



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Vice President for Research

July 22, 2010

To: The Texas Tech University Research Community

From: Dr. Taylor Eighmy, Vice President for Research *TE*
Dr. Bob Smith, Provost and Senior Vice President *Bob*

Cc: Dr. Guy Bailey, President
Kyle Clark, Vice President for Administration and Finance
Ron Phillips, University Counsel
Randy Nix, Director of Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S)
Richard Meek, Faculty Senate President
Beverly Pinson, Staff Senate President
Deans
Associate Deans for Research
Department Chairs
Kim Turner, TTUS Office of Internal Audit
Steve Bryant, TTUS Office of Risk Management
Ron Seacrist, Chief, TTU Police Department

As many of you may recall, a serious laboratory accident occurred at Texas Tech University on January 7, 2010. A doctoral candidate in the Chemistry and Biochemistry Department was badly injured by an explosion in his laboratory as a result of the work he was doing. This accident is still under investigation by the U.S. Chemical Safety Board.

We sent a memo to the community on February 9, 2010 describing our approach to move forward from this event and improve the laboratory safety culture at TTU. We established a working group, chaired by Dr. Alice Young, faculty fellow for research integrity in the Office of the Vice President for Research, to examine how we manage laboratory safety, the culture of safety awareness, and safety training compliance.

The working group's report, formally presented to us on July 19, is enclosed for your review. It is a thoughtful and comprehensive examination of the issues and culture here at TTU. We want to thank Dr. Todd Anderson, Dr. Javad Hashemi, Randy Nix, Ronald Phillips, and Dr. John Zak for working diligently with Dr. Young on this effort.

In response to the receipt of this report, we are instituting the following:

1. Dr. Alice Young will immediately establish and chair a university-wide Research Safety Committee that will include members of the working group.
2. Dr. Young and the Research Safety Committee are charged with implementing all recommendations in the report as soon as reasonably possible. We both, as well as the Provost's Council, the Provost's Staff Council, and the Research Advisory Council, will assist this effort.

Further, in addition to these efforts, the following will happen:

1. As of September 1, 2010, the Texas Tech University Office of Environmental Health and Safety will report to Dr. Alice Young in the Office of the Vice President for Research.
2. All health and safety training of faculty and students will be embodied in the responsible conduct of research (RCR) training program managed by Dr. Young's RCR program in the Office of the Vice President for Research.
3. TTU will acquire and implement a centralized web-based chemical inventory system.
4. Texas Tech will grow as a research university over the next ten years. The regulated environmental health and safety landscape will become increasingly complex over this period. Now is the time to establish the appropriate culture and management structure in preparation for that growth. Recommendation 1b involves an external review of the safety culture here at TTU. We will specifically ask that external EH&S experts from established research universities explicitly look at the program and functionality, staffing, management structure, and strategic planning needs of the TTU EH&S office so that we can position the office for this future growth.

We appreciate your attention and collaboration. Laboratory safety is a life and death matter, and we look forward to implementing these efforts and actions as soon as possible so that we can be an exemplar to other universities.