



Dear colleagues and friends,

Although it is widely accepted that biomedical research drives innovation and fuels the U.S. economy, it is equally true that Congress and state legislators want to hear from scientists how the dollars allocated for research are making an impact. Mindful of this fact, I joined our government relations team for the annual [“SA to DC” trip](#) (Feb. 4-7) led by our San Antonio Chamber of Commerce in partnership with other area chambers, businesses, city/county leadership, and representatives from local research institutes and universities.

During our four days on Capitol Hill, we had an opportunity to discuss our federal agenda priorities and several issues facing Bexar County including higher education, workforce development, healthcare and biosciences. I was impressed with the chambers’ leadership to ensure that the San Antonio delegation had a successful trip, and with the hospitality offered by Senator John Cornyn, Representatives Henry Cuellar, Chip Roy and their staff, who provided valuable viewpoints and feedback during our meetings. There is no question that a careful consideration of all the priorities discussed with our elected officials would enable the 7th largest and fastest growing city in the country to become an ideal place to live, work, and play. For brevity, I listed below the requests that continue to be critical to our institution’s [mission and strategic plan](#) and for which we spent most of our advocacy time.

- Enhance FY20 funding for academic health centers through increased appropriations to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Department of Defense (DoD), the Health Research Services Administration (HRSA), and other related federal agencies to benefit health education, research, and patient care in our city, South Texas Border region, and beyond.
- Increase funding for all Minority and Hispanic Serving Institutions and strengthen undergraduate and graduate education.
- Support policies and regulations that allow for investments in workforce development programs, such as, federal incentives to businesses offering internships.
- Support federal Medicare Graduate Medical Education policies to increase the number of physician residency training slots in Texas.

Less than two weeks later, I returned to Washington D.C. to attend the [annual meeting](#) of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). This meeting convened scientists and policy makers from all over the world, and housed an excellent exhibition hall with live podcasts, installations, and poster sessions covering current science policy issues and challenges faced by the research community. I had the opportunity to interact with the European scientific delegations interested in forging international partnerships. For most of us, the highlight this year was listening to [Kelvin Droegemeier, Ph.D.](#) deliver his first public speech since being confirmed just days earlier as the Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Dr. Droegemeier discussed the importance of American leadership in scientific research and development amidst rising global competition and cyber threats from foreign nations.

Closer to home, as the newly elected vice chairman of the [Texas Healthcare and Bioscience Institute](#) (THBI), I have been actively working with other board members and staff in sharing and discussing with state officials the recently released [report](#) on the Texas Life Sciences Landscape, as well as the [CPRIT Annual Report](#). These documents provide an overview of the significant growth and impact of the bioscience industry in our state and how CPRIT is keeping cancer research in Texas competitive. On February 11, THBI sponsored a half-day Summit bringing together panels of scientists, legislators, policy advisors, pharmaceutical companies, investors, and advocates to cover trends and issues confronting Texans in the life science arena. Following the Summit, THBI hosted [the Luminary Awards dinner](#), honoring this year's recipients Senator Kirk Watson, J.D., Representative John Zerwas M.D., 2018 Nobel Laureate Jim Allison, Ph.D., and Debra Miller. As each accepted the award, a common thread linking their remarks was their passion and spirit of collaboration to push boundaries, seek solutions to manage diseases, and a steadfast determination to support scientific discoveries.

My recent trips to Washington, D.C. have reinforced my appreciation for the tough decisions that elected officials make in a precarious and polarized political climate. As a member of the scientific community, I am committed to keep our legislators informed on the research strengths of our institution, our research partnerships, and the return to taxpayers on this investment.

I invite each of you to join me in this effort.

Sincerely,

Andrea Giuffrida

VP for Research