



Tuesday, December 14, 2004

## Frank Giblin named director of Eye Research Institute

By **Dawn Pauli**, contributing writer

Frank Giblin, the newly appointed director of the **Eye Research Institute** (ERI), has an eye on future growth of the research facility. His plans include growing the ERI by expanding both the amount of laboratory space as well as the number of faculty.

"My number one goal is to help the institute grow. We have six researchers at this time, and we're currently interviewing for another position," Giblin said. "I'd like to expand the type of research that is done and include work on other eye disorders such as corneal disease and diabetic retinopathy."

ERI scientists research various parts of the eye and eye diseases, specifically glaucoma, macular degeneration, cataract and retinitis pigmentosa, a devastating genetic disease.

"Oakland is a great place to have a career. I really appreciate the opportunities I have had. That's what I want to provide for the new faculty we hire," Giblin said. "My predecessor, Dr. Janet Blanks, hired three outstanding junior faculty, and I will do whatever I can to help them succeed in their careers as the previous ERI directors did for me."

To accommodate the growing institute, Giblin plans to expand the laboratory by renovating existing space and possibly even making an addition on the roof of Dodge Hall.

However, the biggest challenge for the ERI is funding. "These are tough times, but I look forward to the challenges," Giblin said. "Funding is getting tougher and more competitive all over the country. We're competing with researchers at institutions such as Harvard, Duke, UCLA and Washington University, all attached to major medical schools. We have to work that much harder to compete for a limited amount of funds."

A recent donation of \$525,000 by Irene Stare, the wife of V. Everett Kinsey, one of the ERI founders, will endow a professorship. "We need to do more fund raising like this," Giblin said.

Since its inception, ERI faculty have received nearly \$40 million in research grant support from private and federal health agencies. The major research support has come from the National Eye Institute of the National Institutes of Health. Other funding sources include the American Health Assistance Foundation, Alcon Pharmaceutical Company, Michigan Eye Bank and Transplantation Center, Fight for Sight and NASA, among others.

One important aspect of the ERI is the research opportunities it provides students. Each year students in the ERI Summer Undergraduate Program in Eye Research (S.U.P.E.R.) program receive research training in biochemistry, cell biology, physiology, molecular biology, signal transduction and neuroscience as applied to the study of the eye and blinding eye diseases. The Center for Biomedical Research at Oakland provides the S.U.P.E.R program with funds for five undergraduate research fellowships of \$3,000 each.

"Most students in the program head to medical or graduate school," Giblin said. "It's a unique opportunity we can provide undergraduates because we currently don't have a graduate program."

Since 1985, the ERI has been affiliated with the Department of Ophthalmology at William Beaumont Hospital. A joint faculty position between Beaumont and OU has been approved.

"We participate in Beaumont's residency training, OU researchers give lectures to their residents, and their clinicians lecture our undergrads. We also try to collaborate on various research projects," Giblin said. "They have world-recognized retinal surgeons."

Giblin began at the ERI in 1974, immediately after receiving his Ph.D. in biochemistry, working as a post-doctoral

fellow with one of the ERI's founders, Venkat Reddy. In 1977, Giblin joined OU as a faculty member.

"Dr. Giblin is an outstanding scientist who will continue to build upon the ERI's 35-year history of research into the underlying causes of eye diseases that result in blindness and loss of vision," said Virinder Moudgil, vice president for Academic Affairs and provost.

Giblin is the fourth director since the ERI was founded in 1968. His appointment was approved by the OU Board of Trustees Dec. 1.

"I've worked with Dr. Kinsey and Dr. Reddy, both very prominent vision researchers," Giblin said. "I'm very honored to follow in their footsteps, and I'm going to try to continue the great tradition of the eye institute and move us forward."

#### **SUMMARY**

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Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Tuesday, December 14, 2004

Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Tuesday, December 14, 2004

Article Start Date: Tuesday, December 14, 2004