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| |  | | --- | |  | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  |  |  | | --- | | VPR Team -  As we wind down 2020, it might be difficult to recall anything beyond the cloud that COVID-19 has cast over us and the entire world. Everybody has been touched by this pandemic in so many ways. Despite these unprecedented circumstances, we have continued to excel and advance the research mission with incredible determination. I have seen many of you looking at this pandemic as an opportunity to foster innovation and improve processes and operations, and I am deeply grateful for your adaptability and contribution to the success of our enterprise.    At the beginning of the year, our office effectively guided our faculty and research community through a series of safety measures that required "shelter in home" and an initial scale-down of research activities. This was followed by a gradual ramp-up in early May, and several virtual meetings and town halls with chairs, faculty, staff and trainees to answer questions and address obstacles to resume research operations. Although vaccines are finally coming and bringing hope and optimism, many of us will continue to work from home for a while. Nevertheless, this "new normal" has not impacted our productivity and commitment. Indeed, through our support, all schools across UTHSA have been able to increase their research portfolios and the number of sponsored program awards and clinical trials.    I feel privileged to work with all of you to further develop this complex research infrastructure that is so critical to build a better tomorrow. Please take a minute to go over our major accomplishments in FY2020. You should take pride in your success and ability to go beyond all the goals we set up at the beginning of each year, pushing the bar higher and higher.    This year, unlike any other, also reminded us how grateful we should be to our families, friends and communities which provide an amazing collective strength to persevere and navigate through adversities. I hope you will find the time during these holidays to celebrate these remarkable achievements with all of them (in a safe way!).    Happy holidays to you and your loved ones.    Andrea Giuffrida, PhD  Vice President for Research   \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_    **Faculty Recruitment and Support**    The VPR Office assisted 4 faculty (Drs. Bieniek, Dahia, Sung, and Yang) to obtain UT STARs funding from UT System (over $4 million total). These funds were leveraged to: (1) create a brain and spinal cord tissue bank (including digital pathology and epidemiology services), (2) launch a precision medicine program in endocrine tumors, and (3) support multi-disciplinary teams to advance studies in genome repair, cancer biology, and myeloid malignancies.    We also assisted 11 junior investigators to submit proposals for the Voelcker Young Investigator Awards (YIA). Three of last year applicants (Drs. Zhao, Chen and Taverna) received a YIA award in 2020 for a total of $650,000.  In collaboration with the Offices of Recruitment and Science Outreach and Postdoctoral Affairs, we successfully renewed the [Voelcker Biomedical Research Academy](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?t=ujlqsabbb.0.0.8pquoqqab.0&id=preview&r=3&p=https%3A%2F%2Fvoelckeracademy.uthscsa.edu%2F) grant ($652,000) which will enable a multi-year research training in biomedical sciences of highly competitive high school students in preparation for their transition to college.    **Research Infrastructure**    The **VPR Strategic Fund** ($500K/year) supported numerous initiatives including incentives for T32 directors and IRB/IACUC/COI committees, acquisition of software/platforms (SurveyMonkey Apply, DocuSign, etc.), matching funds for large institutional grants, and covered some of the costs of DLAR renovations.    **University Research Council (URC)** funds ($172K/year) were disbursed to support pilot grants from the Parkinson's Disease Center of Excellence, CTSA pilots (including COVID-19 pilots), School of Dentistry Research Clusters and School of Nursing research initiatives.    **DLAR** completed the construction of 3 new procedure rooms in the STRF, coordinated renovations and acquisition of new instrumentation for the BSL3 facility to accommodate COVID-related research projects, and completed a 5-year plan for future investments in DLAR infrastructure. Throughout the pandemic, all DLAR staff worked relentlessly in-person to guarantee business continuation.    **Research IT** continued to support our offices and research community by converting the software used by the IRB and OCR to manage their business processes, updated the Online Research Compliance Assistant (ORCA) used by the IACUC and DLAR, automatized the data captured from [ClinicalTrials.gov](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?t=ujlqsabbb.0.0.8pquoqqab.0&id=preview&r=3&p=http%3A%2F%2FClinicalTrials.gov) by [FindAStudy](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?t=ujlqsabbb.0.0.8pquoqqab.0&id=preview&r=3&p=https%3A%2F%2Fvpr.uthscsa.edu%2Ffindastudy%2F), provided clinical trial information for the new [Cancer Center](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?t=ujlqsabbb.0.0.8pquoqqab.0&id=preview&r=3&p=https%3A%2F%2Fcancer.uthscsa.edu) website, and designed solutions for regulatory committee management and approval processes. They also interfaced the PURE database to PeopleSoft to increase dashboard functionality, and updated iDisclose to improve reporting on affiliations to foreign entities, time effort and compensation from outside activities.    **Institutional Research Cores** completed the renovations and launch of a new [Institutional Biobank](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?t=ujlqsabbb.0.0.8pquoqqab.0&id=preview&r=3&p=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.uthscsa.edu%2Fvpr%2Fcollaborations%2Fbiobank) by leveraging funding from the Kronkosky and Barker Foundations; consolidated the NMR and X-Ray Crystallography core labs to increase efficiency and expand services to the outside community.    **Clinical Trial/Clinical Research.**Despite the challenges of working from home, the review and approval of animal and human research by the IACUC, DLAR, IRB, OCR and CTO staff continued at the pre-pandemic pace. New investigational COVID treatment studies were approved in record time and virtual options for in-person procedures (as well as Research Concierge, Forums, and committee meetings) were rapidly adopted to allow continuation of existing research.  A new website titled "Navigating the Research Lifecycle" will be launched in January 2021 presenting information relevant to the specific stages of research projects, from protocol development to study close out.    **Technology Commercialization**filed 17 new patent applications out of 66 new inventions disclosed (mostly in the areas of therapeutics and medical devices). In addition, OTC filed 16 PCT applications and executed 6 license agreements. Of the 8 cohorts enrolled in the inaugural year of [TechNovum](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?t=ujlqsabbb.0.0.8pquoqqab.0&id=preview&r=3&p=https%3A%2F%2Fotc.uthscsa.edu%2Ftechnovum), 4 created new startup companies: Dr. Gupta's "Atomic Therapeutics", Dr. Chul Ha's "Protectum Oncology", Dr. Papanastassiou's "Cerenovum" and Dr. DeLorenzo's "EmergenceMed".  Five additional startups were created in 2020: Dr. Sharma's "SygnaMap", Dr. Whang's "Lonestar Biosciences", Dr. Ruiz-Gonzales' "Muen LLC", Dr. Makey's "Xtraction" and Dr. Jiang's "Riverwalk Therapeutics".    **Postdoctoral Affairs** maintained records of postdoctoral research fellows in support of the new institutional postdoctoral policy that was fully implemented in January 2020. OPA also managed a comprehensive database of information on postdocs and research mentors that is used in NIH training grant applications. Finally, OPA provided diverse institution-wide workshops (adapted for virtual presentation) to enhance the research training environment and career development of the biomedical workforce.    **CTSA/IIMS** promoted and coordinated multiple COVID-19-related activities including 7 COVID-19 pilot projects, supported several major clinical trials on COVID-19 treatment interventions (e.g., ACTT-1, 2, 3; Remdesivir +/- immunomodulators), participated in NCATS N3C (National COVID Cohort Collaborative), a patient-level COVID-19 database to support research, and received NIH funding for the Texas CEAL Consortium (CEAL = Community Engagement Alliance against COVID-19) to inform the public about the COVID-19 epidemic, participation in clinical trials, and acceptance of vaccines. In addition, the IIMS team continued to provide key resources to foster training and career development programs.    **Grantseekers.** Out of the 29 new grants submitted to Grantseekers between FY19 and FY20, 10 were successfully funded (over $15 million). | | | |  | | --- | |  | | | |  | |