

CWRU, Cleveland launch new partnership

Center for Science, Health and Society strengthens university commitment to community

Cleveland Mayor Jane Campbell and Case Western Reserve University announced June 25 the creation of the Center for Science, Health and Society, a significant new collaboration in which the university will provide a conduit for the city and its residents to shape components of the area's health care delivery system through community outreach, education and health policy.

“This new center demonstrates a higher level of partnership between the city of Cleveland and Case Western Reserve University,” said James W. Wagner, Ph.D., CWRU interim president, who, along with incoming President Edward M. Hundert, M.D., joined Campbell in making the announcement (Dr. Hundert assumed the university presidency Aug. 1, and Dr. Wagner resumed the position of provost and university vice president then). “While our School of Medicine already collaborates with several community agencies to help improve the health of Cleveland-area residents, this is the first partnership with direct ties to the city itself,” he added.

The city of Cleveland, currently conducting a search for a new public health commissioner, is working with the university to create a “Partnership for a Healthy Cleveland.” This collaboration would bring the city's department of public health to the CWRU campus, with the new commissioner also serving as a member of the School of Medicine faculty, and would provide the community with more and better access to CWRU resources.

Nathan A. Berger, M.D., is serving as director of the center, which means that he has transitioned out of his post as dean of the medical school and vice president for academic affairs at the university, effective July 1.

According to Dr. Berger, the new center will focus on what he calls “the four Es”:

- Engage community members by keeping them abreast of new developments and opportunities in science and health care.
- Excite community members with opportunities to improve their own health status, and inform them about career opportunities in health science and health care delivery.
- Educate community members about the availability and accessibility of health care resources so that they become more knowledgeable consumers.
- Empower community members to choose to live more healthful lives, pursue careers in biomedical research and health care delivery, and become better-informed advocates for policy development.

“I’m looking forward to my new role at CWRU, as well as serving the citizens of Cleveland and Northeast Ohio,” Dr. Berger said at the announcement. “The Center for Health, Science and Society is an exciting opportunity for me and the university to tackle significant health issues on several fronts.” He said that the center could help address the lack of knowledge of science in the public by working with high school students or even younger children. Also, he said the center could work to improve screening rates for asthma, diabetes and cancer.

Dr. Berger said that as part of the center’s work, a community health program may be located at the site of the former Mt. Sinai Medical Center, “but it would not duplicate services offered by any of our affiliated hospitals or the Free Clinic.”

Mayor Campbell said the partnership will allow the city to tap into the expertise available at the university. “We’re creating a brand new model,” she said. “How do we measure the quality of care provided at city clinics? We have a similar challenge with environmental health activities. Lead detection, for example, [and] teaching people how to deal with older homes’ lead abatement. How do we measure success? We don’t have the professional expertise to make these measurements. Having a partnership with the medical school will develop an institutional partnership that will last beyond the term of any mayor or any [university] president.”

Dr. Hundert said that the partnership built with the city through the center will involve several schools at the university. “This new center will cut across medicine, dentistry, nursing, social work, possibly even legal aid,” he said, adding, “The community in Cleveland can help shape these programs.”

Dr. Berger was the ideal choice for this new role, Dr. Hundert said. “A lot of the successes that Nate has shown as dean are in the educational areas as they relate to community health,” he said.

“He’s built up many community programs with the Mt. Sinai [Health Care] Foundation, with the St. Luke’s Foundation, and the primary care program at MetroHealth” Medical Center, for example, Dr. Hundert said.

“This represents a new and exciting opportunity for him to apply his leadership skills and vast medical knowledge to the important work of the center,” Dr. Wagner said. “Nate has devoted his career to medical education and research, and I know he will bring the same commitment to his new position.”



At a June 25 meeting with the press, Nathan A. Berger, M.D., left, incoming CWRU President Edward M. Hundert, M.D., Cleveland Mayor Jane Campbell, and Interim President James W. Wagner, Ph.D., discuss the new Center for Science, Health and Society, of which Dr. Berger will serve as director.