

**N**ine nationally and internationally prominent scientists—including a top AIDS researcher—have joined the ranks of the OU Health Sciences Center faculty, thanks to an intensive recruiting effort led by Senior Vice President and Provost Jay H. Stein. Together the nine bring more than \$15 million in public and private foundation research funding to the University of Oklahoma's medical campus.

Recruitment of these key individuals was an outgrowth of an ambitious 1992 strategic plan that included defining the institution's direction for research, Stein says. Now ranked among the nation's top 20 best comprehensive medical universities according to *U.S. News & World Report*, OUHSC is well

positioned to expand its reputation for excellence into the research arena—a factor that helped attract the new faculty.

The major focus of the past two years, Stein adds, has been targeting areas of research potential, reallocating funds to those areas and developing a competitive and exemplary clinical program. Their efforts were aided by a research strategic plan commissioned by the Presbyterian Health Foundation and conducted in collaboration with the Wharton School of Business and the Center for Applied Research, which culminated in the goal "to be in the top third of all academic medical centers in federal research funding by 2003."

"Much work has gone into laying the foundation of the strategic plan's objective," Stein explains. "The first step was to recapture and reallocate resources despite two years of flat budgets. This effort resulted in the ability to harness \$6.3 million to be expended over the next five years to ensure the competitive recruitment of faculty/scientists as well as chairpersons in biochemistry and molecular biology, pediatrics, urology, family medicine, health promotion sciences and psychiatry."

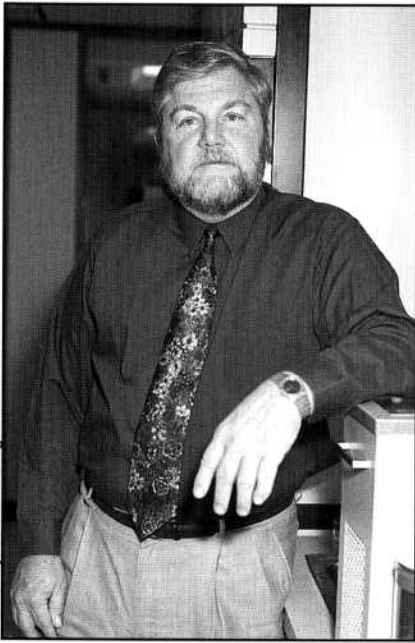
The \$6.3 million has been augmented by \$1.8 million from Presbyterian Health Foundation for an aggressive, nationwide recruitment program to secure top scholars and clinicians. The new faculty scientists represent a wide range of disciplines. They include:

**Robert E. Anderson, M.D., Ph.D.**, serves as director of the Oklahoma

**Nine nationally distinguished research scientists are adding to the luster of the OUHSC faculty's growing reputation for excellence.**

# New Superstars in Town

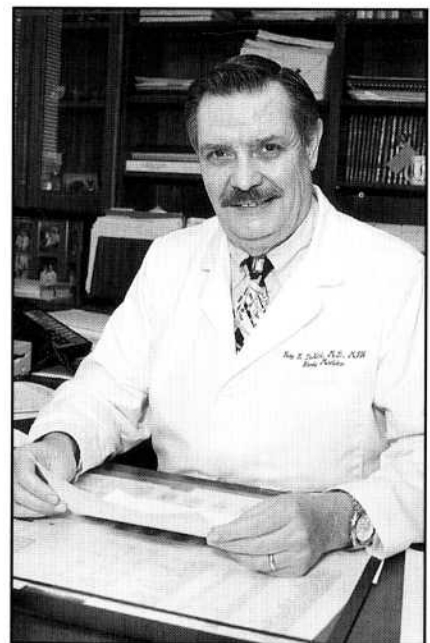
By Pamela Byrd-Mauldin and Staci Elder



**Robert E. Anderson, M.D., Ph.D.**



**Daniel J. Culkin, M.D.**



**Roy L. DeHart, M.D.**

Center for NeuroScience, professor of ophthalmology and professor of biochemistry and molecular biology.

A veteran of the war against blindness, Anderson is an international leader in research of retinal disease—specifically macular degeneration, the most common cause of blindness in Americans age 65 and older, and retinitis pigmentosa, the most common inherited cause of blindness. He joins the OUHSC from the Cullen Eye Institute at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, where he was a professor in the departments of ophthalmology and biochemistry and in the division of neuroscience. The editor of six books and author of more than 150 articles in major scientific publications, Anderson currently has more than \$2.2 million in National Institutes of Health-sponsored research funding.

