

SURGERY Synopsis

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CHAIR'S MESSAGE



Douglas E. Wood, MD,
FACS, FRCSEd (*ad hom*)
The Henry N. Harkins
Professor and Chair

Mission statements can be inspiring or just words. They can be things we write and forget or they can guide us in daily decisions. The Department of Surgery's mission statement: "The Department of Surgery will provide compassionate and high quality patient care, train future generations of surgical leaders and conduct research in a collegial environment which embraces diversity and promotes inclusiveness." These words are inspiring and do guide us. Our mission statement is a reflection of the daily commitment, passion and aspirations of the people in this Department – staff, surgeons, residents and fellows. We make future departmental plans, perform surgery, teach residents, and conduct research in ways that make this mission statement come alive.

We are proud that our dedication and commitment has had and continues to have an impact on the larger world of medicine. Some recent high profile examples:

The American College of Surgeons

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) was founded over 100 years ago and is the most

prestigious organization of its kind for surgeons of all specialties. Being a Fellow of the ACS is a proud designation. Our Department is known for its service to the ACS at many levels: through work on committees or initiatives; work within the governing bodies; or by providing leadership to the "College." We highlight three of our own who have been, currently are, or will be at the pinnacle of leadership – as President of ACS.

Present – Ronald Maier, MD, President of the ACS

The American College of Surgeons held their 2018 Annual Clinical Congress in Boston this past October. At the Clinical Congress, Dr. Ronald V. Maier, Jane and Donald D. Trunkey Professor, Vice Chair of Surgery, Surgeon-in-Chief, Harborview Medical Center, Chief, Division of Trauma, Burn & Critical Care Surgery, was inducted as President of the ACS (2018–2019). It was a proud moment for him and for the

Department. In his Presidential address "For our Patients," he urged the members of the College to never lose their zeal and commitment to their patients. [Address video >>](#)

Past – Carlos Pellegrini, MD

Dr. Ronald Maier follows Dr. Carlos Pellegrini as ACS President. Dr. Pellegrini, past Chair of the Department, served the College as President in 2013–2014.

Future – Valerie Rusch, MD

While Dr. Rusch is a Professor at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, we can rightly claim her as one of our own: she is an alumna of our general surgery residency program, graduating in 1980, and was a cardiothoracic surgeon on staff here before being recruited to New York. Both she and Dr. Maier were residents in our program (just two years apart). She is an outstanding surgeon, researcher and educator.

Our surgeons have made and continue to make a real impact through service to the College along with the three mentioned above.

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One ACS appointment we have highlighted in a previous issue of *Surgery Synopsis*, but bears further mention, is Eileen Bulger's appointment as chair of the ACS's Committee on Trauma (COT). Dr. Bulger, who is Professor and Chief of Trauma Surgery, is the perfect individual to head this important Committee. Dr. Bulger was named the Chair of the ACS Committee on Trauma at the 2017 ACS Clinical Congress and you can read a full report of this appointment in *Surgery Synopsis, Fall/Winter 2018 (page 7) >>*

These are a small sampling of the impact the University of Washington, Department of Surgery has on the ACS. We have highlighted many in past *Surgery Synopsis* editions as well as this issue.

Along with a complete listing of the Department's presence at the ACS, there are many other honors and awards in this issue; these are very well reviewed on pages 16 and 17.

Diversity and Inclusion

This is an important part of our Mission Statement. Increasing diversity within our Department is an ongoing and critical goal for me as Chair. Diversity of faculty and staff improve our patient care, the education we provide and make our research more robust and inclusive. And, diversity and inclusion are just the right thing to do. There is a lot going on in this arena, but I want to take the opportunity to highlight an event and an on-going initiative in particular.

Harkins' Symposium Address

Dr. **Estell Williams**, Acting Assistant Professor, Division of General Surgery, who joined our Department in the last year after graduating from our residency program, is on the Department's Diversity Council and delivered one of the presentations at the Department of Surgery's annual Harkins Symposium, held in October 2018. The title of address is "Achieving a Critical Mass: Diversity is Beneficial, Why Don't We Accept It?" Please read the entire address on page 12. It is thought provoking and inspiring.

Department of Surgery Women's Council

As reported in an earlier *Surgery Synopsis*, the Department has also formed a Women's Council, which is providing insight and recommendations to the Department around issues particular to women surgeons. To date, they have analyzed departmental statistics for women in such areas as achievement of promotion and women in positions of leadership in the Department and School. These results are raising awareness as well as advocacy to introduce important new departmental policies, such as best working conditions during pregnancy. Dr. **Kris Calhoun**, Associate Professor, Division of General Surgery, is leader of this group.

The Diversity Council reviews and evaluates the culture of diversity and inclusion in the Department and outlines recommendations for how to best make the department a place that encourages career advancement and supports employee satisfaction. We look forward to their ongoing work and recommendations.

Farewells

We say goodbye to one of our most distinguished surgeons, who is retiring this June. Dr. Robert Sawin, Professor, Chief of the Division of Pediatric Surgery and Surgeon-in-Chief of Seattle Children's Hospital. He has had a long and distinguished career and will be greatly missed. Thankfully, he will continue to do some clinical work (inpatient rounding and seeing patients in clinic) and continue to teach and mentor residents and fellows. Please read more about his life and career on page 8.

It is with a very heavy heart that I share with you the unexpected passing of Dr. **Dan Ledbetter** (Professor) on February 27, 2019. Dan will be remembered as a caring, committed and great technical surgeon who always insisted on doing the right things for his patients. He was a fantastic partner for the other pediatric surgeons, a brilliant thinker, and required all his colleagues to be evidence-based and rational in our decision making. He used that same approach in his teaching of medical students as a faculty member in the College program, and with residents and fellows, all of whom report that his teaching was critical in their development.

We will celebrate his life more fully in the next issue of *Synopsis*. In the meantime, please join me in sending our love and support to his family: his wife, Sunny, Chief of Neonatology at SCH; and his children, Brian and Kelly. Kelly is one of our plastic surgery chief residents. Dan's passing is a huge loss for all of us in the Department of Surgery, as well as for Dan's many colleagues and friends at SCH and the University of Washington.



Dr. Dan Ledbetter

Our Mission Statement lives because of people like Dan Ledbetter, Bob Sawin and others in this department – our surgeons, residents, fellows and staff – past and present. By their actions large and small, they continue to fulfill the mission of the Department. I am grateful and humbled by their dedication and their constant pursuit of improvement and I encourage all of you to read this *Surgery Synopsis* from beginning to end. I think it will inspire you as it has me.

Sincerely,

Douglas E. Wood, MD,
FACS, FRCSEd (*ad hom*)
*The Henry N. Harkins
Professor and Chair*