

Leaders' update

A message from Donna Berrier, M.P.A., chief administrative officer

As I'm sure you are aware, VCU Massey Cancer Center's National Cancer Institute (NCI) Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) is what distinguishes us as an NCI-designated cancer center. While we must reapply for our CCSG periodically, we also must complete a progress report every year detailing the scientific accomplishments made in our research programs as well as the transdisciplinary collaborations, recruitments, facilities, shared resources and administrative efforts that are helping to grow our research enterprise and accomplish our mission of developing new ways to prevent, detect, treat and, ultimately, cure cancer. Compiling the CCSG progress report is an incredible task, and I commend our cancer center leadership and administrative team for their excellent work. While the report is too vast to cover every detail, I would like to take the time to note several points in which we should all be proud.

Noted in the report were significant achievements in all of our research programs, including collaborations among experts in varying disciplines that brought fresh perspective to overcome major hurdles in preventing and treating cancer. Members of our Cancer Cell Signaling (CCS) research program provided significant insights into the cellular and molecular signaling pathways that govern the behavior and survival of a number of cancer cell types. Our Cancer Molecular Genetics (CMG) research program members discovered novel genetic and epigenetic events that contribute to cancer development and progression and made major strides in translating their research from bench to bedside. The Developmental Therapeutics (DT) research program made noteworthy preclinical findings in the laboratory and brought forth a number of phase 1 clinical trials testing novel therapies for a variety of cancers. Members of the Radiation Biology and Oncology (RBO) research program continued to define new mechanisms to overcome tumor radioresistance while improving imaging methods and enhancing radiation delivery to develop more effective cancer treatments. The Cancer Prevention and Control (CPC) research program also had many noteworthy achievements, including developing improved methodologies for measuring cancer cost outcomes, defining barriers to clinical trial enrollment, improving patients' ability to make informed decisions regarding preventive measures through decision aids and personal health records, and establishing a Center for the Study of Tobacco Products after securing a P50 grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Massey underwent many changes in 2013 to better position itself for success at the time of our CCSG renewal in 2017. Much emphasis was placed on multidisciplinary collaborations, especially the integration of our CPC program with our four other research programs. The addition of Charles Geyer, M.D., F.A.C.P., associate director for clinical research, began the revitalization and reorganization of our clinical research program in order to increase efficiency and improve clinical trial accruals. Khalid Matin, M.D., F.A.C.P., was named medical director of community oncology and clinical research affiliations, and he, along with Geyer, immediately began growing and restructuring our Clinical Research Affiliation Network. A number of promising new faculty joined our team, including but not limited to Mark Malkin, M.D., neuro-oncologist; Charles Clevenger, M.D., Ph.D., chair of the Department of Pathology; David Fenstermacher, Ph.D., chief research information officer for VCU and a faculty member in the Department of Biostatistics; and Iain Morgan, Ph.D., director of the Philips Institute for Oral and

Craniofacial Molecular Biology in the VCU School of Dentistry. Many additional faculty are actively under recruitment, all will help build our interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary scientific projects and further strengthen and develop our research programs. Paul Fawcett, Ph.D., continues to work with our shared resource core directors to update and maintain equipment and facilities that provide valuable in-house resources that increase our researchers' capabilities.

The construction of the McGlothlin Medical Education Center (MMEC) provided 28,800 square feet of space for Massey clinical research staff. The Structural Biology Shared Resource also received space on the lower level of MMEC, and renovations were completed in the vivarium on the second floor of the MCC building. Renovations were also started in the multidisciplinary treatment rooms in the Dalton Oncology Clinic.

Though 2013 proved be an incredibly competitive funding environment, the number of funded projects increased from 65 in 2012 to 73 in 2013. NCI funding increased by more than \$107,000, and funding by other institutes at the NIH increased by almost 24 percent. Philanthropic support also remained strong, with our \$100 million capital campaign reaching the \$85 million mark. The Governor and state legislature also responded positively in their biennial budget with \$7.5 million in funding for 2013 and \$8.5 million for 2014. Without this state support the cancer center would not be able to provide funding for pilot projects, investigator-initiated clinical trials, faculty recruitments and the expansion of clinical research into our affiliate network.

As we reflect on the enormity of accomplishments that have occurred in the last year, I would like to thank everyone at Massey for their hard work and dedication. Our collaborations don't only occur in our research programs, they occur at every level in our organization. We can only meet our goals by moving forward as a team, and I look forward to growing our team and continuing to fulfill our mission in 2014 and beyond.

Sincerely,

Donna Berrier, M.P.A.

Chief administrative officer

Associate director of administration