

December 10, 2019

Opening Remarks of Dr. Carrie L. Byington, EVP of UC Health, to the Health Services Committee

Thank you, President Napolitano, for those kind words of introduction.

Regents, members of the health services committee and honored guests ---

As this is my first Health Services Committee meeting as the EVP of UC Health, I would like to introduce myself by telling you a little about my background, my experience in medicine, how these inform my view of health care, and my aspirations for the University of California Health system.

I was raised in rural South Texas near the Mexican border in a multi-generational household speaking both English and Spanish. The land that my family called home has a long indigenous history and was once Spain; it became Mexico, then the Republic of Texas and finally the United States. My family inhabited that land throughout that time. This geography created in me an understanding that borders are fluid and sometimes transient, and that our lives are connected in spite of these borders. Living in this area of the country, I was also exposed to what I now know are health disparities. I watched as beloved family members lost their lives for lack of access to health care. These experiences are what propelled me into medicine.

I became a physician, the first health professional in my extended family. I was drawn to pediatrics because of the potential of children and because of the ability to influence their long-term health outcomes when you begin early in childhood. I further sub-specialized in infectious diseases, completing a fellowship in pediatric infectious diseases at the University of California San Francisco. My work as an infectious disease specialist has taken me around the world. It has enabled me to participate in guideline development and policy decisions around pandemics and emerging infections such as H1N1 influenza, Ebola, and the Zika virus. These experiences further influenced my view that the health of one person influences the health of all people.

Throughout my career, I have been a clinician, caring primarily for children with Medicaid or those who are uninsured. I have been an educator training over 100 pediatric residents and fellows, and I have been a continuously funded NIH investigator. I embraced the missions of academic medicine and was successful in each of these areas. It was very comfortable for me to remain as a faculty member. However, I began to take on administrative roles when I realized it was only in this way that deep systematic change could be realized. This is why I have the privilege to be in front of you today.

We are at an important inflection point in the health fields in the US. We are undergoing a dynamic transformation in health care delivery, education and research. I want us to be active in this national transformation to represent the core values I cherish — a commitment to affordable healthcare, to eliminate health disparities, and to preserve

and sustain a commitment to academic health care in the United States. This is why I chose to come to the University of California. This system has the scale to transform health care in California and the credibility to inform the conversations occurring at the national level.

I have just completed my first month at UC Health, and I am engaged in a listening tour across the organization, including campus visits and visits with external stakeholders. I am looking for ways that systemwide collaborations can add value to the exceptional work that occurs in each of our health centers every day.

I have identified four areas so far that I believe will be very important over the next year, and I'd like to briefly mention them:

First — I would like for UC Health to lead with clearly articulated values. I want our employees to know what UC Health is and to be proud to be part of the organization because of the values we support. We are fortunate that the Office of the President is completing a values exercise at this time. I arrived in time to participate in the last session, and I hope that my comments influenced the final product that incorporates the delivery of health care as part of our public service mission. As we incorporate these values statements into our strategic plans and the work being done at the campuses, I will be looking to reframe our expression of values in a way that more clearly recognizes our commitment to public service. I view the public service mission of UC Health, which is part of a land-grant organization, to be equally important to our other stated values such as our commitment to excellence and as supportive of our values of respect and inclusion. As the agenda today demonstrates, we have many issues and challenges as a health system. A clear understanding of — and a commitment to — our values will be the most important guide for our actions.

Second — University of California Health can and should play an integral role in the strategic planning around the clinical enterprises and create an integrated system linking all of our campuses. Academic health centers are unique across the academic missions of universities in which we have to be both academic enterprises and businesses. In fact, for the academic enterprise to be sustained, the business of healthcare delivery is required to be successful. Understanding the dependence of the academic enterprise on the clinical enterprise is one area that I am working with the Office of Institutional Data and Research to better measure. My goal is to make these interdependencies more transparent so that we can better plan.

The healthcare landscape in the state of California is complex and competitive. I see one of the roles of UC Health to support the work of individual campuses by developing infrastructure and identifying strategic opportunities that will benefit the entire system. Some of this is already occurring through the Leveraging Scale for Value initiative, and this approach has the potential to be extended to employee health, student health, our benefits plans, and importantly to the state of California by finding new ways to deliver value-based care.

Third — as I briefly alluded to — the academic and clinical missions are inseparable. I would like to expand our discussions of ‘System-ness’ to include the academic enterprise. How can we leverage scale for value in our teaching and research missions? In this domain, I would like to be inclusive of all of our health professional schools and develop more opportunities for cross-campus inter-professional education and potentially new degree programs. I would also like for us to address, as a system, the workforce needs of the state of California. There are opportunities for new and creative programs to be developed across our campuses that could be leveraged to deliver more providers to under-served areas of the state, to lower student debt, and to improve patient outcomes.

Finally — I see an opportunity for UC Health to become more active on the legislative front at both state and national levels. Health care is at the forefront of all political discussion today. We must play an active role in informing those discussions and in developing policies that will allow us to continue to live our values and to serve our stakeholders. Developing the policy portfolio and capabilities related to policy analysis, development, and communication is a priority. I will begin legislative visits in Sacramento in January, and our office is working with Government Relations at UCOP to define the impacts of the proposed health legislation being put forward at both the state and federal level.

All of these areas of focus will result in new data, reports, and recommendations, which I will want to begin to share with the HSC. The last thing that I will mention before we begin our meeting in earnest is that our office is working with the chair of the HSC on creating a standing agenda for meetings for 2020. The agenda setting will allow consistency and will provide an opportunity to share new data and insights that I hope will guide your important work. I thank you all for your service to the University of California Health System, and I am grateful for you allowing me to serve with you. I am happy to answer any questions.

Thank you very much.