“The OU Health Sciences Center offered me several opportunities,” Anderson says, “including directing the Oklahoma Center for NeuroScience, developing a graduate program in neuroscience, having research space in the Dean A. McGee Eye Institute, and working with a former colleague, department of ophthalmology chairman David Parke. Hopefully, many people will be able to benefit from the

services our research will provide, as we try to find the molecular basis for certain inherited retinal degenerations that result in blindness.”

“Dr. Anderson is a true leader in his field,” adds Parke, who also serves as director of the Dean McGee Eye Institute and, with Stein, was instrumental in recruiting Anderson. “We hope his investigations will lead to specific treatments for these two major causes of blindness, and we expect his presence will attract other outstanding vision science molecular biologists to Oklahoma. The institute is committed to assembling a world-class research team in this area.”

A native of Texas, Anderson received his B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from Texas A&M University and his M.D. degree from the Baylor University College of Medicine. He also completed a postdoctoral fellowship in the Medical Division at Oak Ridge Associated Universities in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

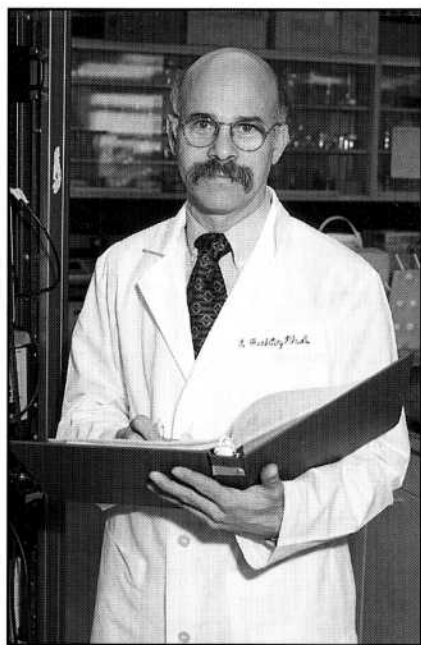
**Daniel J. Culkin, M.D.**, is the new chairman of the department of urology within the OU College of Medicine.

A distinguished scientist in the field of prostate and urological cancer, Culkin brings new energy and re-

sources to his chairman’s position. A recipient of more than \$1 million in research grants and awards, he has published numerous articles and abstracts regarding urology and prostate cancer.

“My clinical and basic science interests lie with the development and assessment of biological markers that predict the natural history of prostate cancer—research done with the intention of developing better guidelines we can use to offer people various treatment regimens,” Culkin explains. “Future goals for our department also include facility development, faculty development and a renewed dedication to resident/medical student education. With enhanced facilities and faculty recruitment, we can provide subspecialty expertise in the clinical arena that won’t be available anywhere else in Oklahoma.”

Culkin previously was a professor of urology at the Louisiana State University Medical Center in Shreveport and served as chief of urology at the Shreveport Veterans Affairs Medical Center. He earned his B.S. degree from Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, his M.S. degree from Loyola Medical Center in Chicago and his M.D. degree from Creighton School of Medicine. In addition to numerous



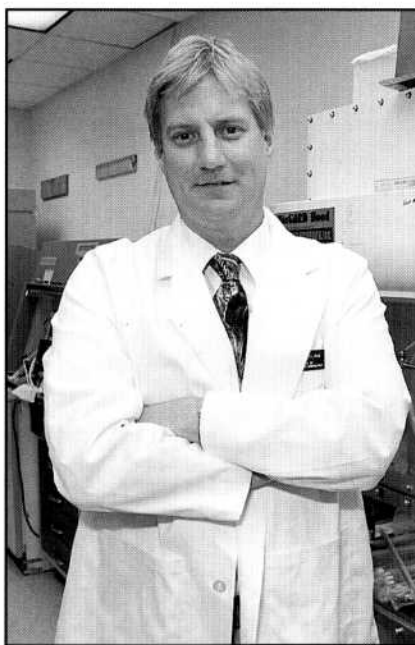
**Laurence D. Fechter, Ph.D.**

professional memberships and activities, he is ad hoc editor of both *The Journal of the Southern Medical Association* and *The Journal of the American Paraplegic Society*.

