

**VCU**

Leaders' Update

A message from Director Gordon Ginder

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to share that Massey's scientific External Advisory Board (EAB) recently gave an overall positive evaluation of our cancer center. The board met onsite in March to conduct a review of the cancer center. The EAB consists of advisors who periodically review and advise Massey on its research activities and impact in the context of our NCI designation. This group includes 14 cancer scientists and leaders from 13 other NCI-designated cancer centers such as U Penn Abramson, Moffitt, Case Western and Georgetown Lombardi. Massey's leaders were heartened by the EAB review, and the board's recommendations were deliberated and discussed at our senior leadership retreat in May.

The EAB assessed each of Massey's four scientific programs and recommended that we consider reorganizing and restructuring some of the programs to better reflect the strengths and interactions among the center's researchers, align members with the scientific aims and themes of the programs, have relevance to Massey's catchment area and support the overall research goals of the cancer center. Massey's leadership team had a thorough discussion of the report at our senior leadership retreat. We plan to conduct an in-depth review and reevaluate our programs after the completion of strategic recruitments that are currently underway, since these new faculty will fill some of the identified gaps. As we make progress, we'll keep you informed.

Massey was also encouraged by the advisory group to consider how the more basic science programs might better interface with and further drive science that best serves the center's catchment area as well as how the programs hand off their discoveries and pre-clinical science to the Developmental Therapeutics program for the development of clinical trials. We discussed these topics at the senior leadership retreat and affirmed that our disease-specific focus groups should provide a clear path for translation, and so we will work with those groups to establish more defined processes to achieve this. Additionally, we will continue to use the cancer center pilot projects to foster a focus on science that meets the needs of our catchment area by making it a priority area for funding. I encourage you to consider how your research is, or can be, relevant to our catchment area as you begin new research projects. More information about our catchment area, including how it's defined, is available on [Massey's website](#).

Furthermore, the EAB suggested that Massey consider how each of Massey's scientific cross-cutting themes relate to, integrate within, or serve as primary aims of our research programs so that cross-cutting themes improve and do not distract from the focus of the programmatic themes. After discussion at the senior leadership retreat, we decided to anchor the cross-cutting themes within the programs; for example, Cancer Cell Signaling will be the primary base

for the obesity and metabolism theme, Developmental Therapeutics will lead precision medicine and disparities will be anchored within the Cancer Prevention and Control program. Where immuno-oncology will 'live' is still under consideration.

Additionally, the cancer center was urged to further facilitate the preparation and submission of multi-investigator research and training grants, such as P01, P50 and T32 awards, as well as F and K awards. We ask that you, our members, join us in this effort. Massey has a team of science writers who can aid you in writing grant proposals. Contact Kevin Hogan for assistance at kthogan@vcu.edu.

Finally, I would like to make you aware of a benefit for Massey members that was discussed at the senior leadership retreat but is not widely known. Eastern Virginia Medical School has a robust proteomics core with high-end instrumentation into which Massey researchers can tap. VCU has a shared resources agreement with EVMS, so Massey members can get their internal rates. For more information about their services, rates and contact information, visit the [EVMS Proteomics website](#).

Your cancer center leadership team is motivated to take all of the steps proposed by the EAB to position Massey for success. Thank you for your contributions to Massey's research and clinical advances and mentoring and training efforts. The cancer center is on a strong, positive trajectory, in large part, because of your active participation and achievements.

Regards,

Gordon D. Ginder, M.D.
Director