

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

### **U**CLA's Jonsson Comprehensive

Cancer Center has been continuously funded by the National Cancer Institute for the last 28 years. Last year, our Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) was renewed for the next five years. The renewal process provided us with an opportunity to reflect upon our successes as well as look forward to the challenges of the future. Congratulations to Drs. Patricia Ganz, Harvey Herschman, Dennis Slamon and all the scientific program area directors for a superb job in presenting our research. The peer-review team recognized the strengths of the JCCC program and approved an overall increase in our funding of 70 percent. Unfortunately, due to budget constraints at the National Institutes of Health, we received only a 43 percent increase.

Here are some of the statistics that we presented to the National Cancer Institute (NCI):

- ★ During the most recent five-year cycle, the number of patients enrolled in therapeutic clinical trials increased 60% from 3,348 to 5,335.
- ★ The JCCC was awarded multi-million dollar Specialized Programs of Research Excellence (SPORE) grants in both lung and prostate cancer. SPORE grants recognize the expertise at an institution in the particular area or cancer site being studied. We are very proud of these successes (see story on page 10).
- ★ Philanthropic funding enabled us to establish seven new shared resources to support our faculty in basic, clinical/translational and population-based studies.
- ★ 40 outstanding new faculty were recruited to UCLA and JCCC (see story on page 22).
- ★ JCCC physicians and scientists played key roles leading to the FDA approval of three novel targeted cancer therapies.
- ★ \$1.7 million in philanthropic funding for interdisciplinary seed grants generated \$26.7 million in external peer-reviewed funding of program grants.

I believe that these facts, together with the reports of the peer review committees, provide impartial commendation of the suc-



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cess of our partnership of scientists, physicians and philanthropic supporters to impact cancer. Over the next five-year period, the Cancer Center Support Grant will provide funding for 11 scientific program areas and 14 shared resources. The seven newly funded resources are: Proteomics, Gene Expression, Immunology, Small Animal Imaging, Tissue Array, Family and Genetic Evaluation and Patient Recruitment and Retention Cores (see story on page 26).

Thanks to the success of these initiatives, we've recruited two additional directors to our leadership team. Robert DuWors has joined the JCCC as deputy director for Administration and Finance, after serving five years in a similar position at the University of California, San Francisco Cancer Center (see story on page 28). Dr. James Economou has been appointed deputy director of the JCCC. His responsibilities include oversight of the SPORE programs, the interdisciplinary and clinical seed grants and strengthening our training programs (see story on page 13).

What now? For the JCCC, "business as usual" means rapidly evolving change—utilizing every human and technological resource available to extend the research curve. To be the best, we must continue to recruit and retain outstanding faculty—our most important resource. As both our knowledge base and technology evolve, we are fostering new initiatives with Senior Associate Dean Leonard Rome in the David Geffen School of Medicine. Currently, we are implementing partnerships with the California NanoSystems Institute and the Samueli School of Engineering here on the UCLA campus.

At the end of the day, having an impact on cancer involves more than "big science" and FDA approval and must include access to services for all of our people. The unequal

burden that cancer places on under-served minority communities is playing itself out in our backyard. Our long-sought partnership with Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science has been recognized with a \$500,000 grant from the NCI. The purpose of this partnership is to improve patient access to novel therapies and enhance training opportunities for future faculty. Public health students will be challenged to design and implement interventions to help reduce the unequal burden in our under-served communities. The co-investigator in this partnership is Dr. Jay Vadgama at Drew, who has exhibited extraordinary commitment to these goals (see story on page 18).

Critical to our success are the dedicated individuals who provide the philanthropic resources to support discovery research, faculty recruitment and retention and programmatic initiatives. We are grateful to these visionary donors as well as the members of the Jonsson Cancer Center Foundation staff, led by Executive Director Jonathan Page. Over the past four years, philanthropic support has increased to nearly triple the average of the previous four years.

We face tough challenges in our current local and national economic environment. But we remain committed to achieving our goals. It's not just our jobs, it's deeply personal. Last year alone, three of us who serve as JCCC directors lost a father, a mother and a mother-in-law to cancer. A 24-year-old member of our foundation staff passed away from lung cancer just days before his first wedding anniversary. We must continue to support our outstanding researchers here at the JCCC because the cost of not doing the work is so much greater.

*Judy Jonsson*