**Roy L. DeHart, M.D.**, has been named chairman of the department of family medicine, which recently celebrated the grand opening of its new building, the Family Medicine Center, located at 900 NE 10th Street in Oklahoma City. (See story on Page 3.)

"We have a marvelous young faculty to work with here within our own department, and I continue to enjoy the opportunity to teach both students and residents," DeHart says. "I think that's the key to why I'm here; I like what I do. Our new Family Medicine Center also is a plus; it's a state-of-the-art facility that will be as competitive as any in the region."

With an increased emphasis on training primary care physicians to practice in Oklahoma's rural areas, as well as in other parts of the state and nation, the OU Health Sciences Center is fortunate to already have attracted a recognized leader in family medicine, Stein notes. DeHart joined the OUHSC faculty in 1985 and was named chairman of the department this past year.



**Ronald C. Kennedy, Ph.D.**

He earned his medical degree from the University of Tennessee in 1960, a master's degree in public health from Johns Hopkins University in 1965 and a master's degree in international affairs from George Washington University in 1974. DeHart also is an internationally recognized expert in occupational and aerospace medicine and serves as a senior consultant to WorkMed, a private practice occupational medicine network in Tulsa, and as a consultant to agencies such as NASA, Northrop Corporation, Martin Marietta and the U.S. Postal Service.

DeHart is a diplomate of the American Board of Preventive Medicine, certified in both aerospace and occupational medicine, a fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians and a fellow and former president of the American College of Preventive Medicine. He serves as associate editor of *The Journal of Occupational Medicine* and is on the editorial boards for the *Journal of Aviation, Space and Environmental Medicine* and the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

**Laurence D. Fechter, Ph.D.**, serves the OU College of Pharmacy as director of the toxicology program and as Mosier Centennial Professor.

Before joining the OUHSC in 1993, Fechter spent much of his previous 17 years at Johns Hopkins University studying the effects of toxic agents—such as carbon monoxide from cigarette smoke and petroleum-based chemicals—and their connection to hearing loss. As holder of the College of Pharmacy's Henry D. and Ida Mosier Endowed Centennial Chair in toxicology, he is continuing this effort, as well as developing a research center that can serve as a resource for the community.

"The endowed chair program in place at the OU Health Sciences Center was the main reason I left Johns Hopkins. I had an opportunity to build a program from the ground floor, and I was extremely impressed with the OUHSC's commitment to developing and strengthening research programs," Fechter says. "My own research interest has to do with chemicals in the environment and in occupational settings and the potential for them to disrupt health—particularly health of the central nervous system. Research primarily involves developing new methods to determine if certain chemicals are likely to produce injury and how injury can be prevented. In my own work, I apply this mainly to hearing loss."

Fechter has been a consultant to the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Institutes of Health and the World Health Organization. He earned his M.A. degree in general experimental psychology from Kent State University and his Ph.D. degree in biopsychology/neuroscience from the University of Rochester. Prior to his 17-year career with Johns Hopkins, he was a research fellow in the department of medical pharmacology at the University of Uppsala Biomedical Center in Sweden and in the department of psychology at the University of Rochester.

**Ronald C. Kennedy, Ph.D.**, is a professor within the department of microbiology and immunology in the OU College of Medicine.

One of the nation's premier AIDS researchers, Kennedy brings his unique expertise and more than \$11 million in federal research grants to the campus. A national player in the





**Kenneth R. McLeroy, Ph.D.**

ongoing battle to develop a vaccine against AIDS, Kennedy holds inventorship on eight patents and is the author of more than 160 publications in scientific journals. Among his most recent efforts are a vaccine-based AIDS "snakebite kit," which would be effective in preventing HIV infection for the first 48 hours after exposure.

"OU Health Sciences Center scientists have been very active in studying specific organisms that can be used in the development of vaccines. My own work involves attempting to develop a vaccine to combat AIDS, so I am excited about working in an environment that I believe will greatly advance research in this area," Kennedy says. "I also am looking forward to the opportunity to work again with Provost Stein, who is former chairman of medicine at the University of Texas Health Sciences Center in San Antonio, and with my friends and colleagues, Dr. Joseph Ferretti (OUHSC associate vice provost for research) and Dr. Frank Waxman (OUHSC assistant vice provost for research)."

