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## ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

### **Donald E. Tomford, M.A.**

*Chief Department Administrator, Department of Neurosurgery*

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Faculty and staff often describe Donald E. Tomford as the keel of the Neurosurgery ship – unflaggingly involved in all aspects of department administration and the “solution guy” for many problems.

As the Neurosurgery department administrator, Mr. Tomford has navigated the department for more than a decade. All along the way, he has worked to advance the academic, research and service missions of the department and the Medical School.

Mr. Tomford’s contributions helped the department transition from a section to department status in 2001. And he has reorganized the administrative side of the department to respond proactively to changes in the clinical and financial environment. He has been a driving force behind developing the Department of Neurosurgery’s vision and mission – assisting in strategic planning, assessing financial goals and clarifying the department’s vision.

One faculty member said, “Don has guided the Department of Neurosurgery seamlessly while it nearly tripled in size. He is more than a great administrator; he is the moral compass of the department.” During expansion, Mr. Tomford helped his department redesign clinic and referral processes using lean thinking principles and took the time to become certified in lean thinking methods.

In the past year, Mr. Tomford worked tirelessly to make the department more efficient and patient-responsive in terms of referral management, clinic operations and a host of other issues. Another faculty member commented, “Don has made it financially possible to advance our academic and research missions by his wonderful organizational skills.”

He speaks and consults about his administrative techniques so that many of the excellent procedures he developed have become best practices for other departments.

He continues to inspire others through his leadership. He has encouraged the development of office skills, particularly for the many new staff required for the expansion, and this in turn has shaped the department into a smoothly-run organization. He works on a regular basis with department staff to motivate excellence and pride in workmanship. Constantly looking for ways to do things better, he fosters innovation and encourages novel ways of solving problems.

On a daily basis, Mr. Tomford manages the complex operational issues involved in running a busy and technologically dependent department. He does so completely independently and without drawing attention to himself.

One faculty member said, “Don has been very skillful at helping the surgeons in our department in personal skills development, clinical practice development, programmatic development and departmental development. He helps us acquire the resources we need in order to do our job better. He has been excellent at identifying the best people to hire and taking the time and consideration to get them into the right job in our department.”

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He inspires others within the organization to seek a higher plain and level of performance, and consistently demonstrates his own willingness to increase his responsibilities. As one who works diligently to inspire others and to mentor them in becoming better performers, he is a joy to work with, devotes his attention to those working with him, and fosters teamwork and respect with all who work alongside him. His work ethic inspires others to contribute, and he has helped to create a culture of trust and teamwork.

Mr. Tomford is a member of the Business Operations Design Team and has been involved with the BODT Space Committee, deciding how to spend capital as well as assigning space. He is a member of the Managed Care Operations Committee and the Managed Care Contracting Committee. Within the Medical School, he is on the Relative Value Unit Committee and is the Chief Department Administrator representative on the Clinical Operations Management Forum. He also is involved with the Professional Billing and Advisory Committee and in discussions with Blue Cross Blue Shield regarding neurosurgical reimbursement.

He has taken on a leadership role in the national Neurosurgery Executives Resource Value and Education Society and, through this organization, has become a mentor for other neurosurgery administrators around the country.

Mr. Tomford joined U-M in 1983 as manager in facilities, became a patient representative in 1984 and joined the finance department in 1986. Mr. Tomford became the administrator for the Department of Neurosurgery in 1993.

Mr. Tomford holds a bachelor of science degree and a master of arts degree in educational leadership from Eastern Michigan University.

*In his free time, Mr. Tomford enjoys golfing, vacationing with his family and walking his dog Luther. He is the assistant varsity softball coach at Saline High School and for the last four years coached a travel baseball team in the Saline area.*

*Mr. Tomford is grateful to the previous chairman of the department, the late Julian Hoff, M.D., for giving him the opportunity to join such a wonderful department, and thanks the current department chair, Dr. Karin Muraszko, for her continued guidance and unwavering support. He also thanks his wife Susan and his daughters, Kristy, Kari, Ashley and Kim, for understanding that the rewards of working at such a wonderful place outweigh the sacrifices.*