



Zhijian 'James' Chen to receive 2026 Japan Prize

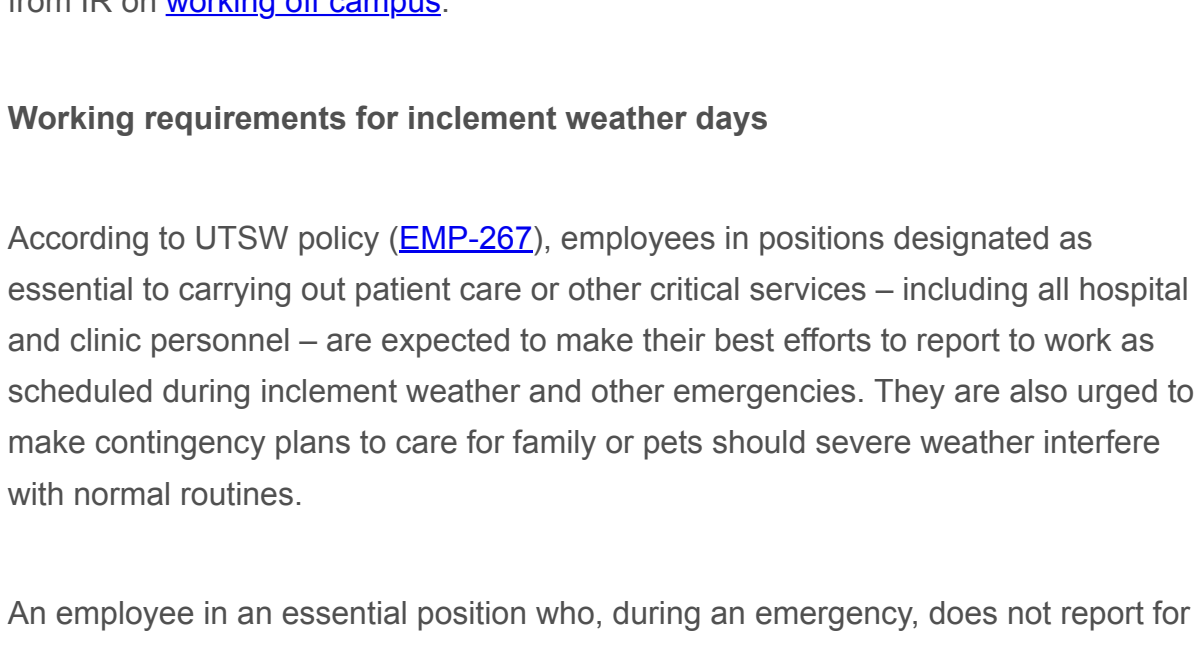
We are delighted to share that Zhijian “James” Chen, Ph.D., Professor of Molecular Biology and Director of the Center for Inflammation Research, has been named a recipient of the 2026 Japan Prize in Life Sciences – one of the highest international honors for science and technology.

Dr. Chen is one of the world’s top researchers on how the body’s immune system protects us against threats such as bacteria and viruses. He was recognized for his discoveries related to the innate immune system including cyclic GMP-AMP synthase, or cGAS, which acts as the body’s burglar alarm to trigger defense from invading pathogens. Dr. Chen shares the prize with Shizuo Akira, M.D., Ph.D., Professor, Osaka University.

“I am extremely honored and humbled to be selected to receive the Japan Prize,” said Dr. Chen, who is also a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator. “This recognition validates the collaborative work of scientists at UT Southwestern and worldwide to expand our understanding of human disease. I am grateful to the students, postdoctoral fellows, and staff members in my lab for their hard work and to the leadership at UT Southwestern for their unwavering support.”

Dr. Chen’s research has also been recognized with some of the most esteemed awards in science, including the Paul Ehrlich and Ludwig Darmstaedter Prize (2025), the Albert Lasker Basic Medical Research Award (2024), the Louisa Gross Horwitz Prize (2023), and the Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences (2019), among others.

[Read more about Dr. Chen's honor](#)



Winter Weather

As we brace for arctic air and a potential wintry mix this weekend, we want to remind you of our institutional policy on inclement weather. We also want to encourage employees approved for remote work to review the resources available from IR on [working off campus](#).

Working requirements for inclement weather days

According to UTSW policy ([EMP-267](#)), employees in positions designated as essential to carrying out patient care or other critical services – including all hospital and clinic personnel – are expected to make their best efforts to report to work as scheduled during inclement weather and other emergencies. They are also urged to make contingency plans to care for family or pets should severe weather interfere with normal routines.