A native of Connecticut, Kennedy received his B.A. degree from Rutgers College and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Hawaii. He is former director of the Center for AIDS Research and the Southwest Founda-

tion for Biomedical Research and was an adjunct professor of microbiology and pediatrics at UT-San Antonio. Presently he is the co-editor of the medical journal *Viral Immunology* and associate editor of both *Biotechniques* and *AIDS Research and Human Retroviruses*.

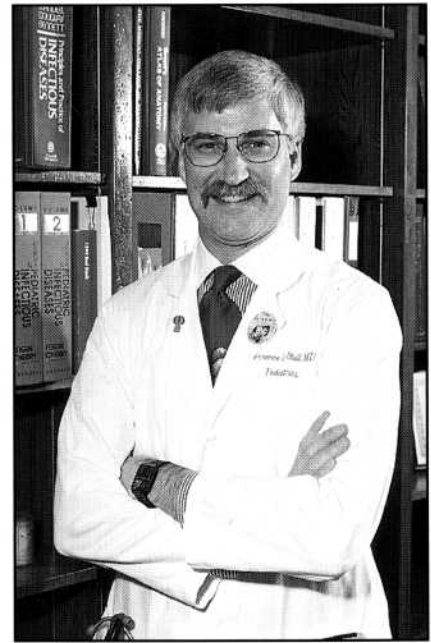
**Kenneth R. McLeroy, Ph.D.**, is the new chairman of the department of health promotion sciences in the OU College of Public Health.

A distinguished scholar in health promotion and disease prevention, McLeroy has focused his career on education, whether in the American classroom or the wilds of Bolivia as a Peace Corps volunteer.

Before accepting the chairmanship position, he was a tenured associate professor in the department of public health education at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He has worked previously as a senior health services analyst for the Research Triangle Institute in North Carolina, as a mental hygiene/social work specialist for McAfee Army Hospital in New Mexico and from 1968-70 as a Peace Corps volunteer in Tarija, Bolivia. During the latter stint, he was involved in the design, implementation and record keeping for the Tuberculosis Control Program and trained the Bolivian nationals to continue the TB control work.

"I see enormous opportunities at the OU College of Public Health," McLeroy says. "Oklahoma has some relatively unique populations compared with other states and is one of the few states in the country with large Caucasian, Native American, Hispanic and Asian populations. The opportunity to work with varied populations is important to me. Behavioral sciences and health education are my primary areas of work, with a research focus on 'change strategies' that will help organizations, families, educational entities, individuals and communities learn to practice and benefit from healthy lifestyles."

McLeroy earned his B.S. degree in psychology from the University of Houston, his M.S. degree in social psychology from OU and his Ph.D. degree in health education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel



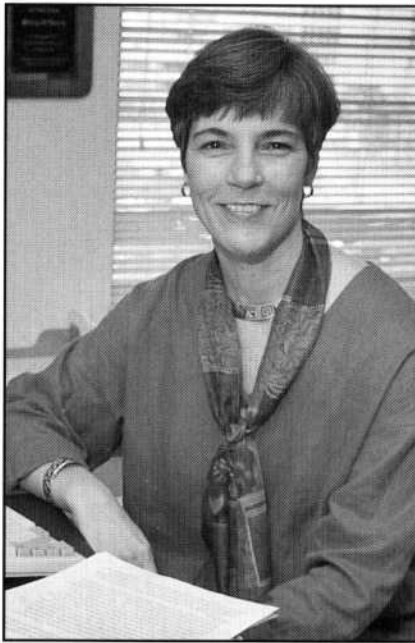
**Terrence L. Stull, M.D.**

Hill. He has published numerous articles in the field of health education and is a career recipient of more than \$750,000 in research grants and contracts.

**Terrence L. Stull, M.D.**, has been named chairman of the department of pediatrics in the OU College of Medicine.

"The opportunity to become chairman of the OU department of pediatrics and pediatrician-in-chief at Children's Hospital of Oklahoma provides me with a new dimension to contribute to children's health care," Stull says. "That new dimension involves academic opportunities at the OU Health Sciences Center that will allow me to expand my basic research in molecular epidemiology and pathogenesis—how bacteria cause infections. The overall goal of my research is to characterize specific proteins and genes that allow bacteria to cause infection in children and then to determine which proteins may be appropriate vaccine candidates."

