

SURGERY Synopsis

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Chairman’s Message

“View From A Room”



It has been eight months since I took over as the Interim Chair for the Department of Surgery, and it has been a remarkable and humbling experience. Though I have been at UW for my entire career, the “view from a room,” i.e., from the Chair’s Office, has made me appreciate this department even more. (And, it is the first office I’ve had with natural daylight and an actual “view!”)

Much of this appreciation stems from getting to know our faculty and staff from a different perspective. In my new role I have been privileged to meet with many of you individually, in my visits to each of the divisions, and in a variety of other meetings and committees.

I have continued the annual faculty group Breakfasts we hold. To date, I have met with the Assistant, Associate & Professors, as well as our Teaching Associates, and Research Faculty. The thoughtful comments from each of these groups around how to improve systems, broaden and grow our mission and further develop our Department, were compelling.

Most remarkable and rewarding for me was to hear the general view that their peers and mentors are great to work with: together we create a strong sense of community in our Department.

I have always appreciated our faculty, but never more so than now. I have a renewed and magnified view of how widely our surgeons are nationally and internationally known and respected. You will see this reflected in the awards and recognition section of *Surgery Synopsis* as well as on our [website](#). We have incredible breadth and depth in our faculty group and it is easy to take for granted the stature and accomplishments that make UW Surgery stand out nationally for our clinical care, educational programs, and research.



Dr. Douglas E. Wood in his new office where his view from a room includes two pieces of beautiful art.

A recent example is the election of Ron Maier to President—Elect of the [American Surgical Association \(ASA\)](#), and the simultaneous election of four new ASA members from the Department of Surgery: [Sam Arbabi](#), [Alessandro Fichera](#), [Brant Oelschlager](#), and [Ben Starnes](#). The ASA is the most elite academic surgical society in the U.S.; to have four new members and a President—Elect from one institution is unprecedented and is further external validation of the incredible respect and regard for our faculty. (And many of you will recall that Dr. [Carlos Pellegrini](#) was the ASA President in 2005 –2006.)

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Chairman's Message

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Another example is the appointment of Dr. [Mark Meissner](#) to be the initial holder of the Gloviczki Professorship in Venous and Lymphatic Disorders. The focus of this professorship is unique and Dr. Meissner is the perfect surgeon to hold this Professorship (please read more about this story on page 19).

It has also been inspiring to work with the department faculty leadership team to move our department forward – whether working to recruit important faculty additions or discuss and determine financial priorities. I still feel like I have much to learn. Our leadership meetings and my visits to division meetings help me better understand the challenges and the successes of our teams. I appreciate the patience and support that so many of you have provided as I learn the ropes.

In addition to the faculty breakfasts, I also met with the research-focused faculty and, new this year, with our Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants. This group, which has grown to 55 in number, is integral to providing the excellent patient care we are known for. My purpose in holding these breakfasts was to get to know them better and hear from them how they are engaged in our clinical teams as well as their insights into where we might improve. The breakfast was helpful to me and some changes have already been made based upon their input.

In addition to these efforts to better understand our faculty, I have also set a new goal: to work more closely with the residents and to learn better what they are happy about, and to understand their challenges. I have set up weekly breakfast meetings with the residents, keeping them small and focused so that we can talk honestly and ensure that everyone in the room is heard. It has been a great joy for me to get to know the residents better. Our residents are among the best and brightest in the nation, and it has been exciting to hear their innovative ideas. We have also continued our weekly Chair's Conference with the residents on Friday afternoons, during which we focus on topics that influence our professional and personal lives. Recently we discussed an excellent article on Google's effort to identify the characteristics of the ideal team. We came up with a lot of our own ideas for how each of us, from student to junior resident, senior resident to attending, can do things differently to make our teams both more fun, and more effective.

Finally, I have been able to get to better know our superb management team. As I recently told them in a management

team meeting, they provide the critical administrative and fiscal management that allow the faculty to focus on patients, conduct research and teach our residents and fellows. The importance of this work and their partnership with faculty cannot be understated. This team is highly respected within UW Medicine as well as in outside professional organizations. We can be proud that they are regularly called upon to share their expertise to help form and focus work within UW Medicine.



Douglas E. Wood, MD, FACS, FRCSEd (ad hom)
Professor and Interim
Chair, Department
of Surgery

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I have been particularly grateful for the help of Susan Marx and the department's administrative leadership team as they continue to educate me on what I need to know and do to fulfill the duties of a Chair. There is so much to know. Dr. Pellegrini made it look easy, but I can tell you that it is not. For me this is truly a humbling growth experience. However, I don't want my tenure as Interim Chair to be one that is passive. While we have accomplished many great things in this department, I am eager to continue working together to be better than we were last year, and I'm excited and energized by all of you who have ideas to keep us always improving.

The "View from this Room" is truly inspiring. I am so grateful for the opportunity to see this department and the individuals in it from this vantage point. I

am here to help make this a rewarding place to work and am looking forward to our path ahead. The door to this room is always open; I welcome your thoughts, comments and suggestions.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Surgery Synopsis*, which focuses on all the activities surrounding the end of one academic year and the beginning of the next: the residents we say goodbye to and the residents we welcome into our family. Please take time to look at the photos and read the comments from incoming residents. The reasons they chose to come here for their graduate surgical training are enlightening and inspiring. Please also take a look at the graduation events and comments from some our graduating residents. Our trainees, new, graduated or continuing are ones we are extremely proud of. And it is with particular pride and appreciation that we wish our graduating residents well as they venture into the next phase of their careers.