



RESEARCH READY

TTUHSC El Paso Adds Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

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Biomedical sciences students are excited about the broader range of advanced educational opportunities the school brings.



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The first degree offered by the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences officially launches this fall.

On a clear and sunny afternoon in early February, a throng of students and faculty gathered outside on the campus of Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso (TTUHSC El Paso).

Clad in their beloved red and black, the group buzzed with excitement as it crowded around a podium decorated with a large, scarlet double-T. The assembly quickly hushed when TTUHSC El Paso President Richard Lange, MD, MBA, approached the lectern.

“Today, I’m proud to announce that the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) has become an official and independent school of TTUHSC El Paso,” Lange told the audience. “This new school is proof that we’re growing as a university and will allow us to better serve our community by offering a broader range of advanced educational opportunities for prospective students.”

The GSBS joins the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine and Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing to become the university’s third school, but it is more than a sign of growth, said Texas Tech University System Chancellor Robert Duncan.

The GSBS represents TTUHSC El Paso’s increasing focus on research.

Duncan explained, “When we were first dreaming up TTUHSC El Paso in the late 1990s, one of the things we always talked about was the region’s unique opportunity for research.”

That’s because of the university’s location on the U.S.-Mexico border. Based in a city made up of 80 percent Hispanics, TTUHSC El Paso is poised to serve and study one of the fastest growing minority groups in the country: Mexican-Americans.

Despite the growth of this population, Hispanics are often underrepresented in national health studies, meaning the demographic is one of the least understood when



Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Dean Rajkumar Lakshmanaswamy, PhD; Vice President for Research Peter Rotwein, MD; Texas Tech University System Chancellor Robert L. Duncan; Gayle Greve Hunt School of Nursing Dean Jeanne Novotny, PhD, RN, FAAN; and TTUHSC El Paso President Richard Lange, MD, MBA

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In the future, TTUHSC El Paso plans to add PhD and combined MD-PhD programs to offer the community even more advanced educational opportunities. “We hope that our newly approved Master of Science program will be the springboard for a new cohort of outstanding biomedical scientists who will contribute to improving the fabric of our community and region,” said Vice President for Research Peter Rotwein, MD

Rotwein envisions El Paso becoming a hub of biomedical research on the U.S.-Mexico border with TTUHSC El Paso researchers paving the way. He believes the research conducted here by both current and future scientists could have a major impact on the health and well-being of all Americans.

The GSBS is the foundation for that dream. 

it comes to health. They also suffer from health disparities — inequalities in disease presence and health outcomes — with higher rates of many diseases compared to other groups.

Duncan, though, knows the new graduate school can help. The GSBS is expected to attract distinguished scientists and students interested in the biomedical sciences, thus boosting the amount of research conducted at TTUHSC El Paso.

The current research faculty is already off to a promising start.

Family and community medicine physician Jennifer Molokwu, MD, MPH, is studying how to increase Hispanic women’s participation in cervical cancer screenings; Hispanic women suffer from some of the highest rates of cervical cancer.

Navkiran Shokar, MD, another family and community medicine doctor, is investigating how to reduce the rate of colorectal cancer in El Paso County Hispanics. Colorectal cancer occurs more frequently, and causes the most deaths, among El Paso’s Hispanics than in Hispanics in the rest of Texas.

Rajkumar Lakshmanaswamy, PhD, GSBS dean, also has his eye on cancer. The professor studies how diabetes makes triple negative breast cancer, a subtype of breast cancer, more aggressive. The disease combination is difficult to treat and is often seen in the Hispanic population.

A handful of other studies on the minority population are underway, and more are expected with the creation of the new school. The GSBS will not only contribute much-needed research, but it will also help create the next generation of biomedical scientists. The first degree offered by the school, the Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences, officially launches in the fall of 2016.



The Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences is expected to increase the number of research studies conducted at TTUHSC El Paso.