An employee in an essential position who, during an emergency, does not report for work or refuses an authorized request to remain on duty beyond their scheduled shift ending time, may have that time recorded as an unexcused absence, based on any departmental time and attendance policies. Additionally, they may be subject to disciplinary action. Absences due to inclement weather will be charged to the employee’s available, applicable leave accruals. If you are unsure whether your role has been classified as an essential position, please speak with your direct supervisor for clarification.

For more details, including guidance and expectations, please read policy [EMP-267](#).

Hospital employees should also be familiar with resources found on the [University Hospital Inclement Weather Resources SharePoint site](#).

Students can expect additional communications from their Academic Deans regarding remote learning, if needed.

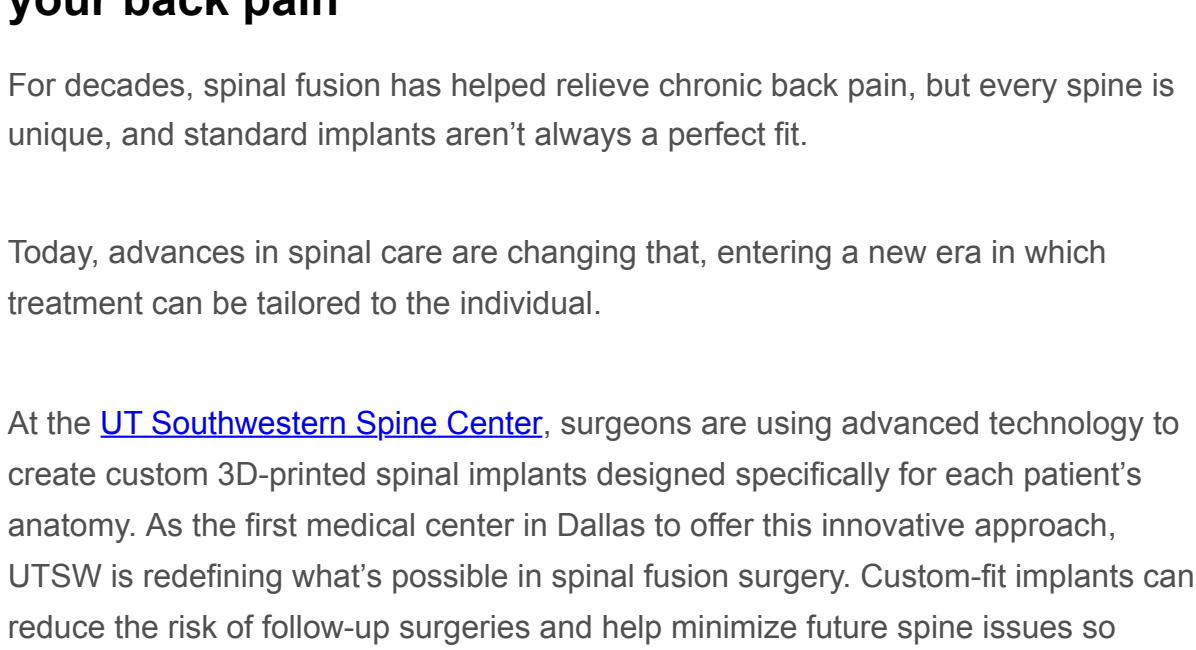
For more preparedness and safety tips, including driving and traveling on campus, visit [Campus Updates](#). If and when the time arises, you will see a steady flow of communications and guidance.



DART bus stop relocation on Harry Hines

As work on the New Pediatric Campus with Children’s Health continues, construction closures, traffic rerouting, and parking changes are sometimes required.

