

dear residents

Dr. Wang's Legacy

July 27, 2025

Dear Residents,

Dr. Tommy Wang assumed the role of Chair of Internal Medicine at UT Southwestern in February 2020. At the time, reports were emerging of a novel viral infection originating in Wuhan, China. A handful of cases had already been detected in the United States, including the first confirmed case in Seattle in January. While the situation was evolving, few could have anticipated the [seismic shift in healthcare that was about to unfold](#).

Stepping into a major leadership role in a large department at a major academic institution is challenging under any circumstances. To do so on the brink of a global pandemic was extraordinary. And yet, Dr. Wang met the moment. He sprang into action - holding the department together, rapidly mobilizing resources to manage the surge in patient volume and working tirelessly to safeguard the health of our faculty, staff, and trainees.



At the onset of the pandemic, vaccines were still a year away. Out of an abundance of caution, and shaped by the devastation we had witnessed in the Northeast, Dr. Wang and I made the difficult decision to keep residents from directly caring for patients with COVID-19 until vaccines became available and PPE shortages were resolved. A few residents volunteered to help and were understandably disappointed - but we stood firm, prioritizing your safety. Once the immediate crisis passed, we turned our efforts to restoring, reworking, and reimagining the residency program.

Under Dr. Wang's visionary leadership over the past five and a half years, the Department of Internal Medicine has experienced remarkable growth and transformation. He spearheaded the expansion of the Physician-Scientist Training Program, established five new fellowship programs, and strengthened the residency program in both size and substance - with the addition of new, mission-driven tracks. All this progress unfolded against the backdrop of profound local and global upheaval - pandemics, political polarization, and social reckoning - that tested the resilience of institutions everywhere. Yet amid the uncertainty, Dr. Wang's steady and principled leadership kept our department anchored in its core values, providing clarity, stability, and direction when it was needed most.

Through initiatives like regular department forums, the launch of IM News, and a renewed focus on transparent communication, Dr. Wang cultivated a culture of cohesion and shared purpose. What could have been a period of disconnection became instead a powerful story of resilience, renewal, and forward momentum.

Great leaders do more than manage - they inspire. Dr. Wang leaves behind a department that is stronger, more vibrant, and better prepared for the future. As Dr. Burstein, a former UTSW resident, steps in as Interim Chair, he is well positioned to carry forward the vision and momentum that have brought us to this point.

Warm regards,

Dino Kazi