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COVERING LOUISIANA

LSU System Appoints Veteran Surgeon and Medical Educator to Lead Health Care Redesign

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Interim LSU System President William L. Jenkins on Friday named Dr. Frank Opelka of New Orleans to the newly-created position of LSU System Executive Vice President for Health Care and Medical Education Redesign.

Dr. Opelka, Vice Chancellor for Clinical Affairs at the LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans, who also served in a national healthcare redesign role as Associate Medical Director for the American College of Surgeons (ACS), assumes his new position immediately subject to approval by the LSU Board of Supervisors at the board's Sept. 7th meeting.

"Dr. Opelka's distinguished career and his wealth of experience will go a long way toward the immediate and long-range changes needed in health care delivery in the State of Louisiana," said Dr. Jenkins. "We're in a dilemma and we have to move swiftly to restructure our health care delivery system to ensure that the hundreds of thousands of people who depend on us continue to receive high quality care. Frank's expertise and guidance will be valuable to us as we modernize our methods of delivering health care while adjusting to our financial realities in producing a sustainable, community-involved health care system that meets our residents' needs."

A former U.S. Army combat surgeon and colorectal specialist, Dr. Opelka is a former president and chief executive officer of LSU's Healthcare Network. In the months following Hurricane Katrina, he helped rebuild LSU's clinical faculty group practice. He also participated in the planning for the new University Academic Medical Center in New Orleans and has participated national healthcare redesign discussions with a concentration on maximizing patient safety, quality and cost efficiency, especially in paying for performance. He is considered a leading expert in national quality measurement as a member of the National Quality Forum, a national healthcare quality group based in Washington.

Recently, Dr. Opelka and the ACS proposed a new approach to delivering health care and paying providers by setting value-based targets within medical specialties. Under the plan all providers who are involved in treating patients would share in incentives for meeting quality goals for the conditions they treat.

Dr. Opelka received his medical degree from the Chicago Medical School at Rosalind Franklin University in 1981. He served in the Army for 11 years before joining the Ochsner Health System as a colon and rectal Surgeon. In 2001, Dr. Opelka became Vice Chair for Surgery at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston. In 2006, he was named president and chief executive of the LSU Healthcare Network before being named vice chancellor for clinical affairs at LSUHSC-New Orleans in March 2005.

Dr. Opelka will be based at the LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans, where he will oversee the division formerly led by LSU System Vice President for Health Affairs and Medical Education Fred Cerise, M.D., to develop meaningful reforms for the LSU

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hospitals to continue providing safety net medical care for low-income and uninsured residents, while also looking at ways to enhance services and expand LSU's reach in communities throughout the state to attract a broader patient base.

One of Dr. Opelka's first priorities will be conducting a series of statewide, regional-based meetings to assess community needs hospital by hospital, determining what the specific health care needs are in of each area. The LSU System will use that feedback to determine the best plans for moving forward and meeting the needs of providers, patients and other stakeholders in each part of the state.

"I look forward to meeting with the patients, the providers and other stakeholders to determine what will work best for every area of our state," Dr. Opelka said. "This is something that has been needed for a long time, and I expect this to be a productive process that will help us determine the future path of LSU in health care education."

For additional information, contact Charles Zewe, PhD, LSU System, 225-578-3941, czewe@lsu.edu.



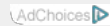
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