



UPSTATE
MEDICAL UNIVERSITY
EDUCATION · HEALTHCARE · RESEARCH

Office of the President

April 24, 2017

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

I want to join others from across the SUNY system today and offer congratulations to Kristina Johnson, PhD, on her appointment as SUNY's next chancellor. The SUNY Board of Trustees made the appointment of Dr. Johnson official today. She will assume the post in September. Her impressive career includes experience in the private sector, government and academia. I look forward to meeting with her as she assumes the Chancellor post and working closely with Trustee Chair McCall and Chancellor Zimpher during this transition period.

Spring has sprung on the Upstate campus. The Weiskotten Hall courtyard is starting to see signs of spring with colorful flowers emerging from the soil. Today, blue and silver pinwheels line the courtyard to mark Child Abuse Awareness Month. Placed by our students, the pinwheels are yet another reminder of the community outreach and awareness-raising role that Upstate plays in our community.

The pinwheels highlight our support of the McMahon Ryan Advocacy Center, where our faculty lend its expertise on issues related to child abuse. These community partnerships are a key element of our new strategic plan, OUR (One University Roadmap) Upstate, which we introduced April 12.

The plan is the road map that will bring us to a destination of a world-class academic medical that finds us “united in expertise, compassion and hope to create a healthier world.”

Surely, we will encounter roadblocks and obstacles along our journey, but as we follow this road map, we will overcome these obstacles.

For all information related to the plan and to offer your comments, please visit: <http://www.upstate.edu/strategicaffairs/strategic-planning/index.php>. Thank you to all who have already provided us with feedback.

The launch of OUR Upstate was a highlight of a busy winter and spring.

The second Presidential Symposium, we hosted in late March, touched on issues of great interest to all. I'm grateful to those who attended and participated in our discussions, especially New York Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul and Virginia Commonwealth University's Dr. Steven H. Woolf. The discussions laid out the harsh realities on many topics, including refugee health, the opioid and heroin epidemic, emerging disparities in women's health, and persistent health disparities for underserved and minority communities. Upstate experts are on the front lines of all these issues and the important work we do in these areas is much needed.

Lt. Gov. Hochul was but just one of New York's key leaders to visit campus this semester. Upstate welcomed New York's top doctor, Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker, who selected Upstate to host his "Commissioner's Grand Rounds" on the subject of Baby Boomer Health. After the ground rounds, Dr. Zucker toured the Upstate Cancer Center and Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital. He met employees from these areas and was impressed by the facilities and the range of services we offer. I am certain Dr. Zucker will be interested in hearing the progress we make through our strategic plan in reducing disparities in health care.

As I promised in my State of the University Address in March, I have announced a new dean of the College of Medicine and Senior Vice-President. Julio Lucinio, MD, PhD, joins us in July from the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute and Flinders University, in Adelaide, Australia. He is accomplished in every aspect of academic medicine and his broad global perspective is especially important and relevant to Upstate in view of our strategic plan initiative of enhanced center for global health, environmental and community impact.

Regarding our clinical mission, I am thankful for everyone's extraordinary work, especially during these times when our hospital census has been extremely high.

Another moment that highlights the dedication of our staff came during last month's snowstorm, which shut down parts of our university, but not our hospital operations. As the forecast grew dire and roadways treacherous, more than 100 nurses and other staff members stayed overnight at our Downtown and Community campuses to ensure that they would be here in the morning to care for their patients. Thank you.

We get many good letters about the care we offer from our patients, but it's not every day that a local state legislator uses his regular column to highlight the medical care he's received. At the link below is State Assemblyman Al Stirpe's column and his thank you for Upstate's outstanding care: <http://nyassembly.gov/mem/Al-Stirpe/story/74478/>

This weekend, some of our researchers took to Washington, D.C., others stayed here in Syracuse for the March for Science to highlight the need for continued research funding and to call attention to scientific discoveries. This is an important issue for all academic medical colleges and universities. As noted by the Association of American Medical Colleges, additional funding not only sustains further scientific breakthroughs, but helps “ensure a biomedical research workforce that reflects the racial and gender diversity of our citizenry, and inspire a passion for science in current and future generations of researchers” two key issues that relate to our strategic plan.

Upstate has been a beneficiary of federal research support. Recently, grants from the National Institutes of Health have been awarded to our faculty to address some of the most devastating diseases. Congratulations to Wenyi Feng, PhD, (cancer), Mario Viapiano, PhD, (cancer), Vivian Ghatan, PhD, and Kristopher Maier, PhD, (peripheral artery disease) and Li Ru Zhao, PhD, (Alzheimer’s disease) for their work on finding new treatments and generating a greater understanding of these diseases. We need this work to continue and accelerate to meet the challenges in cancer care and neurologically based diseases.

This has been a busy year with many changes and I thank you all for being a part of it. I ended my State of the University Address in March on the theme of United, Expertise, Compassion and Hope and that’s how I will close this Spring message to you.

In less than 30 days, Upstate will graduate 500 students, from physicians and research scientists, to nurses, therapists, technicians and public health advocates. Knowing about these students and the education and support that all of you have provided them, I have great hope for the future of medicine and our society at-large.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Danielle Laraque-Arena', with a stylized, flowing script.

Danielle Laraque-Arena, MD, FAAP
President, Upstate Medical University