

University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences- Investiture of Dr. Daniel Rahn

Remarks of Darrell G. Kirch, M.D.

President and CEO

Association of American Medical Colleges

September 30, 2010

The honor of serving as president of the AAMC creates special opportunities for me to visit our members, the nation's medical schools and teaching hospitals. By giving me the privilege of speaking today, you also have allowed me to correct a huge deficit, as I must confess that I have never visited the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences campus.

Everything I have seen just in my first few hours here has been most impressive, and I hope each of you is proud of an institution that clearly is a key asset for all the citizens of Arkansas. Most importantly, I see an institution striving to be true to its mission "to teach, to heal, to search, and to serve."

As I traveled here to mark the investiture of your new Chancellor, I found myself thinking about two memorable dinners. The first dinner took place 37 years ago this month during my first weeks as a very anxious, very overwhelmed medical student. In an incredibly gracious gesture, our dean and his wife invited the first-year students to his home for wonderful welcoming dinner. My school was the University of Colorado and the couple hosting us so warmly was Dean Harry P. Ward and his wife, Betty Jo. To be treated with such respect and warmth as a new professional colleague did much to reassure me at a time when I greatly needed it. What an honor and what a pleasure it is to stand here today as your new leader assumes the Harry P. Ward Chancellor's Chair—a chair dedicated to the man who made me personally feel welcome as I started my journey to becoming a doctor!

The second dinner I find myself remembering took place 20 years later, in 1993. Instead of starting medical school, I was starting the process of interviewing for the first time as a candidate to become a medical school dean. I think I was just as anxious and overwhelmed as I had been 20 years earlier. But then, the chairperson of the search committee and his wonderful wife invited me to *their* home for dinner. My warm and welcoming hosts that evening were Dr. Daniel Rahn, his wife Lana, as well as their children Jason, Becky, and Zach, and a very energetic small dog named Augie. Once again, when I needed it greatly, the respect and warmth shown to me made all the difference in the world. Not only did I discover a wonderful colleague in Dan Rahn, but his young family became dear friends to my young family.

You learn important things about people when you break bread with them. In particular, you see their values at work. What I learned about Dan Rahn over dinner that evening in his home is that he has a great heart and a great spirit. With his encouragement, I became Dean of the Medical College of Georgia, and over the next seven years I learned that, superimposed on his foundation of heart and spirit, is a powerful intellect (he was, after all, a physics major at Yale) as well as a tenacious commitment to

excellence. Nothing pleased me more than the fact that he was willing to take his values and all those personal qualities and apply them to every leadership role he has held in the 17 years since I first met him. Most importantly, from being vice chair to being president, I watched him always remain true to the values that I saw around that dinner table at his home.

You have a list of five core values for UAMS: integrity, respect, teamwork, creativity, and excellence. But, the important question about organizational values is not whether you have them posted on your Web site or hanging in the corridors of your buildings. The question is whether you make decisions, take actions, and treat people in a way that is consistent with those values. I am in a unique position to assure you that your new Chancellor will remain true to those values, doing so in a manner that will bring great credit to this important institution.

Today, the state of Arkansas and our nation as a whole stand at a pivotal moment. In a time of great financial stress, institutions like UAMS struggle to provide access to health care to all those in need. At the same time, we increasingly question our ability as a nation to afford that health care. While a bill was passed this year that expands health insurance, we face many unsolved problems in how we actually will turn that legislation into better access to care and healthier lives for all of us.

I am not calling for a revolution; there is much that is good in our health care system, and we definitely do not want to lose that. But, I am saying that meeting the challenges we face in providing accessible, affordable health care will take more than minor incremental steps. It will require transformational change—actions that respect the foundation we have built, while taking us in important new directions. I watched Dan do this at the Medical College of Georgia. We delivered good care, but often in a way that was less than fully attentive to the needs of patients and families. Dan became a leader in the effort to make our care more focused on the patient and their family, and today the Medical College of Georgia is widely recognized as a model for transforming its clinical care from being expert-centered to patient-centered.

The people in this room know we need transformational change in our health care system if we are going to truly meet the needs and fulfill the hopes of all our patients, but bold transformational change often generates opposition. Because of that, it requires a final personal quality: courage. I have seen Dan Rahn display the courage needed to do the right thing as a doctor and the courage needed to do the right thing as a leader. He helped inspire me to find my own courage at key points in my leadership journey. I and all my colleagues around the nation look forward to seeing him join with you as you find your courage to make the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences a powerful force for positive change.

Thank you!