The conclusion of the 2004-2005 academic year brought much in the way of good news to the school of medicine and the medical center. I am pleased to announce that after two years of planning and more than 12 months of intensive activity by our faculty, students and staff, the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA has received reaccreditation without major deficiencies from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), a joint program of the American Medical Association and the Association of American Medical Colleges that accredits medical schools in the United States and Canada. Full accreditation has a term of eight years, but the accreditation period can be reduced for any institution if significant improvements are needed.

Leadership for our entire accreditation endeavor was provided by Joyce Fried, director of special projects, and Dr. Alan Robinson, executive associate dean and vice chancellor for medical sciences. The effort that they and the rest of their team put forth was truly amazing.

LCME accreditation is based on compliance with 129 standards in the following categories:

- Institutional setting
- Educational program for the M.D. degree
- Medical students, including admissions, student services, and the learning environment
- Faculty
- Educational resources

The evaluation delves into every aspect of medical school operations and personnel, both in Westwood and at our teaching affiliates. The process calls for a comprehensive self-study and concludes with a site visit.

In preparation for this process, the school leadership and staff spent more than a year gathering data to answer hundreds of questions provided to us by the LCME. This “database” demonstrated how we comply with the standards in each of the categories listed above. A steering committee and seven subcommittees were formed, each focusing on a specific area. These committees analyzed the information in the database and drafted a report on their findings, which was submitted to the steering committee.

The steering committee used the information from the subcommittee reports to identify our strengths and weaknesses in each category. The results were distilled into a self-study report that was submitted to the LCME along with the database, detailed descriptions of each of our courses and clerkships, and a separate report written entirely by the students.

Once the self-study was submitted, preparation for the site visit began. Our LCME site visit team was composed of six distinguished members from around the country, including a medical student member. The visit itself, which took place in January, lasted three days, and the fast-paced schedule of meetings and tours included interviews with school leadership and more than 150 faculty, staff and students. On each of the three days, the site visit team met over lunch with approximately 12 medical students from all four years in the UCLA, Drew, and UCR programs. On the last day, the site visitors conducted an exit interview with me, as well as with the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, to summarize their findings.

The team’s final report was submitted to the LCME for discussion and modification in early June. At the end of June we were notified of the LCME’s findings and decision. The findings identified many areas of institutional strength and a few areas where improvement is indicated. The strengths include:

- A stable, visionary, effective and accessible leadership team committed to the educational mission and widely respected by students and faculty
- Notable faculty support for and commitment to the recent comprehensive curriculum change, including personal participation by department chairs and support of faculty time for teaching
- Significant personnel resources to support the educational program, including specialists in curriculum design, faculty development, evaluation and information technology
- A commitment to diversity resulting in a commendable level of diversity among the student body and faculty
- Medical student praise for the high level of academic and student support services from faculty and members of the administration
- Opportunities for medical students to participate in research and the high percentage (70 percent) of graduates in recent classes who have completed an independent research project

A Message from Gerald S. Levey, M.D.
Vice Chancellor, UCLA Medical Sciences
Dean, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA

leadership in education and research
Exceptionally strong core financial support for the medical school, especially from governmental and philanthropic sources

Suggestions for improvement were centered on the following three standards:

- Students assigned to all campuses should receive the same rights and support services.
- There must be a system to assist students in career choice and application to residency programs, and to guide students in choosing elective courses.
- The health professionals who provide psychiatric/psychological counseling or other sensitive health services to medical students must have no involvement in the academic evaluation or promotion of students receiving those services.

All of these issues have been corrected, and in none of them were we totally out of compliance.

The LCME accreditation process is uniquely valuable to us because it allows us to step back and evaluate our own programs, and to receive feedback from expert medical educators on how we can improve our efforts. Their feedback was both informative and encouraging.

A second item of good news is that our National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding levels are continuing to rise, and we rank eighth in the United States in NIH grant support. In 2004, our faculty members were awarded $286 million in grant funding, showing a steady rise over the past decade from the $92.5 million awarded in 1994. This outstanding achievement is a testimony to the quality of scientists at UCLA and their commitment to cutting-edge research that can be translated directly to the care of our patients.

