



Dear colleagues and friends,

On multiple fronts, the first three quarters of FY19 have marked significant research accomplishments, including three key Texas legislature outcomes, the [renewal of our AAALAC accreditation](#), a \$2.5 million [gift announced](#) to establish a biobank, and the [launch of the TechNovum accelerator](#). In addition to these achievements, we have seen a significant upward trend of our sponsored research expenditures. Allow me to cover some of these areas in more detail.

In our quest to reduce the burden of cancer, which last year resulted in \$40.3 billion in medical expenses in Texas, we worked with the Texas Healthcare and Bioscience Institute (THBI), our [government relations team](#) and other state organizations, to ensure that the **Cancer Prevention & Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT)** would not sunset in 2023. Lead by strong bi-partisan support, the legislature agreed to include a constitutional amendment on the November 5, 2019 general election ballot, placing in the hands of Texas voters the authorization to increase the maximum bond amount from \$3 to \$6 billion to sustain CPRIT for the next 10 years. The statewide impact of CPRIT is unquestionable: at our institution, 46 investigators were collectively awarded \$93,552,996 in the past decade, and CPRIT awards in FY19 totaled \$7.7 million. As detailed in the CPRIT [comprehensive report](#), this program has significantly increased Texas competitiveness in the cancer field by facilitating the recruitment of star-quality investigators and providing research support to push boundaries.

In addition to safeguarding the future of CPRIT, President Bill Henrich and our government relations team secured a Mission Specific Research Formula funding, a **new funding paradigm** for the 2020-2021 biennium, allowing for better planning for our long-term research goals.

In the last year, we have seen a growing **threat posed to biomedical research by animal rights activists**, who are framing their aggressive narrative with inaccurate information under the guise of animal welfare. This past legislative session, the Texas Society for Biomedical Research and the Texas Veterinary Medical Association, supported by our institution and others,

succeeded in altering the language of two bills ([House Bill 146](#) and [Senate Bill 121](#)) proposing municipal animal shelters as an option for rehoming retired dogs and cats upon completion of a research study. While the intent of the legislation was apparently laudable, if enacted it would have compromised existing adoption policies developed by veterinarians to ensure the welfare of animals after a research study and imposed a significant administrative burden. With guidance from our government relations team and UT System's Office of Government Relations, neither bill advanced out of their respective committees. In addition, our office has [developed a series of initiatives](#) to promote public awareness on the importance of using animals in biomedical research and build a culture of transparency relative to the activities taking place in our vivarium.

In recognition of UT Health San Antonio compliance with local, state and federal laws regulating animal research, we received official notification from the [Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International \(AAALAC\)](#) of full accreditation for our laboratory animal care and use program. The AAALAC site visitors were particularly impressed by the significant resources allocated by the institution towards facility renovations, as well as the outstanding staff engagement, protocol post-approval monitoring, and animal facility records for veterinary care and sanitation.

Two years ago, under the guidance of UT System, 7 academic institutions joined forces to form the UT System Health Biobank. This collaborative approach is serving as a blueprint for the development of our **new Biobank** which has leveraged a generous gift from the Barker Foundation. Funds will be used for space renovations on the first floor of the Research Administration Building to accommodate a freezer farm, a tissue processing lab, and to purchase equipment and a software management system for the centralized biorepository. This [new institutional research core](#) will benefit multiple research programs, including neurodegenerative disorders, cancer, renal and kidney diseases, aging, solid organ transplantation, and post-traumatic stress disorders.

This spring we announced the [TechNovum accelerator](#), a new program managed by the Office of Technology Commercialization (OTC) and designed to assist faculty entrepreneurs (founders) who wish to play a more active role in the translation of their inventions and the creation of new ventures. Nine cohorts of founders, supported by commercialization assistants and business mentors, have started an intensive four-month curriculum which entails weekly evening sessions and the development of a professional investor pitch to be delivered on *Demo Day* to an audience of accredited angels and venture capitalists. **TechNovum** will help navigate the myriad steps and pivots undertaken by a new startup to advance and market an invention. With an average of 60 disclosures per year being submitted to the OTC, coupled with a 6-digit figure annual investment to safeguard our intellectual property, TechNovum will also play a key role in sustaining the viability of OTC as required by the [Bayh-Dole Act](#).

Recently, [high profile cases of research misconduct](#) and multiple attempts by foreign countries to access protected research data across U.S. universities have been reported by the media. These cases, which have casted a negative light on the scientific community, are often linked to

failures in reporting conflicts of interest or commitment by investigators holding a position outside of the institution, and/or receiving research funding or compensation from a foreign entity. All UT Health San Antonio faculty and staff have an obligation to report any activities that may create a conflict, including board services and outside employment, through the online platform, [iDisclose](#). The [Handbook of Operating Procedures 10.1.6 and 10.1.9](#) fully cover the **conflict of interest and conflict of commitment policies** and the institutional process to report and address violations. Our institution has also convened a committee to revisit existing policies and processes to safeguard our data and IP from foreign threats.

Admittedly, these notes are longer than usual, but if you made it this far, please keep in mind that I always value and welcome your thoughts and suggestions on how we can continue to grow our research enterprise.

Sincerely,  
***Andrea Giuffrida***  
VP for Research