

Closing the Books on a Great Year, Looking Ahead to an Even Better One

What can be said about the past year—Academic Year 2016—is similar to what we have said about many recent years at P&S. We are growing and thriving in so many ways:

- Our ColumbiaDoctors faculty practice organization grew by more than 8 percent last year, with an ever expanding geographic reach.
- We continue to grow our faculty at a net rate of about 6 percent per year, with outstanding faculty recruits from around the country.
- Our school's NIH grants portfolio increased by 11 percent during a year when the NIH budget increased only 1.6 percent.
- Our faculty's prolific research continues to change the face of biomedical science and medical practice, as evidenced by 74 papers in *Cell*, *Nature*, *Science*, and the *New England Journal of Medicine* alone.
- We were able to accept less than 4 percent of the nearly 8,000 students who applied to medical school this year, and year after year we have one of the country's highest yield rates on accepted students.
- We continue to have one of the most diverse student bodies, which is nearly double the national average of underrepresented minority students.
- Our commitment to our local community includes partnering in community-based participatory research, providing high-quality care to all of our neighbors, helping neighborhood children pursue their dreams of careers in medicine and science, and maintaining our campus as an open environment for our neighbors to share.

Behind those headlines are individual stories of success in all of our missions. Examples include grants large and small to study health across the lifespan, a student's scholarly project to improve a clerkship for future students, a surgeon's use of a technique that put an

11-year-old with cerebral palsy back into the basketball game she loves, and advancement of plans to close a portion of one of our streets to build a community square that will be shared with our medical center neighbors.

One annual report cannot tell all the worthy stories that illustrate a year's successes, but this report includes a selection of articles that describe some of our successes. Our ongoing work in precision medicine is exemplified in an article that shows the role and power of big data in modern patient care. An article on the microbiome shows how our researchers are going beyond just describing the microbiome to now demonstrating its influence on physiological processes. Another article takes you deep within our cells to explore the important role of noncoding RNA, previously thought to occupy only a minor role in genomic medicine. We also profile the work of four researchers involved in understanding and correcting disparities in disease and treatment among groups of patients whose health is influenced by social and environmental factors. What these varied efforts have in common is reflected in the theme of this report, "The Next Big Things," and these articles show how P&S ingenuity and perseverance generate new knowledge to advance patient care.

One of our most tangible achievements this year fits nicely into the "big things" category. As included in this report, in June we dedicated our new 14-story medical and graduate education building—the Roy and Diana Vagelos Education Center—in honor of the building's lead donors. Many other donors, including Cheryl and Philip Milstein; Kathryn and Mary Jaharis, representing the Michael Jaharis family; Roger Wu and David Wu, representing their parents, the late Helen and Clyde Wu; and Sudhir, Anita, and

Dhairya Choudhrie, representing the Choudhrie Family Foundation, were also on hand to dedicate the building. It is no exaggeration to say that we could not have built this amazing building, which was constructed entirely with private donations, without the generosity of so many philanthropists. This group of visionary supporters committed resources so that today's medical students can be trained in 21st century techniques in a learning environment that is both functional and architecturally stunning.

The futuristic theme of this report is also fitting for what we predict Academic Year 2017 has in store. As 2016 was turning over to 2017 on July 1, our faculty received major grants that will support our strategic priorities. One of the first is an NIH grant to Columbia to enroll participants in the Cohort Program of President Barack Obama's Precision Medicine Initiative. The five-year award, which has the potential to

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total \$46.5 million, reinforces our leadership in precision medicine by extending our ongoing successes in taking an individualized approach to treating cancer and rare genetic diseases to a broader range of human illnesses. Columbia will partner with NewYork-Presbyterian, Harlem Hospital, and Weill Cornell Medicine to enroll patients as part of the national goal to enroll 1 million patient volunteers. P&S also was chosen to partner with a coalition of research organizations awarded \$13.7 million from the NIH to establish the Data and Research Support Center as part of the national Precision Medicine Initiative. Biomedical informatics experts at P&S will help curate health information being contributed to the Precision Medicine Initiative Cohort Program, including electronic health records, medical and pharmaceutical databases, and payer databases. P&S will standardize the information,

ensure the quality of the data, and convert the data into a format that is usable by researchers involved in the program. We also renewed our NIH Clinical and Translational Science Award, which funds the Irving Institute for Clinical and Translational Research at Columbia and NewYork-Presbyterian. The \$58.4 million grant will support the Irving Institute's ongoing work in translational research, speed development of new medical therapies, and align its focus on precision medicine with Columbia University's own Precision Medicine Initiative.

The end of Academic Year 2016 marks my 10-year anniversary as dean of this remarkable school. What our faculty, students, and supporters have accomplished during that decade is truly inspirational, from our phenomenal growth in research funding to our expanded clinical footprint to our impressive success in recruiting the best medical and graduate stu-

dents. As we look forward to another great year, we will have the privilege of celebrating the first 250 years of Columbia's medical school by combining historical reflections with visionary and strategic planning for the beginning of the next 250 years.

We enter this next year energized by an enthusiasm I know you—our faculty, students, alumni, generous supporters, and other readers—share. Thank you for all you contribute to our success—past, present, and future.

With best wishes,

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