Stull brings nearly 20 years of pediatric experience and several external grants to the OUHSC and previously was acting chairman of the department of pediatrics at the Medical College of Pennsylvania in Philadel-



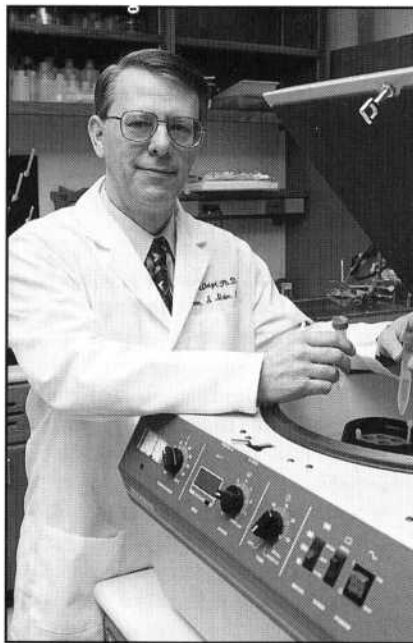
**Shirley S. Travis, R.N., Ph.D.**

phia. A highly regarded investigator, his primary interests are in development of *H. influenzae* infections and transmission of *B. cepacia* among cystic fibrosis patients.

He earned his B.A. degree from Vanderbilt University and his M.D. degree from the University of Alabama in Birmingham. He also completed a residency in pediatrics at Stanford University Medical Center and a NIH postdoctoral fellowship in pediatric infectious diseases at the University of Washington and Children's Hospital in Seattle. Among his professional affiliations, he is a diplomate of the National Board of Medical Examiners and a member of the American Pediatric Society.

**Shirley S. Travis, R.N., Ph.D.**, now holds the Parry Chair in Gerontological Nursing within the OU College of Nursing.

A nationally prominent scholar in the area of adult development and aging, Travis has received extensive external funding for her research in adult day care and longterm care. The Parry Chair, which Travis holds, was created by the Parry Foundation of Houston to recognize a nurse scholar for the advancement of gerontological research, clinical practice and education.



**Paul H. Weigel, Ph.D.**

"The gerontological nursing program at the OU Health Sciences Center is on the threshold of doing great things, and I am excited about being part of a group that is 'emerging' rather than one that has been in existence for many years," Travis says. "This position will provide me with an opportunity to continue the longterm care research I've been doing in an environment that is enthusiastic about and supportive of gerontological research."

Travis previously was an associate professor of family and child development and an adult development and aging extension specialist at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. She also was associate director of the Center for Gerontology and interim director of the university's Adult Day Care Center.

She earned her B.S. and M.S. degrees in nursing from Georgia State University and her Ph.D. degree in family studies/gerontology from Virginia Polytechnic. Among her professional honors are the 1992 Outstanding Educator of the Year Award from the Virginia Association on Aging and the 1990-91 Sigma Theta Tau Distinguished Lecturer Award.


**Paul H. Weigel, Ph.D.**, was named chairman of the department of biochemistry and molecular biology in

the OU College of Medicine.

Principal investigator on more than \$1 million in current NIH-sponsored research grants, Weigel brings strong resources and a new outlook on biochemistry and molecular biology to the OUHSC. He was formerly professor of biochemistry/cell biology and vice chairman of the department of human biological chemistry and genetics at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston (UTMB).

He has served as a member of both the pathobiochemistry and the physiological chemistry study sections for the NIH and is on the editorial board of *The Journal of Biological Chemistry*.

"I was impressed with the direction and commitment of the new leadership on campus, especially provided by Dr. Stein and Dr. (Douglas) Voth, executive dean of the OU College of Medicine," Weigel says. "I see an excellent opportunity for growth and development of science, particularly within the department of biochemistry and molecular biology. My lab is interested in hyaluronic acid, a natural sugar component in our bodies, and its role in infection, wound healing and other processes. We're also studying receptor-mediated endocytosis, a process by which cells in the body bring outside molecules into the cell. This process is important in understanding how different aspects of cell behavior are regulated. The most relevant area for us right now is in diseases caused by Group A *Streptococcus*."

Provost Stein sees the additions to the faculty as pivotal to achieving OUHSC's research mission. "We are extremely pleased to have been able to attract faculty of this caliber. The results of these scientists' research are leading to breakthroughs in Alzheimer's disease, AIDS, blindness, immune disorders, emotional/behavioral disorders, aging, disease prevention and several other diseases and conditions. Their arrival here truly reflects that the OU Health Sciences Center has entered a new era of distinction." 

*OUHSC writer / editors J. Alex Greenwood and Pam McKeown contributed to this story.*