In my capacity as associate chair for faculty affairs, I am in an excellent position to judge the breadth and quality of the department’s personnel. From this vantage point, it is easy to conclude that the state of the faculty is extremely strong. This is all the more remarkable given the uncertainty caused by current economic conditions nationwide.

Of course the biggest news this year is our success in acquiring external funding for research. We rose from seventh in the nation to fourth in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding among departments of internal medicine. The research projects that garnered those monies will help drive the introduction of novel treatments in the coming years. Although the research facilities and support services are integral parts to the success, it is really the faculty members who deserve the majority of the credit for what has been accomplished.

To build on past successes, we are introducing two major initiatives that we believe will help facilitate the faculty’s work. Both remain in their earliest stages, but will serve to support their excellent work now and in the coming years. First, we are undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of the overall academic environment in the department for faculty. To achieve this, we are in the process of initiating an all-inclusive survey of faculty members to identify those areas where additional support at the department level is needed. Our aim is to make sure all faculty members reach their highest potential. From that analysis we will be able to develop new programs, processes and support systems to assist faculty. Our goal is to further improve the environment for all, but to be certain to identify and address the additional hurdles that women in our department must overcome to ensure success. It is a very exciting initiative with limitless potential as to what programs and resources may result.

The second major initiative is a reassessment of faculty tracks, with emphasis on the research track. This is an effort driven by University leadership, and is designed to support the career development of all people in the track and to remove obstacles that might prevent them from achieving higher academic levels. University leaders have completed an evaluation of the existing research track and are in the process of making recommendations. While awaiting approval and implementation of the final rules, the department has already started moving ahead to ensure research track faculty are given full support and encouragement to develop both scientifically and academically.

Despite an economic environment that has required most medical centers to curtail hiring, our department has made some very strategic recruitments. The work of many of these new faculty is detailed in the division reports that follow. We are building steadily in many areas, and we continue to garner the best of the best.

The department’s faculty also have been critical in the development of several destination programs. Although a smoothly functioning administrative structure and state-of-the-art facilities are necessary components for any such program, it is the scientists who develop new treatments and clinicians who deliver the highest quality and compassionate care that induce patients to come from afar to the University. We are fortunate to have those exceptionally talented faculty members here on our campus.