

Foundation for the future

By Stephen P. Spielberg, M.D., Ph.D.

In expressionist theater, the stage sets reflect the inner thoughts and souls of the characters in the play. As we plan the future physical nature of Dartmouth Medical School, so, too, must our “bricks and mortar” reflect our core missions in medical education, research, and patient care.

Over the last few months, we have been fortunate to be actively planning several upcoming building projects (and their associated capital campaign), at the same time as we are starting the review process that is part of our periodic accreditation by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education. The response of our faculty and staff to the introspection required by both of these pivotal activities has been spectacular—a tribute to their dedication to DMS as a whole and to the specialized expertise they each bring to Dartmouth.

Transmission: Several underlying themes have emerged that will guide us on our way forward. A fundamental one is our commitment to the development and transmission of new knowledge. Our decisions—whether in delivering excellent patient care; in educating the next generation of doctors, scientists, and policy-makers; or in improving the structure of our health-care system—must always be data driven. We do not aim merely to provide the best currently proven care, but to develop tomorrow’s new approaches and therapies. Likewise, the rapidity of change in our knowledge of biology and medicine means we must teach our students not only today’s facts, but also the joy of ongoing learning throughout their careers.

A foundation for all our planning is the unique nature of Dartmouth—the strength DMS gains from being part of Dartmouth College and DHMC, and the synergies fostered by our setting. We are dedicated to basic science as the underpinning for translational, clinical, and evaluative science. We are dedicated to seeking ways to integrate all aspects of research in order to speed the impact of basic discoveries on human health. We are dedicated to educating the next generation of scientists and clinicians in the most vibrant and creative setting possible. And we are dedicated to encouraging all of our branches and affiliates to work together to accomplish these goals.

Vision: Our vision for the next 20 years at DMS is designed to take advantage of current strengths and to plan for future needs and opportunities. We need to view ourselves as a single campus with two sites—Hanover and Lebanon.

On the Hanover site, we need to modernize our aging research and educational facilities in Vail and Remsen. The recent renovation of space in Remsen for the Department of Genetics provided a model of



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how this can be accomplished on the laboratory side. We will be planning additional renovations to make these buildings into optimal 21st-century research and educational facilities, so we can attract and retain the best faculty and provide a true “home” for our medical and graduate students. This planning will be done jointly with our colleagues in the College’s Department of Biology and other associated Arts and Sciences departments, to assure coordination of our shared educational and research needs, and it will

also reflect the vitality generated by our interactions with scholars in the humanities, in the quantitative sciences, and at the Thayer School of Engineering and the Tuck School of Business.

In Lebanon, we have been planning for the relocation of the Center for the Evaluative Clinical Sciences (CECS) and the Department of Community and Family Medicine (CFM), both currently housed in Strassenburgh Hall. This move will provide much-needed educational and research space for these important programs, as well as make it possible to place a new life sciences building on the current Strassenburgh site in Hanover. We have also begun planning for a new translational research building (which, of course, we’re calling the “TRB”) at our Lebanon site. This building will house our integrative, interdisciplinary science programs—neuroscience, respiratory science, cardiovascular science, immunology, and imaging—together with new animal facilities. Fortunately, we have had recent experience designing integrative research space, in the Cancer Center labs that were part of the Rubin Building expansion. A review of how that space has served the needs of investigators will guide our new endeavors.

Commons: These two new buildings in Lebanon—the CECS/CFM building and the TRB—will be sited next to the existing Borwell Research Building, and all three structures will be joined by a large atrium, or “commons.” This will serve as a meeting place to bring together basic, translational, and evaluative scientists and will be a physical representation of our mission to enhance interactions among disciplines, to assure that science has an impact on medical care. Key to our concept of “one campus, two sites” will be improved transportation and communication—including better bus service and enhanced electronic conduits—to assure maximum integration between the two sites of research and educational activities.

As our planning proceeds through the fall, we will be making every effort to maximize input into the process from all our constituencies and to communicate ideas, proposals, and opportunities as our plans are firmed up. Thanks to our many friends and benefactors, some of whom have already stepped forward to offer financial support for these projects, I am confident that when the curtain goes up, the show on the new DMS “stage set” will be a smash hit. ■

“For the Record” offers timely commentary from the dean of Dartmouth Medical School. Spielberg took office as DMS’s dean in July 2003.