

Cultivating RESEARCH

DEAN SMITH TAKES OVER AS THE NEW VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH.

Born into a family of musicians in Colorado Springs, Colo., Dean Smith might have become one himself. Then at the age of seven or eight he found his mother's botany notebooks in the attic. It was love at first sight.

"Even as a professional violinist, my mother had always been interested in the sciences," Smith says today. "She was admitted to medical school, but at that time women didn't (typically) go to medical school. So she went to Colorado College and majored in botany even though she became a professional violinist."

As a young boy, Smith sat and pored over his mom's old notebooks, admiring the carefully crafted notes and drawings, "fascinated by the science of it." As a seasoned scientist and administrator, he took over in September as vice president for research at Texas Tech, where he directs research efforts and develops ways to bring more outside funding into the programs. He comes with quite a track record.

Armed with a bachelor's from Harvard and master's and doctorate from Stanford, Smith did post-doctoral work in Germany and Sweden in the 1970s. He has spent most of his faculty life at the universities of Wisconsin and Hawaii. He was associate dean of the graduate school at Wisconsin and then served as senior vice president and executive vice chancellor at Hawaii. Most recently he was a professor at Hawaii with his laboratory and grants in the medical school.

Smith is a neurophysiologist. Until four years ago he studied how nerves interact with one another at the synapse. He did early work related to aging.

In the last four years he has worked with embryonic stem cells, differentiating them into nerve cells. "The goal is to use them in therapeutic ways against Parkinsonism, strokes and spinal cord injuries in particular," he says. "It's a very interesting field, and had this opportunity at Texas Tech not arisen, I'd be in my lab working on it right now."

Energy level? Smith runs marathons. He seems apologetic for a "slow" time of 4:14 in the Boston Marathon in April, or

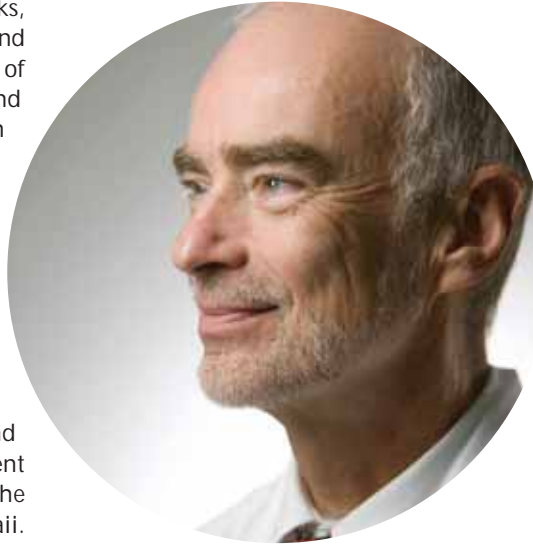
just under 10 minutes per mile over 26.2 miles.

Here's a snapshot of how Smith sees his profession, U.S. universities and Texas Tech's place among them.

HOW TO MOVE TECH'S RESEARCH EFFORTS FORWARD:

"The whole idea is to build capacity, and the method for that is to get more extramurally funded research.

"There are several ways to go about it. The old fashioned way is to invest in your faculty one by one. That is step one.



Give them the resources and environment they need to succeed in their research efforts. That takes time, but it works. There are several other ways that are more technical in nature.

"One is to take over a large institutional managerial role, as the University of California does by running Los Alamos National Laboratory. We could increase our managerial capacity, and this also would open up avenues for our own faculty to do research."

ON HANDLING RESEARCHERS:

"Make sure they have support when they want to develop a new program or new direction, working with the provost's office. Don't nickel and dime them. If they don't make it, they won't fail because we short-changed them. Make it for five years

and tie it to a quid pro quo. At the end of five years, they come in for a rigorous review. If they succeed, great! If they fail, we decide whether to accommodate change or reallocate those resources back and fund some new effort."

HOW HIS WAY OF TREATING RESEARCH FACULTY WAS FORMED EARLY IN HIS CAREER:

"I ended up at the University of Wisconsin in 1975. They promised me a nice package for my research program in August. The following April, I had a National Institutes of Health grant in place, but still no startup package. Ultimately, they gave me \$2,500. That was enough to buy a Hewlett-Packard pocket calculator in those days, which I did. I decided then that if I ever got in a position to provide startup packages in a fair and timely way, I'd do it. When I became associate dean of the graduate school, which was functionally the associate vice chancellor of research at Wisconsin, the first thing I did was look at the startup mechanism. From then on, when a young faculty member came in, we settled up front, and the check was waiting for them when they came in the door. It's one of my major accomplishments and it has stayed with me. I don't make promises that I can't keep."

ON TEXAS TECH'S POTENTIAL AS A MAJOR RESEARCH UNIVERSITY:

"I think it's got great promise. Texas has a large population base to support the school. The state has two major research universities now with the University of Texas and Texas A&M. Tech is a much younger school and it's growing. I consider it an emerging research university. We have a way to go but we'll get there. It would be nice to have a permanent university fund like they do. And it would be nice to have a huge patent-generated revenue fund to draw upon, as Wisconsin does. But we don't, so let's deal with the cards as they are and use what's available. Hungry people can do quite well when they're out looking."

— KARL WOLFSHOHL