September 8, 2016

CELEBRATING EINSTEIN-MONTEFIORE’S FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Dear Einstein Community:

This September marks not only the start of a new academic year, but also the first anniversary of Einstein’s transition to become part of Montefiore. Integration of two large institutions, even ones such as Einstein and Montefiore with fundamentally similar core values, always poses a major challenge. While full integration is an ongoing process, we have accomplished a tremendous amount thanks to the hard work of dedicated teams at both institutions. We have: a) transferred several hundred NIH grants and other federal, state and private foundation grants and contracts from “old Einstein” to “new Einstein”; b) likewise, almost the entire “old Einstein” faculty and staff were transferred to “new Einstein”; and c) multiple services, including human resources, purchasing, facilities, finance, communications and development, have either completed integration within the much larger Montefiore corporate structure or, as in the case of information technology, are in the process of doing so.

To take full advantage of the synergies gained through Einstein’s integration with Montefiore, last September we embarked on developing a broad new Strategic Plan, which is now completed. It benefitted from wide-ranging input from faculty, board members and the leadership of both institutions. In addressing our educational mission, we committed to stabilizing the size of our graduate (Ph.D.) program and to revitalizing the curriculum of our M.D. program. Last month we welcomed the new M.D. class (including 13 M.D./Ph.D. students) and the new Ph.D. class.

Progress toward Degree-Granting

Under the leadership of our Executive Dean Ed Burns, a team is working steadily toward the goal of achieving independent degree-granting authority for “new Einstein.” This involves a detailed application process overseen by our regional accreditation body, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. In parallel, we are working to obtain independent visa-granting authority, and reached a milestone last month when the U.S. Dept. of State approved our Exchange Visitor Program application. This means J-1 visa holders (a category that includes many postdoctoral fellows and visiting researchers) can now be sponsored by Einstein.

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Another critical process under way relates to accreditation of our M.D. educational program by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME). We are looking forward to a “Limited Survey Visit” by a three-person LCME team in early November; it will follow up on a number of areas identified by the full LCME team that conducted our most recent site visit in December 2014. Colleagues in our offices of medical education and of student affairs have been working continuously, along with Michael Reichgott, our LCME visit coordinator, Dr. Burns and me, to address the areas identified by the LCME, as described in detail in a briefing book provided in advance to the Limited Survey Visit team.

**New Academic Leadership**

Einstein’s research enterprise is robust and growing, with investments in priority areas identified in the Strategic Plan. We have been fortunate to appoint outstanding new chairs of several of our basic science departments: Steve Almo in biochemistry; Steve Porcelli in microbiology & immunology; Jonathan Backer in molecular pharmacology; and Kamran Khodakhah in neuroscience. Yaron Tomer’s appointment as chair of the department of medicine, effective March 1, 2016, heralds a revitalization of this department, which provides a critical link between Einstein science and Montefiore medicine. Recruitment of several new division chiefs in that department is under way. Speaking of which, our pediatrics chair, Judy Aschner, has appointed three new outstanding division chiefs in pediatric genetics, hospital medicine and critical care over the past year.

Searches for chairs of three other clinical departments will be completed in the coming months: neurosurgery; radiology; and psychiatry and behavioral sciences. I anticipate joining Montefiore President and CEO Steven Safyer and Executive Vice President and COO Philip Ozuah in appointing outstanding new leaders for each of these departments. They will help bolster our Strategic Plan’s Brain Science Initiative and further integrate Einstein and Montefiore. Research in cancer is also highlighted as a key priority of our Strategic Plan. To this end, later this month I expect to launch a national search for a new director of the NCI-designated Albert Einstein Cancer Center. The individual we seek must be an outstanding scientist and also someone capable of participating meaningfully in the full spectrum of cancer research activities at Einstein and the rapidly expanding Montefiore clinical cancer enterprise.

**Robust Research Funding and New Discoveries**

Although the federal fiscal year doesn’t end until September 30, and many NIH awards come during this month, we already know that the rate of new and competing-renewal NIH awards for the first two cycles of the fiscal year showed dramatic improvement over prior years. We have every reason to believe the last cycle of the year will be equally successful.

Notably, based on its outstanding score, we anticipate competitive renewal of our NICHD-funded Rose F. Kennedy Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center under the leadership of Steve Walkley (neuroscience) and Sophie Molholm (pediatrics). We were recently notified that Einstein will be awarded an NIDDK-funded Center for Diabetes Translation Research under the leadership of

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Elizabeth Walker (medicine/endocrinology) and her colleagues, and that under Kathy Anastos’ leadership, Einstein-Montefiore will receive a $9.4 million grant to study HIV/AIDS care in Central Africa. A detailed list of notable grants awarded since September 2015 can be found here.

Of course, success in attaining grant funding is not an end in itself. It is a vital means to enable the research that leads to new discoveries and ultimately, improved human health. Our faculty have indeed used their grant funding to make a major impact, as is evident from the work they have published over the past year and several key discoveries shortly to be published that you can read about in the “Research News” section of our website.

**Einstein Board of Trustees**

Finally, I must thank our Board leadership, which itself underwent a critical transition from being a Board of Overseers in “old Einstein” to a Board of Trustees with fiduciary responsibility for “new Einstein.” The new Board, at its last meeting of the past academic year in May, unanimously approved an unprecedented 12 Einstein faculty members for tenure. Roger Einiger, who had already succeeded Ruth Gottesman as Board chair prior to the transition, remains as chair of the new Board. I want to acknowledge both of these outstanding individuals, whose commitment to Einstein has been unwavering, and who have been such an extraordinary source of support to me personally during the difficult period preceding our transition in September 2015. I feel confident that not only they, but their colleagues on the new Einstein Board, will continue to provide wise oversight and material support to the faculty and students of our great medical school.

**Allen M. Spiegel, M.D.**
The Marilyn and Stanley M. Katz Dean
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