



Tulips on Ingalls Mall near the Michigan League



Dear Alumni/ae and Friends,

June in Ann Arbor, with its summer green — not only in the lawns and foliage but in the traditional velvet of our new graduates' hoods — is a time that brings reminders of the cycles of renewal that grace not only nature but academic institutions as well.

Graduation ceremonies represent achievement, but they also represent growth and new opportunities. For the Medical School itself, such new directions are also on the horizon. As you will read in Gil Omenn's letter in this issue, the Health System recently completed an intensive strategic planning process that will ultimately lead to important changes in the way we teach, conduct research and care for patients.

The rise of managed care and the increased emphasis on outpatient treatment have already brought changes in how we prepare medical students to serve their patients. The Strategic Plan has identified several curricular innovations that we will begin implementing over the next few years. These include an increased emphasis on ambulatory care experiences, new reliance on Web-based educational tools and an enhanced effort to improve the teaching skills of our faculty. Such innovations are necessary to maintain our role as one of America's leading academic medical institutions, a role of which we have been made especially aware during the celebration of our Sesquicentennial and the many great achievements that are part of the School's history.

Biomedical research is also being restructured and improved at Michigan. The Life Sciences Initiative is well underway, and will do much to help us coordinate and expand research and teaching in such rapidly advancing fields as genomics, chemical and structural biology, cognitive neuroscience and bioinformatics, as well as in other areas of study that bear on and are influenced by the life sciences.

The Life Sciences Institute, a research complex that will serve as a hub for cross-disciplinary research and teaching in the life sciences, is part of the Initiative. Both the Initiative and the Institute are important elements in the state of Michigan's Life Sciences Corridor, a billion-dollar project to invest in and promote life sciences research and business development. Organized by the Michigan Economic Development

Corporation, the Corridor includes the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Wayne State University and the Van Andel Institute in Grand Rapids.

We intend to play our part in keeping the University and the state in the forefront of biomedical research and the translation of that research into products and services that enhance life. In conjunction with the Life Sciences Initiative, we are examining ways to improve the research enterprise at the Medical School, including designing a spectacular new research building to house researchers by program and theme, as opposed to department, in order to facilitate collaboration among disciplines. Construction of this new research building will begin next year. The building will be on the north side of Washtenaw Avenue, west of Couzens Hall. Across Washtenaw, on the south side, will be the new Life Sciences Institute. The two buildings, the Medical School's new building and the Life Sciences Institute, will be linked by a pedestrian bridge over Washtenaw Avenue. Many of our colleagues in the Institute will have primary and joint appointments in the Medical School.

This new Initiative, and the Medical School's refocused efforts to foster and support faculty research, make this an exciting time to be dean. I am pleased to be able to oversee this important evolution and growth of the Medical School.

By now you should have received an invitation to the Sesquicentennial Celebration/All-Classes Reunion that will take place October 13-14. The event is a wonderful opportunity for all the classes of the Medical School to be together for what promises to be a festive occasion and to celebrate the outstanding work of the many men and women who, over the past 150 years, have helped make the Medical School the strong and proud institution that it is today. I hope you'll be a part of this historic event and join me in looking forward to the beginning of an even greater future for the Medical School.

Allen S. Lichter, M.D.
Dean

