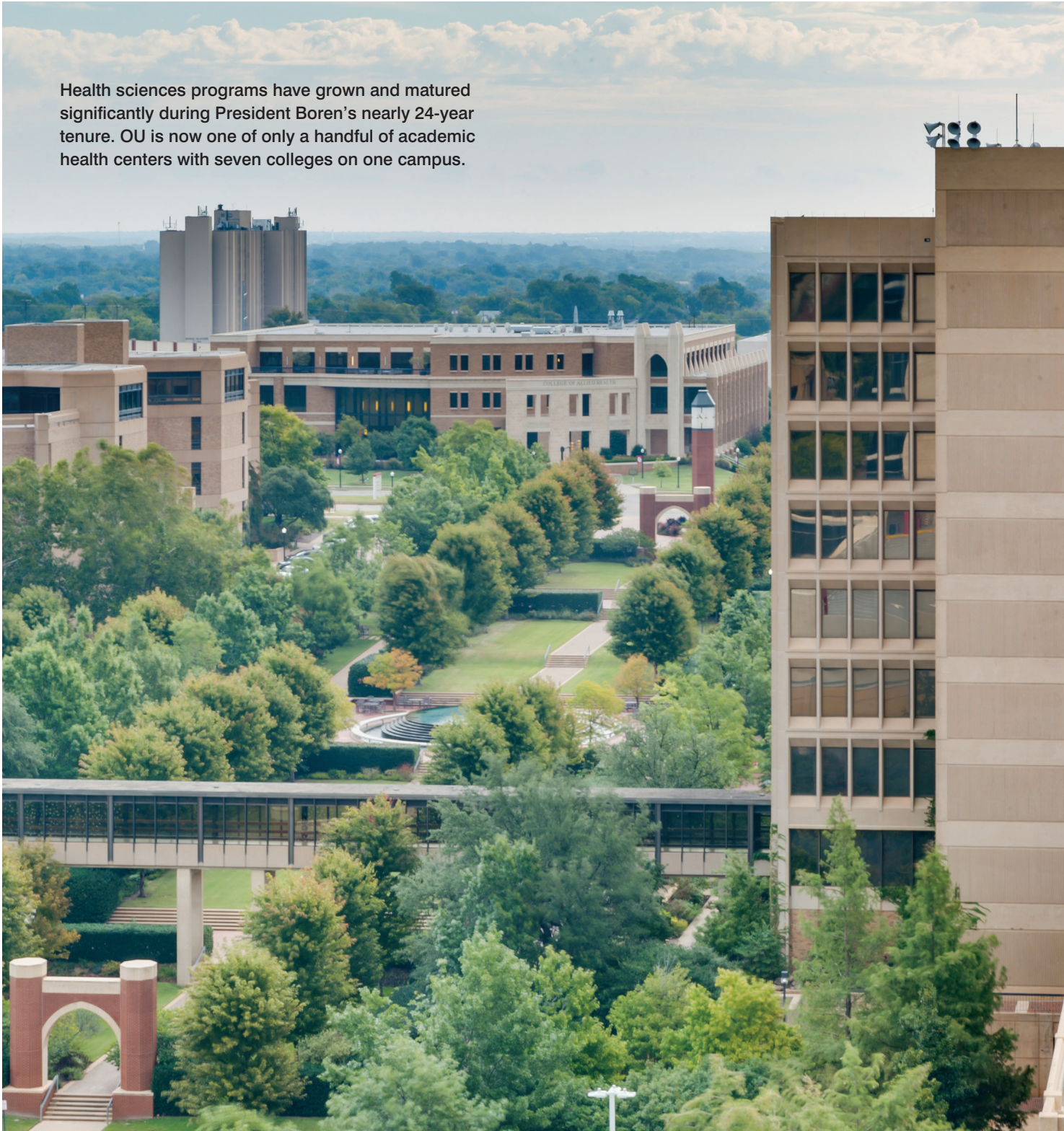


OU Health Sciences Center training

Health sciences programs have grown and matured significantly during President Boren's nearly 24-year tenure. OU is now one of only a handful of academic health centers with seven colleges on one campus.



the health care teams of tomorrow

BY APRIL WILKERSON

From a striking physical transformation to advancement in all areas of its academic health mission, the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center has flourished in the past quarter of a century.

In its three-pronged mission of education, patient care and research, OUHSC programs have matured and multiplied significantly during the nearly 24-year tenure of President David L. Boren. Although all areas are entwined with one another to meet the greater mission, each has excelled in distinctive ways.

“We train the health care team for Oklahoma,” says Jason Sanders, M.D., senior vice president and provost for OUHSC. “Across the nation, we are one of only a handful of comprehensive academic health centers with seven colleges on one campus, which allows us to leverage the breadth of our health care specialties and research to care for people in Oklahoma and beyond.”

ACADEMIC GROWTH

OUHSC’s seven colleges – Allied Health, Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health and the Graduate College – have grown in size and caliber of applicants, today serving approximately 3,000 students in more than 90 undergraduate and graduate degree programs in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. A major advancement has been the incorporation of interprofessional education into students’ training programs. Traditionally, students have trained within their own disciplines, but health care is becoming increasingly collaborative to improve patients’ health outcomes. Through OUHSC’s Interprofessional Education Collaborative, students learn how to care for patients as a team, each contributing expertise to improve health together. Students and faculty from the Anne and Henry Zarrow School of Social Work on OU’s Norman campus also take part in interprofessional activities.

With the new locally owned, managed and governed OU Medicine Inc. health system, all OUHSC colleges will contribute to the synergy of a closer working relationship, Sanders says.

“One of the major benefits of OU Medicine Inc. is a strong academic partnership that will expand and enhance training opportunities across all our medical and health professions for years to come,” he says.