Finally, UCLA Medical Center, which is celebrating its
50th anniversary this year, was ranked “Best in the West” for the 16th consecutive year and fifth in the nation in *U.S. News & World Report* annual survey of the best hospitals in America. The Stewart and Lynda Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA was ranked “Best in the West” for the 13th consecutive year. The Division of Geriatric Medicine was once again ranked number one in the nation. This year, 16 specialties are ranked in the top 20 in the United States with 12 of them in the top 10.

I hope you are as proud of the accomplishments of the school of medicine and medical center as I am. We are committed to our efforts to be the very best and are grateful for your continued support.

**Stem Cell Research**

On November 2, 2004, the State of California thrust itself into the national spotlight when the voters approved Proposition 71, which provides $3 billion in funding for stem cell research. This legislation ensures that California, and indeed the United States, will become a major participant in the world-wide study of embryonic stem cells and hopefully in the years to come, their development into major therapeutic tools.

Proposition 71 created the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, an institute that is overseen by the Independent Citizen’s Oversight Committee (ICOC) that is composed of a diverse group of scientists and disease advocates. Representation on this committee includes the five University of California deans of the schools of medicine or their designees. For this past year, it has been both an honor and an exhilarating experience for me to sit on this committee and participate in the evolution of this new state agency. The committee has been working at a furious pace to put in place the all-important infrastructure that will enable the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine to provide funds in support of research grants, facilities and graduate student training.

In response to this initiative, Chancellor Albert Carnesale enthusiastically endorsed and provided resources for the creation of the Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Medicine that is described in this issue of *UCLA Medicine*. The director of the Institute is Dr. Owen Witte, and his co-directors are Dr. Judith Gasson and Dr. Uptal Banerjee. They have been working diligently to organize campus researchers addressing issues of stem cells to fulfill the promise of stem cell research.

Human embryonic stem cells were identified approximately 10 years ago. The reason the promise and excitement of embryonic stem cell research is so great in large part is related to two major features. One, embryonic stem cells can grow in a culture dish and differentiate to form any cell type in the human body. Two, the ability to differentiate creates a therapeutic potential that is unlimited. One can readily imagine neurogenic stem cells being used to treat Parkinson’s disease and to aid in spinal cord regeneration. Similarly, scientists are hopeful that stem cells can be used to generate pancreatic beta cells that produce insulin, which would provide a major treatment for type I diabetes. Similar examples can be found for diseases involving other organ systems and specific cell types. Nevertheless, the challenge that Drs. Witte, Gasson, Banerjee and all those working in this area currently have, and will have in the future, is that finding the proper conditions for the differentiating of human embryonic stem cells into specific cell types is still formidable scientifically. Growing these cells has been difficult, but in the judgment of many outstanding physicians and scientists, the application of stem cells to cure human disease will happen, and the only uncertainty is when it will happen.

All of us at UCLA are thrilled to be part of this grand initiative in the State of California and to be major participants in this area of research. Fortunately for UCLA, and ultimately our patients, much experience has been gained by scientists here and elsewhere working with adult stem cells and cord blood stem cells. We believe this is the right campus at the right time to take a leadership position in the science involving embryonic stem cells and applying what we have learned to the improved diagnosis and treatment of human diseases.

Finally, all of us at UCLA recognize the ethical controversies that swirl about this fascinating and important area of research. We are respectful of the arguments and individuals on both sides of the embryonic stem cell controversy. I can reassure you that not only will we work hard to bring stem cell research to fruition, but that we will be respectful of the concerns that have been voiced by various segments of society and will follow the guidelines laid down so carefully by the National Academy of Sciences with regard to embryonic stem cell research. I am confident that in future issues of *UCLA Medicine*, Drs. Witte, Gasson and Banerjee, and other members of the UCLA stem cell scientific community, will present updates on their accomplishments in this field.

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