



Dear colleagues and friends:

This newsletter issue is arriving in your Inbox a couple of weeks later than scheduled as we had to pause to address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and adapt from “business as usual” to “stay home, work safe” as our new normal. We have activated continuity plans across our institution, and are now relying heavily on digital platforms to maintain operations and stay connected as we practice social distancing to “flatten the curve”.

While infectious disease experts are now tapped daily by the media, we should not forget how fragile the biomedical research ecosystem is and how important it is to continue to advocate for policies and sustainable funding that enable investigators to advance their research. With this in mind, last month, I joined the annual SA-to-DC trip (organized by the local chambers of commerce to communicate our collective legislative priorities for Bexar County), and worked closely with our government relations team to voice the research strengths of our institution and the city’s unique assets in biomedicine. My meetings with Representative Henry Cuellar and other elected officials, allowed me to share first-hand accounts on how funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other federal agencies is paramount to drive innovation and fuel economic development in our region. The [San Antonio Partnership for Precision Therapeutics](#) provided an excellent example of the collaboration among our city’s public-private research entities and how interdisciplinary teams can accelerate drug development.

Closer to home, the TAMEST annual conference held January 7-9, captured the potential of biomedical research to grow and transform the bioscience industry in our state by gathering scientists, legislators and policy makers around the theme [Innovating Texas: Research to Commercialization](#). Dr. Bess Frost, the first investigator from our institution to be selected for the prestigious Edith and Peter O'Donnell Award, presented her ground-breaking research on promising solutions for the treatment of Alzheimer disease. In addition, several state and national leaders covered key strategies on how we can leverage the Texas entrepreneurial spirit and apply it to the academic ecosystem. I invite you to watch the [videos](#) and download the [slides](#) of these outstanding presenters, a career development opportunity during this shelter-in-place time!

Building relationships with leaders and state agencies through participation on business trips, board meetings, and conferences often spur open dialogue and new avenues to support research. Last fall, in partnership with [BioMed SA](#) and [Texas Healthcare and Bioscience Institute](#) (THBI), we convened a lunch with [CPRIT](#) CEO Wayne Roberts to discuss a potential new funding mechanism to promote cancer-focused translational science. This was followed by a return visit earlier this month to our campus, by [CPRIT executive team](#)-Wayne Roberts, Cindy

WalkerPeach, Rosemary French, and Kristen Doyle soliciting input from investors and academia/bioscience industry leaders on new funding concepts to support cancer-related innovation and early product development.

In this issue, you'll find a call for faculty entrepreneurs for two ongoing programs- [PTEF](#) (begun in 2015) and [TechNovum](#) (launched in 2019) – both designed to support discovery and innovation. Three new programs (one still in the final stages of legal review, coming later this spring) are poised to strengthen our research infrastructure and maintain us competitive in attracting top scholars and students. In the fall, we took the pulse of our inventors and several entrepreneurial department chairs and encouraged by their responses, we joined the [National Academy of Inventors \(NAI\) as an institutional member](#). Plans are underway to form a campus NAI chapter with the leadership and support of Dr. Daruka Mahadevan, chair of the Hematology-Oncology department and a NAI senior member. Another exciting development, is the student founded and led non-profit organization, [Enventures SA](#). While the organization is university agnostic, several of the entrepreneurial minded co-founders are graduate students in our Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. These students have already played a key role in TechNovum providing the first cohort of inventors' commercialization assistance, such as conducting market research and developing business plans.

The challenging time we are all facing is changing our world. But what has not changed, is our focus, to serve our community of scholars. Taking a line from Charles Dicken's epic novel *A Tale of Two Cities*, "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times...", I am confident that working together *we can* and *we shall* make this pandemic the best of times for collaboration, innovation, and research.

*Stay safe & healthy,*

**Andrea Giuffrida**  
**VP for Research**