

2008 State of the Medical College and Graduate School of Medical Sciences

Already one of the nation's pre-eminent medical schools, Weill Cornell Medical College moved boldly in the past year to set in motion a plan to build on its legacy of excellence; attracting the best and brightest medical students from around the world; supporting a faculty that continues to extend the landscape of research and discovery; and spanning the global health community — from Turkey to Tanzania, from Qatar to Haiti — by living out the institution's mission to serve around the corner, or around the world."

This is the state of Weill Cornell Medical College and Graduate School of Medical Sciences as presented by Dr. Antonio M. Gotto Jr., the Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean of the Medical College, on June 10 in his annual address to faculty and staff.

Weill Cornell students — the foundation of the Medical College — continue to lead the nation both in and out of the classroom. Dean Gotto noted that more than 5,000 students applied to the class of 2011, and the 101 students who matriculated boast grade-point averages and MCAT scores that best the national averages.

The class of 2008 has also faithfully fulfilled the promise and potential of the past four years. All 93 graduates who pursued residencies — many at top 50 institutions as ranked by U.S. News & World Report — obtained one. Admission to the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences has also enjoyed continual growth under the leadership of Dean David Hajjar.

And while the student experience here remains vibrant, challenging and rewarding, Dean Gotto, in his frank address, noted that graduates leave Weill Cornell with an average debt of about \$114,000. While that figure is below the national average (soaring this year to nearly \$160,000), the dean said it still makes an irrefutable claim for additional scholarship and financial aid opportunities. "We are not alone with regard to this problem, and we are addressing it through our fundraising efforts which, to date, have allowed us to offer more financial aid to students."

The past year has been overwhelmingly successful for the Medical College's capital planning efforts. Close to \$800 million has been raised with an overall goal of \$1.3 billion. These funds will help Weill Cornell increase translational research efforts, recruit additional scientists and department chairs, and complete a new 400,000-square-foot research building on E. 69th Street that will likely become one of New York City's leading research facilities.

While the physical presence of Weill Cornell continues to expand and grow, its educational identity has also been reinvigorated by a forward-thinking administration. In 2007, the Medical College created the Task Force on Medical Education to review and analyze teaching practices at Weill Cornell. Chaired by Dean Hajjar and Dr. Carol Storey-Johnson, Senior Associate Dean (Education), the Task Force has recommended, among other things, that teaching, mentoring and advising medical students be an obligation of a faculty appointment.

"It is a whole new paradigm today," Dean Gotto said of the evolving role and responsibilities of medical educators.

Several individual professors were specifically recognized for their contributions this year, including the appointment of five faculty members to endowed professorships, six elections to tenure and three recipients of clinical scholar awards.

In addition, Dr. Jack Barchas, the Barklie McKee Henry Professor and chairman of psychiatry, this year received the 28th Annual Maurice R. Greenberg Distinguished Service Award, the highest honor bestowed by New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell and the Medical College.

As Dr. Gotto recounted the many successes and accomplishments of the past year, he also looked forward, detailing specific goals for the next five years.

Paramount among them is expanding opportunities for full professorships for women. While women are well represented at both instructor and assistant-professor levels at the Medical College, they lag far behind men as associate professors and, most notably, as full professors. Currently there are 37 female professors compared with 154 male professors at the Medical College.

"We will be vigilant in finding ways to increase the promotion of women to associate professor and tenured professor," Dean Gotto said. "This is a top priority in the coming year."

Dr. Gotto concluded his address with what may have been the Medical College's proudest moment in 2008 — a video of the May 8 graduation of the inaugural class of Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, the first American institution to offer its M.D. program outside the U.S.

To build on that historic achievement, over the next five years the Medical College and its partner, the Qatar Foundation, will continue to transform Qatar into a vibrant and sustainable scientific research community with new facilities and an expanded staff of investigators, technicians, faculty and staff.

"We are poised for significant growth in the coming year," Dean Gotto said. "With your help, I am confident that we will succeed."

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Awards & Honors

Dr. David Lyden, the Stavros S. Niarchos Associate Professor in Pediatric Cardiology, associate professor of cell and developmental biology and associate professor of pediatrics, presented the 8th Annual Leonard Weiss Memorial Lecture at the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo on June 11. Dr. Lyden's lecture, entitled "Preparing the Soil: The Premetastatic Microenvironment," discussed the contribution of the premetastatic and metastatic microenvironments in promoting metastasis; explained the role of niche-to-niche migration of bone marrow-derived cells and stromal cells metastasis; and made suggestions on how the medical community can target the different steps in the metastatic process to treat cancer. The Weiss Memorial Lecture is in honor of Dr. Leonard Weiss, who was one of the first to propose the theory of metastatic inefficiency and supported James Ewing's theory that metastasis is highly dependent on blood flow.

Dr. Susan Pannullo, assistant professor of neurological surgery, was honored with the 2008 Gary Lichtenstein Humanitarian Award, presented June 12 at the Sounding Off for a Cure fundraising event for the group Voices Against Brain Cancer. Dr. Pannullo serves as director of neurosurgical radiosurgery and director of neuro-oncology at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center.

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