

SURGERY Synopsis



CHAIR'S MESSAGE



Douglas E. Wood, MD, FACS, FRCSEd (ad hom)
The Henry N. Harkins Professor and Chair

As we begin a new year, it's inevitable that we reflect on 2021 – the good times and the bad (and the bad times seem to keep haunting us over the past 2 years!). I am sure all of us hoped COVID would be a thing of the past by now, but unfortunately Omicron is filling our hospitals and causing cancellation of elective OR cases again. This is not how we had hoped to start 2022, and it is easy to become overwhelmed with constant uncertainty, but the fact is there continues to be much good in the world and fortunately we don't need to look far to find it. I am continually encouraged by the resilience and perseverance of our community. Our faculty, trainees and staff continue to yield unwavering strength in carrying out the important work of the department.

I am not alone in thinking this is a great department. In a recent issue, *US News & World Report* ranked the [University of Washington as #7 in the world](#) for Best Global Universities in 2022, and #12 for Surgery. UW continues to be second in the U.S. for NIH research grants, totaling \$1.3 billion in 2021. A major component of this ranking reflects academic research - a critical pillar of our department's three-fold mission (Clinical Care, Education, and Research). For most of our faculty this important work is done on top of an already busy clinical schedule. But these efforts push our surgical community closer to discovering breakthroughs in diagnosis, treatment, and long-term management of disease. We can all be proud of that.

This issue of Surgery Synopsis will focus on the research mission of the Department of Surgery. We highlight the research being done in each division of the Department as well as research done by our Residents and Fellows. At a Departmental level, we are giving sustained and strategic attention to our research mission. We have continued to put a good deal of effort into hiring faculty with research interests and expertise in areas of strategic importance to the Department.

Our department is fortunate to have the talent and passion for research in Professor [David Flum](#), MD, MPH. Dave is the Associate Chair for Research for the Department and was the driving force behind development of the [Surgical Outcomes Research Center \(SORCE\)](#) and he continues to serve as the Medical Director. Dave is passionate about research and has been the PI on many highly-regarded national research projects, including one that has just concluded, "[Comparing Outcomes of Drugs and Appendectomy \(CODA\)](#)" which was funded by the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute. CODA studied whether medical therapeutics can be as effective as surgical interventions for appendicitis. I want to thank Dr. Flum for helping to form this issue and co-writing this column.

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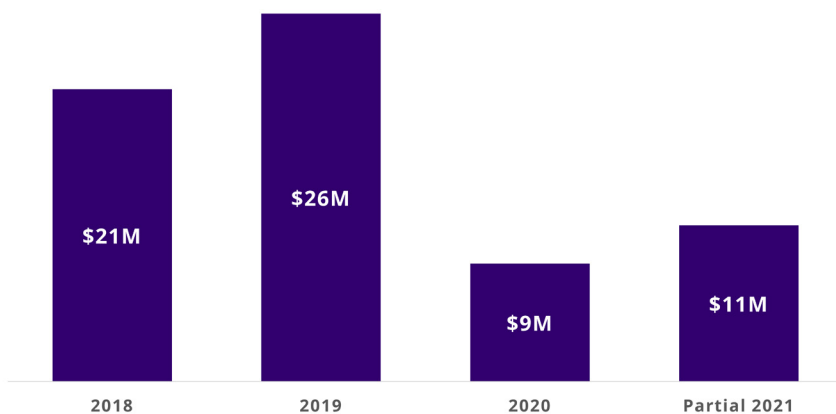
“In a time of great uncertainty and challenge, research is one of our most hopeful pursuits. Researchers look at what we do today and imagine what might be. The innovative treatments and concepts that surgeons across the world will be using tomorrow are being developed right now in labs, conference rooms and simulation suites across the UW.

Within this edition of Surgery Synopsis, you will read about the many accomplishments of our trainees, faculty and research staff. Together we are striving to make UW the premier home for surgical research. That means having top-notch training programs for residents interested in developing research skills, investing in faculty as they start on the journey to become independent clinician scientists and celebrating and supporting seasoned investigators

through the amazing successes and inevitable challenges of a career in surgical research. As a Department we are bound together through our curiosity and pursuit of excellence. All of our faculty and trainees share a passion for innovation, experimentation and improving the field of surgery. Asking questions about what, why, and how we do surgery is fundamental to academic surgery and makes being a part of the UW DoS so stimulating.

