a proposal by the Department of Medicine called “Higher Ground.” Its primary emphasis is on health literacy using existing programs and resources, but developing a structured, integrated and sustainable plan to address the state’s needs.

“Health literacy is really the foundation of good health,” said Dr. Richard delHiado, chairman of medicine, who developed the plan along with Dr. Debbie Minor, associate professor of medicine. “We have a health crisis in this state, and a program like this will make a difference for years to come.”

The proposal outlines a plan to integrate faculty, staff and students at all levels into an active action plan to improve health literacy in collaboration with the Department of Education’s Office of Healthy Schools, the State Department of Health and the entire University of Mississippi system.

Having been vice chancellor from 2001 until 2009, he will likely be more involved in Medical Center decisions than any previous chancellor. And while he can’t say enough good things about the leadership qualities of Dr. Jimmy Keeton, newly appointed vice chancellor of health affairs at the Medical Center, Jones also said, “The vice chancellor’s office has an office especially for the chancellor, and I expect to use it regularly.”

Jones will be the fifth chancellor to have the Medical Center as part of the purview of his job. During the tenure of Chancellor John Davis Williams (1946-1968), the medical school dean, Dr. David Pankratz, depended on Williams’ influence with the legislature to secure funding for the new medical school. Pankratz’ successor, Dr. Robert Marion, depended on Williams’ guidance in the successful integration of Medical Center facilities.

Chancellor Porter Lee Fortune Jr. (1968-1984) was a keen supporter of the Medical Center, but usually deferred to decisions by Vice Chancellor Dr. Norman C. Nelson, a reasoned medical educator and expert administrator. Chancellor R. Gerald Turner (1984-1995) maintained a close working relationship with Nelson. Vice Chancellor Dr. Wallace Conerly and Chancellor Robert Khapit (1995-2009) were old friends who seemed to lead the Medical Center in close collaboration with each other.

Jones and Khapit also became firm friends during Jones’ years as vice chancellor, and they followed the tradition of close, collaborative working relationships between the two campuses:

I am proud to be associated with so many people who care about other people. Service to others is at the core of the motivation for most of us to be here doing what we are doing. We are here with the people of this state to make a difference for years to come. The relationship between the Medical Center and its parent campus changes according to circumstances and leadership style. Described in legal documents as “semi autonomous,” that relationship should be closer than ever with Jones at the helm.

April 9, 2010

‘GOOD DAYS’ AHEAD for UMMC, Oxford campuses

Dr. Dan Jones struck a tone of appreciation in his first formal address to the Medical Center faculty since becoming chancellor of the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Greeted with warm applause upon being introduced by Dr. James Keeton, his successor as vice chancellor for health affairs at UMMC, during the Spring Faculty Meeting March 23, Jones joked that many in attendance may have come out “just to kick this term off, this new chancellor.”

Jones’ brief remarks cut straight to the challenges facing academic health sciences centers across the nation. Despite “turbulent times in health care and our economy,” Jones said, “we have a new leader in place with remarkable people, resources and not just cutbacks in the budget without opportunities for growth. Thank you for all you are doing to continue to move us forward.”

Our educational programs continue to grow to match the needs of the state and our research program is growing as well,” he said.

Jones acknowledged the institution’s new leadership specifically Keeton, Dr. LouAnn Woodward, associate vice chancellor for health affairs, and Dr. Scott Brammer, associate vice chancellor for clinical affairs - and praised them for their willingness to take on new roles to meet the institution forward.

He concluded by encouraging the faculty to continue to find ways to “do more with less.”

“They are good days here and at the Oxford campus,” Jones said. “But we’ve all seen the reduction in state support for our programs along with the growth of our programs. How blessed we are that we are dealing with growth and not just cuts in the budget without opportunities for growth. Thank you for all you are doing to continue to move us forward.”

March 29, 2010 | CENTREVIEW

If you’re going to the inauguration

Those who ordered regalia should plan to pick it up from the bookstore between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Thursday, April 8. Rented regalia should be returned to the bookstore by 3 p.m. on Monday, April 12.

Those who have signed up to ride the bus to Oxford should be in front of the School of Dentistry by 6:15 a.m. Coffee and a light breakfast will be provided as well as snacks for the ride home.

