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UC Professor Travels to Haiti in December to Set Up Medical Student Rotations

Berkeley, CA. December 12, 2011. Esteemed UC Davis professor Dr. Douglas Gross will travel to Haiti for a week in mid-December to meet with Haitian hospital administration to develop a medical student rotation program.

Dr. Gross, who is a practicing pediatrician at the UC Davis Medical Center and a professor in the Department of Cell Biology & Human Anatomy, is working with the University of California Haiti Initiative (UCHI) on the project. He will meet with the Dean and Vice Dean of Medicine at the University Hospital of the State University of Haiti (HUEH) to discuss medical school rotations. Dr. Gross plans to invite fourth-year UC medical students to apply to work alongside Haitian medical students and interns at HUEH, which is the largest hospital in Haiti, and prior to the earthquake the hospital treated over 169,000 patients a year.

This rotation will allow for an influx of UC medical students to assist local Haitian doctors in treating patients, exposing them to pediatric care with limited laboratory equipment and clinical conditions common to developing countries not seen in the U.S. HUEH is located in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, and which now has a catchment population of roughly 500,000 people, all of whom are vulnerable and at-risk in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake. Haiti has the highest infant mortality rate in the Western hemisphere, which makes pediatric care a vital service of HUEH which UCHI hopes to strengthen through these rotations. Dr. Gross hopes this will also develop a strong

working relationship between the UC medical students and the Haitian medical community and hopefully lead to participation by UC residents and faculty physicians.

Dr. Gross, who has been a faculty member of UC Davis since 1979 and who has had a strong record of integrating medical education with global health, wanted to look for a way to utilize his knowledge to help others. He volunteered in Haiti immediately after the devastating January 2010 earthquake.

“My most poignant memories in Haiti come from the many tragic stories I was told by survivors in the immediate aftermath of the quake,” he said. “A college girl my daughter's age with her whole future mapped out, then wiped out when her entire college and her home collapsed and her family was on the streets out of work.”

He became involved in UCHI after visiting Haiti.

“After I returned following the earthquake, I was asked by [student co-founder] Tu Tran to help try and engage the UC system in the redevelopment process in Haiti. I agreed, and became the founding Faculty Executive Director,” Dr. Gross said.

Dr. Gross adds, “My hope is that UCHI will continue to grow, establish long-term relationships with UEH (the State University of Haiti) and will help develop new training programs that will address some of the long-standing problems in this very poor neighbor of ours.”

For questions, additional information, supplementary quotes, and more, contact:

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About UCHI

The University of California Haiti Initiative (UCHI) is a student-led

initiative formed in 2010 following the disastrous Haitian earthquake. UCHI features a unique combination of various academic disciplines working across 10 UC campuses in the UC system, with the support of UC faculty and administration, to partner with local Haitian organizations to improve higher education and increase sustainable development.

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