

Dear Cancer Center Members, Colleagues and Friends:

As I begin to serve as the Interim Director at the Penn State Hershey Cancer Institute I wish to thank our former director, Tom Loughran, MD, who led the center for 10 years and accomplished a great deal to bring us to where we are today. We are grateful for Tom's leadership and wish him well in his new position as the Director of the NCI-designated University of Virginia Cancer Center.

During this time of transition here at the Cancer Institute there is an opportunity to take stock of where we are in our quest for NCI designation and our work to develop our comprehensive cancer center. "We are Penn State." As we proceed we can think about how our basic and translational research programs and core facilities are configured to optimally achieve our mission, and we can develop model multi-disciplinary clinics, clinical research activities and educational programs. We can do this in a collaborative environment where physicians and scientists at the Cancer Institute interact with each other and with faculty within multiple departments at the Penn State College of Medicine and at State College. My plan is to work with each of you, to listen, to try to achieve consensus, and to take advice and counsel from our internal and external advisory boards.

We want to deliver outstanding compassionate care to our patients, many of whom have not been well served in the past due to distance from a comprehensive cancer center, lack of effective outreach or lack of effective treatments. We have developed outstanding state-of-the-art clinical care programs in lung cancer, leukemia, bone marrow transplantation, breast cancer, melanoma, head and neck cancer, pediatric cancer, neuro-oncology, gastrointestinal cancer, genitourinary cancer, and cancer genetics. We strive every day to improve quality of care. We will breakdown the obstacles our patients may face. Our care teams are striving to constantly improve on every aspect of care delivery so that our patients' needs are met in the most appropriate supportive way. I want to hear from you about anything we can do better. We are working hard to bring to Penn State, and to develop from within, innovative clinical trials to prevent and treat cancer.

There are numerous challenges that we can overcome. At this time, the government (National Institutes of Health) budget for funding biomedical research is scarce and has not increased from 2002 to 2013. Despite the chill this has put on the war on cancer, and the threat this has posed to the next generation of researchers, our dedicated faculty has continued to make progress in several areas of strength. These include drug discovery, nanomedicine, genomics and personalized therapy, chemoprevention, models, understanding cell signaling, drug resistance mechanisms, and in developing strategies to reach out and impact the population, e.g. for smoking cessation, risk assessment, or vaccination. We can work to more effectively translate our scientific discoveries to bring them to the clinics, and we can do this better through teamwork, and by working to increase grants, philanthropy and institutional resources directed at such efforts. We will continue to seek opportunities to partner with centers and institutes within Penn State University to broaden our base, and add depth to our research and translational activities. These include the Institute for Personalized Medicine, the Clinical and Translational Science Institute, the Melanoma Center, the Center for Nanomedicine, and the Children's hospital, and various clinical and basic science departments at the College of Medicine and State College. We will make maximum use of the philanthropic resources that we have including the Gittlen Foundation, the Four-Diamonds Fund, and the numerous gifts we receive from grateful patients and their families.

We plan on strategic growth at the Cancer Institute including strengthening our Network Affiliates, reorganization of our Research Programs and Core Facilities. I am excited to have the opportunity to work with all of you. Collectively, we can significantly impact the practice of cancer medicine and the care of our patients in our region. We can look forward to being proud of our shared accomplishments, and in the knowledge that we are doing everything possible to improve the lives of our patients and to make every opportunity available to enhance their well-being. Please do not hesitate to contact us about your suggestions or concerns. Our team is here to serve you.

Sincerely,

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