For those taking their own cars, parking is available in the Ford Center for guests who received a printed invitation. Shuttles will take other guests from parking lots around the campus to and from the Ford Center.

Faculty who are participating in the academic procession will assemble backstage at the Ford Center by 9 a.m. Faculty will proceed on foot. Guests who received a printed invitation will have lunch at the Inn at Ole Miss immediately following the 10 a.m. ceremony. Other UMMC faculty, staff and students will have lunch in the Johnson Commons ballroom.

Buses will begin boarding for the trip back to Jackson at 2 p.m. at the Ford Center. Bus passengers will arrive back at the Medical Center at the Student Union, where they can return regalia.

Call Dr. Helen Turner’s office at 4-8099 for more information, or click on the “inauguration” icon on the UMMC home page.
Scholastic Service
UMMC directs Mississippi’s youth to careers in health care

By Bruce Coleman

Whether introducing junior high students to the wonders of discovery or providing scientifically inclined high school students an opportunity to work alongside veteran researchers, the University of Mississippi Medical Center continues to reach out to the state’s most impressionable learners.

Grant-funded programs in the Division of Multicultural Affairs and the Department of Academic Affairs have helped establish a more promising health-care future for Mississippians by pointing the way to careers in the health sciences.

"Multicultural Affairs wants to give students a head start preparing for college and ultimately achieving their goals of becoming health-care providers," said Guarmel Funches, director of community education and outreach and assistant director for multicultural affairs. "Our programs provide students with fun, hands-on learning experiences, whether dissecting a sheep heart or doing research on health disparities in Mississippi.

"The students are eager to learn more and wonder what will be next."

For close to a decade, the division has helped develop interest in furthering scientific education among junior high and high school students with its Science Training Enrichment Program (STEP), its EXCEL summer enrichment program and its Community ACT Workshop.

STEP gives economically and academically disadvantaged students in grades 6-8 at Jackson Public Schools, public and private schools in Hinds, Madison and Rankin Counties and Choctaw schools enrichment in math, science and critical thinking. The monthly institute encourages the students to be academically successful and increases their awareness of potential health careers.

EXCEL provides disadvantaged and underserved high school students an opportunity to participate in challenging math, science, computer and language-arts coursework while exploring health-care opportunities through mentoring programs.

The program allows students to gain direct access to health-care professionals. Alcorn State University serves as the site for the EXCEL Program.

The ACT workshop offered to students in grades 7-12 at public and private schools in the tri-county area prepares them for America’s most widely accepted college entrance exam. The students attend workshop classes on the Medical Center campus.

"Mississippi is only as good as the students we prepare for our future," Funches said. "The future of health care in Mississippi can be found within the programs (UMMC) provides."

Dr. Rob Rockhold, assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs, doesn’t have to look far to see that future: some of the fruits of the Base Pair Science Mentorship Program he started nearly two decades ago are visible right here at UMMC.

Eighteen of the 155 high school students who have participated in the program over the years have either entered or completed the M.D. program – including one pediatrics resident at UMMC and two students in the School of Medicine. In total, more than one-third of the students have entered career training in science or health-care professions.

"We started Base Pair in a single class of a dozen students at a single high school," Rockhold said. "We now have three programs that encompass five school districts across middle and southern Mississippi."

Base Pair teams high school students in Jackson Public Schools with practicing scientists at UMMC whose areas of research closely match their scientific interest. The scientists do original research and publish regularly in scholarly journals. After a semester of classroom preparation, the students spend five afternoons a week working individually in the laboratory with their mentor.

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Dr. Parminder Vig, left, professor of neurology, assists Henry Murphy, a Base Pair student from Murrah High School, pipet out growth media to feed cells growing in a culture dish.

In all, Rockhold estimates as many as 1,000 students and 100 teachers in Mississippi have benefited from the programs offered by Academic Affairs. He anticipates the establishment of a Mississippi network of Base Pair/EXCEL-trained teachers who share resources, develop coordinated learning activities and cultivate cutting-edge educational methods that prepare students to lead the nation in scientific advances. The Base Pair Web site currently hosted by the Rowland Medical Library would serve as an information hub for that network.

"We are about giving teachers advanced tools and incentives to excite the next generation of biomedical scientists and providing students of that generation with opportunities to actually participate in creating new knowledge in the laboratory," Rockhold said.