CLINICAL EXPANSION

Because of OUHSC’s ability to recruit specialist clinicians through the OU Physicians clinical group practice and through affiliations with the OU Medicine health system, the clinical enterprise offers essential patient care services found nowhere else in Oklahoma — such as the Level 1 Trauma Center, Comprehensive Stroke Center, Level 4 Neonatal Intensive

Care Unit and Children’s Heart Center. Whether inpatient or outpatient, patients can find any health care specialty for both adults and children. OUHSC’s Stephenson Cancer Center is a nucleus of excellence that combines leading clinical, research and training programs. From its interior to exterior, the Cancer Center is a place of healing for patients, allowing people to access cutting-edge care without leaving Oklahoma.

In May 2018, the Stephenson Cancer Center achieved a prestigious designation from the National Cancer Institute, recognizing the center’s remarkable contributions to the United States’ cancer research effort. As one of only 70 NCI-designated cancer centers in the nation, the Stephenson Cancer Center is known for its ability to develop and translate scientific knowledge from laboratory discoveries to new treatments, and this past year was the No. 1 site in the country for patient access to National Clinical Trials Network trials.

During Boren’s presidency, OUHSC clinical programs have also experienced a significant expansion to OU’s Tulsa campus. “This has enabled us to make progress on our vision to be a statewide academic health system. In particular, the OU Physicians collaboration has grown over the past few years between Tulsa and Oklahoma City,” Sanders says.

RESEARCH PROGRESS

One of the hallmarks of an academic health center is that researchers, both basic science and clinical, are engaged in investigations that may lead to new discoveries and treatments for disease. OUHSC has been awarded more National Institutes of Health funding than any other entity in Oklahoma. OUHSC researchers have made advancements in areas such as cancer, diabetes, vision, geroscience, microbiology/immunology and clinical-translational projects. The campus also has a long-standing partnership with the Presbyterian Health Foundation, in which OUHSC researchers have leveraged millions in PHF grants to grow their pioneering concepts into major projects that attract federal funding and private commercialization.

“We are grateful for the unique opportunity that Presbyterian Health Foundation funding provides to OUHSC and its researchers,” says Vice President for Research James Tomasek. “PHF’s commitment to our research projects shows its foresight and dedication to improving the health and well-being of people in Oklahoma and to promoting a vigorous and innovative biomedical research enterprise.”

OUHSC also expanded its research footprint with purchase of the former Presbyterian Health Foundation Research Park. Now called University Research Park, the 700,000-square-foot facility has provided expanded space for research activi-



The OU Health Sciences Center has been awarded more funding from the National Institutes of Health than any other Oklahoma entity and researchers are making inroads to some of the most devastating diseases affecting the public.

ties as well as companies that have successfully commercialized OUHSC research. Among the success stories are Selexys Pharmaceuticals, which developed a drug for sickle cell disease and was subsequently purchased by Novartis Pharmaceuticals; the immunotherapy company Pure Protein; the glycobiology company Heparinex; and the neuropsychiatric illness testing company Molculera. OU's Office of Technology Development searches for new ways to expand the pipeline for commercialization of OUHSC faculty research.

CAMPUS BEAUTIFICATION AND EXPANSION

In the past 24 years, OUHSC also has grown in terms of physical infrastructure and campus enhancement. One of President Boren's first projects was converting Stanton L. Young, then a four-lane street, into a pedestrian walkway. Other beautification projects were a clock tower on the east end of the walkway and a large fountain – seven-tiered for the seven colleges – in the center of campus. First Lady Molly Shi Boren spearheaded additional landscaping projects that resulted in soothing new areas where people could sit or visit.

New buildings have significantly changed the view of campus, and they highlight the essential role of the academic med-

ical center as an engine for economic growth in Oklahoma City and across the state. The student union, named for President Boren, was an early addition under his presidency. OUHSC has worked with OU Medical System, the University Hospitals Authority and Trust and other partners to add facilities including the Stephenson Cancer Center, College of Allied Health building, Harold Hamm Diabetes Center, Andrews Academic Tower, OU Physicians Building, OU Children's Physicians Building, Children's Hospital atrium and Samis Education Center. OUHSC also acquired the Oklahoma City Clinic during President Boren's tenure, and the Dean McGee Eye Institute expanded.


CRUCIAL PARTNERSHIPS

OUHSC's growth, both physical and programmatic, would not be possible without its numerous supporters and partners. Donors like Harold Hamm and Charles and Peggy Stephenson provided landmark support for the opening of the diabetes center and cancer center, as have Fran and Earl Ziegler for the College of Nursing and Cliff and Leslie Hudson for the College of Public Health.

A partnership with the Children's Hospital Foundation has transformed pediatric research, and the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust has made many cancer programs possible. The Presbyterian Health Foundation, in addition to its critical and visionary research support for OUHSC, also funds the M.D./Ph.D. program, which is jointly administered with the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation.

PROMISING OUTLOOK

The future looks bright for OUHSC and the patients, students and communities who are served by its mission. The campus is an economic engine for the city and state, with more than 12,000 employees between OUHSC and the OU Medicine health system. Through the new University Community office and other initiatives such as population health, the campus is prioritizing diversity and inclusion. Partnerships with the burgeoning Innovation District and the new Oklahoma City-based Gene Rainbolt Graduate School of Business ensure that collaborations will evolve to meet the needs of 21st-century health care and economic development.

"Our growth under President Boren's tenure has positioned us well to improve the health care and well-being of Oklahomans going forward," Sanders says. "Our academic medical center enterprise is essential for our state and is poised to be among leaders nationally." 

April Wilkerson is the editor of OU Medicine.