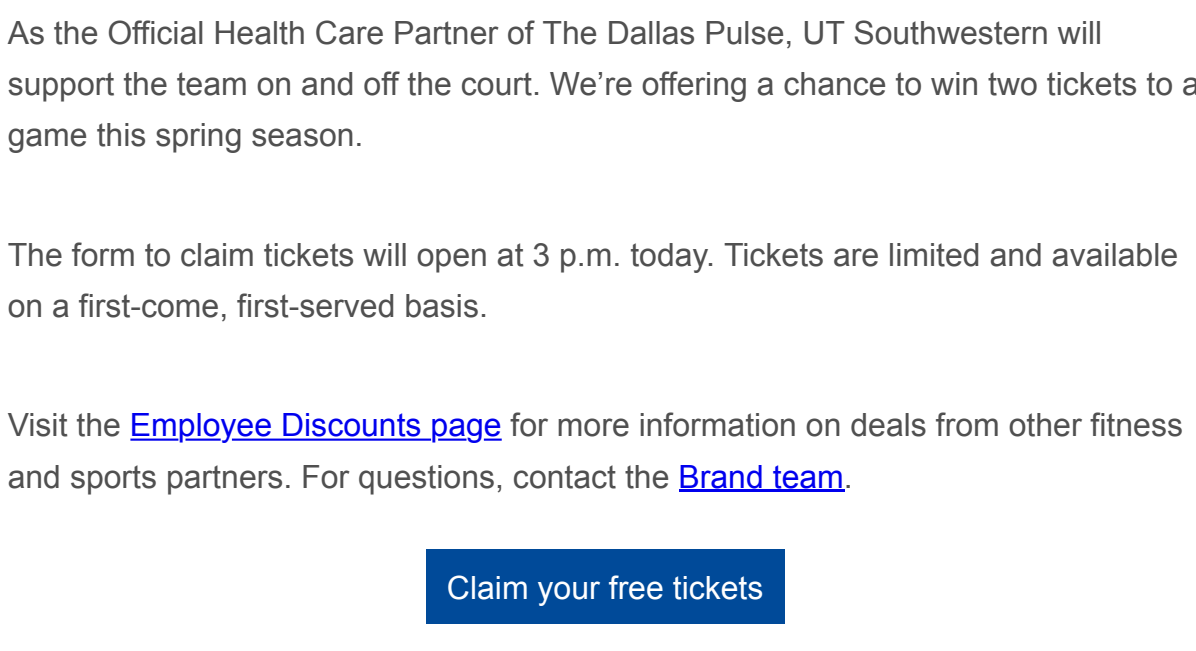
Beginning Feb. 2 and continuing until the first week of August, **DART stop #15492 – Harry Hines @ Clements University Hospital N - FS**, which is located on Harry Hines Boulevard just north of Paul M. Bass Way, will relocate approximately 450 feet south to the south side of Paul M. Bass Way. To accommodate riders crossing Harry Hines, the crosswalks at this intersection will shift to the west and south sides of the intersection. Also, the sidewalk on northbound Harry Hines, north of Paul M. Bass Way, will be closed at the same time, and a path will be opened south of Paul M. Bass Way to reach the new stop location.



Pardon our dust: Construction underway on awards display honoring UTSW educators

Beginning today, and continuing through Jan. 26, construction crews will be creating a wall installation **outside the D1.600 lecture hall in the corridor/lobby**, which will display various awards recognizing the achievements of UT Southwestern educators. The contractor will partition off the area to dampen noise. To help maintain air quality, containment drapes, air filtration, and low-VOC materials will be used.

We recognize this will create a temporary inconvenience, and your patience is appreciated as we work to honor the recipients of these prestigious awards.



3D-printed spinal implants are customized to relieve your back pain

For decades, spinal fusion has helped relieve chronic back pain, but every spine is unique, and standard implants aren’t always a perfect fit.

Today, advances in spinal care are changing that, entering a new era in which treatment can be tailored to the individual.

At the [UT Southwestern Spine Center](#), surgeons are using advanced technology to create custom 3D-printed spinal implants designed specifically for each patient’s anatomy. As the first medical center in Dallas to offer this innovative approach, UTSW is redefining what’s possible in spinal fusion surgery. Custom-fit implants can reduce the risk of follow-up surgeries and help minimize future spine issues so patients can heal better, move more comfortably, and get back to doing what they love more quickly.

[See how they work](#)



Teaming up with Dallas Pulse Volleyball

The Dallas Pulse is Dallas’ new professional team in the Major League Volleyball league. Join us in supporting them as they begin their first season.

As the Official Health Care Partner of The Dallas Pulse, UT Southwestern will support the team on and off the court. We’re offering a chance to win two tickets to a game this spring season.

The form to claim tickets will open at 3 p.m. today. Tickets are limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Visit the [Employee Discounts page](#) for more information on deals from other fitness and sports partners. For questions, contact the [Brand team](#).

[Claim your free tickets](#)

Insider Guide

Clinical Informatics Center Seminar Series: Informatics Interface

Noon-1 p.m., Jan. 22
Virtual and UTSW Hoblitzelle Building (G9.102)

This seminar focuses on ambient artificial intelligence (AI) scribe technologies, which are rapidly emerging as a potential solution to clinician documentation burden, yet real-world implementation and evaluation remain limited. It also will showcase UTSW’s experience piloting and studying ambient scribe tools across clinical settings.

[Register today](#)

M.S.N.H. program open house

Noon-1 p.m., Jan. 22

Virtual

Applications are open for the Master of Science in Nutritional Health (M.S.N.H.) program offered by UTSW’s School of Health Professions, and you’re invited to learn more and take the next step in your career.

[Get the details](#)

UTSW Events Calendar

Looking for your daily dose of happenings?

The UTSW Events Calendar is updated every day.

[View upcoming or trending events](#)

Share your *Insider* suggestions by sending them to utswinsider@utsouthwestern.edu. Looking for an item in a past edition of this newsletter? Check out our [Insider archive](#).

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