Every day our faculty and trainees are asking and answering these questions; at the bench and bedside, using tools that range from spectrometers to big data analytics. Through published work and presentations, contributing patients to registries and trials, testing new technology, and taking part in our culture of curiosity, all of us are contributing to the research mission. Each year, 25-50 faculty also pursue sources of extramural funding - grants, contracts, philanthropy - to support and sustain research in the DoS. Despite the challenges of competing for grant finding, these faculty regularly bring in \$10-12M/year in research support from over 20 different private and public funding sources. 2019 was a particularly impressive year with over \$25M in support of several longer-term projects (**figure**). This funding is developing and enabling a remarkable breadth of programming including two, NIH-sponsored T32 research training programs for our residents, and robust

Total Research Funds By Fiscal Year



research programs across a wide range of areas (transplant, trauma/ inflammation, simulation, health services/outcomes, hepatobiliary, cardiothoracic, pediatrics, global health, education, vascular, plastics).

Across this diverse group of focus areas there are also dozens of faculty and trainees pursuing non-funded research projects that are advancing knowledge, and in many cases paving the way for future funding. Much of this work is supported by a group of generous philanthropists, many of whom are grateful patients whose families have received surgical care at UW. Through endowments and contributions to our research endeavors these gifts help support research in ways that federal funding agencies cannot. They provide the funds for highly innovative pilot projects and support investigators during times when they are developing their ideas and research careers. We are grateful for their continued support.

While grant supported research is critical to sustaining our mission, the DoS also supports research through a set of strategic investments, use of endowments to support faculty and trainees and by dedicating the time of administrators and staff for the advancement of research. Research is promoted through research grand rounds-often featuring junior faculty presenting their work, in regular updates in the Surgery Synopsis and at the annual [Schilling Research Forum](#) (this year March 25, 2022 with visiting Lecturer, Dr. Kathie-Ann Joseph from NYU Grossman School of Medicine/NYU Langone Health).

The Schilling Traveling Fellowship

The core of the Department of Surgery's mission is to train the next generation of surgical leaders, and central to that training is to provide two-year research options for residents. The Schilling Traveling Surgical Fellowship was created in 1986, and amended in 1992, by former Chair John A. Schilling, MD and his wife, Helen

Schilling, to support resident research development either at the University of Washington or elsewhere. To that end, our "research residents" are strongly encouraged to locate funded labs, e.g. with T32 funding, so that they can benefit from a structured research environment. Unfortunately, not all labs or research awards can cover these expenses, and so the Schilling Traveling Fellowship covers any gaps in funding. The Schilling Travel Fellowship generates approximately \$165,000 per year for up to eight residents (four in year 1 and four in year 2 of research). The Schilling Traveling Fellowship provides the stable funding needed for our resident research program to continue to thrive and attract surgery scholars.

The Howie Surgery Research Endowment

The Department of Surgery was the beneficiary of estate gifts by Raymond and Ruth Howie which led to the creation of the Howie Surgery Research Endowment in 1980. Mrs. Howie was a surgical patient at University of Washington Medical Center (*formerly University Hospital*) whose gratitude provided the impetus for this generous gift. The endowment's purpose is to support research or projects in the Department of Surgery, and under the direction of the Chair, without restriction. As of December 2021, the Howie Surgery Research Endowment generates approximately \$240,000 per year in funding which currently supports portions of protected research effort for nine faculty and research start-up expenses across multiple areas of research inquiry.

But perhaps the greatest way the Department supports research is through community. Researchers within each of the focus areas above are benefitting from mentors who meet regularly, editing papers and grant applications, conducting mock study sessions and work-in-progress activities. Research in our department is highly collaborative, team-based, and collective and both our research product and our experience as researchers is better for it.

We are grateful for everyone's efforts to make UW the premier home for research. We can all share responsibility for this success story."

In addition to the vignettes on our research projects and accomplishments, in this issue of Surgery Synopsis you will enjoy our regular features, including many faculty awards and accomplishments, getting to know one of our Department's faculty outside the workplace and introductions to new faculty that have joined the Department.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of Surgery Synopsis.

Sincerely,

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The Henry N. Harkins Professor & Chair
 Department of Surgery
 University of Washington

2018-2022 DoS Research Funding Sources

