



Leaders' Update

A message from Devanand Sarkar, associate director for education and training

Dear colleagues,

Happy New Year.

I am honored to serve as Massey Cancer Center's first associate director for education and training. My role will be to lead the cancer center's professional education and training activities. Additionally, part of my responsibilities will be to chair the new Cancer Education Steering Committee, which will work to develop and implement high-impact educational programs at all training levels.

Massey's cancer training and career development efforts span a broad spectrum of career stages ranging from high school and graduate students to scientists, clinicians and health care professionals. These efforts include a pipeline program for high school students to receive training in Massey's labs and to observe in Massey's clinics; predoctoral cancer training programs; PhD programs in cancer and molecular medicine; oncology residency and fellowship programs; postdoctoral fellowship programs for laboratory cancer research and cancer prevention and control science; and mentoring programs for early career faculty and junior investigators conducting cancer research. Since 2011, 230 predoctoral and 244 postdoctoral trainees have been part of Massey Cancer Center members' programmatic research.

Additionally, Massey has partnered with other Virginia institutes to launch the Annual Commonwealth of Virginia Cancer Research Conference, which will allow trainees to present their research and have an opportunity to learn, interact and build collaborative relationships and networks. The first conference will be held at the University of Virginia on September 22-23, 2017, and VCU will host the second conference in the fall of 2018.

Massey has specified several key education and training initiatives in the cancer center's 2021 strategic plan. Among those is for Massey to work with School of Medicine colleagues to continue to build the academics of the hematology/oncology fellowship program. Additionally, through partnerships across VCU and with other Virginia institutions of higher learning, including historically black colleges, Massey will endeavor to increase the number of training grants and funded trainee positions. With the Development Office, the cancer center will work to secure sustained donor funding and

connect donors with sponsored pre- and postdoctoral trainees. Finally, Massey will strive to enhance mentoring programs for junior investigators in each of the cancer center's research programs.

To be successful in these endeavors will require the participation of our cancer center members. Many of you are already serving as mentors, course instructors and as directors of training programs, and I thank you for that. If you are not involved, I encourage you to email me to learn more about ways to engage. I also welcome your input as to how we can improve our education and training programs. I look forward to working with you to help shape the careers of our future cancer researchers and clinicians.

Sincerely,

Devanand Sarkar, M.B.B.S, Ph.D.
Associate director for education and training