

# Researchers who hold endowed chairs gifted with handcrafted wooden chairs

'You are the best of the best,' Gilliland told recipients at a ceremony Tuesday January 10, 2017 | By Sabin Russell / Fred Hutch News Service



Fred Hutch scientists who have received an endowed faculty chair — the Hutch's highest academic honor — were each presented with an actual chair, handcrafted out of Brown Maple by Amish woodworkers in northeastern Ohio, in a ceremony on Tuesday. Photo by Robert Hood / Fred Hutch News Service

Highly motivated Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center scientists are known for always being on the go, but on Tuesday a grateful institution finally gave a group of the most honored among them a place to sit down.

At a ceremony following a meeting of the Fred Hutch Board of Trustees on Tuesday, the scientists who have received an endowed faculty chair — the Hutch's highest academic honor — were each presented with an actual chair. Handcrafted out of Brown Maple by Amish woodworkers in northeastern Ohio, the chairs are a handsome, and functioning, symbol of appreciation from Fred Hutch and its community of private donors.

"This is a wonderful tradition for us to start," said President and Director Dr. Gary Gilliland, who set an urgent priority shortly after taking the helm of Fred Hutch two years ago to dramatically increase the number of endowed chairs. There were only three when he started, now there are 13, and his goal is to have 40 by 2020.

To jump-start donor funding of the endowed chairs, Gilliland announced a new plan to match private donors for one-half of the \$2 million cost of each of the endowments for 16 new chairs by Dec. 31, 2018. "It's important to honor and recognize your most outstanding faculty," said Gilliland. He added that the money that accompanies these honors can be used to help cover the costs of training, new postdoctoral researchers, and travel, all difficult to cover through grants.

Endowed chairs are indeed a time-honored tradition in academic circles, with some dating back hundreds of years in the world's greatest universities. Nine Hutch researchers received their wooden chairs at the meeting. "You are the best of the best," Gilliland said to them. "And we appreciate the contributions you have made over many years ... it's a real privilege to bring these chairs out."

Gilliland said that raising the number of endowed chairs to 40 will place Fred Hutch in the same ballpark as other major cancer centers in terms of the percentage of faculty so honored, an important consideration for both recruiting and retaining faculty. "It's a great honor to receive a chair," said Dr. Denise Galloway, who was named recipient of a Fred Hutch 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Endowed Chair in 2015, and now has a beautiful piece of furniture to prove it. "It's great to have this chair, and among such good company," said Galloway, a virologist.



Dr. Pete Nelson is pictured holding his handcrafted wooden chair. Photo by Robert Hood / Fred Hutch News Service

Dr. Pete Nelson, recipient of the newly named Endowed Chair for Prostate Cancer Research, was also moved by the honor. "It's a validation of all the time and effort you put into the research," he said. "Everyone who works here feels it is a privilege to work here. For an institution to give back to you is really rare."

Along with the wooden chair and the academic honor comes a cash endowment that supports an annual stipend for the chair holder to use in his or her research. "There some security here, as well as an opportunity to take risks, and go in new directions," Nelson said.

The wooden seats are styled after the captain-style chair that once sat in the office of Dr. E. Donnall Thomas, and was awarded in 2009 to Dr. Hans-Peter Kiem. This one has a five-year term limit, so the chair, known as the José Carreras/E. Donnall Thomas Endowed Chair for Cancer Research, is now in the possession of Dr. Bruce Clurman, Fred Hutch's newly named executive vice president and deputy director.

On Tuesday, Clurman was formally presented with the chair, and Kiem, who was honored with a new Endowed Chair for Cell and Gene Therapy, was presented with a new one from the Ohio workshop. This one is his, and like the other recipients of the new

furnishings, he'll get to keep it. "It's nice to have a permanent chair," he said, "and they are also really comfortable, I was surprised to find." Kiem also noted that cash support that comes with the chair makes a significant difference for his laboratory.

Other faculty members receiving a chair to go with their endowed academic honor were Dr. Garnet Anderson, senior vice president and director of the Public Health Sciences Division, who holds the second of two 40th Anniversary Endowed chairs awarded in 2015; Dr. Mark Groudine, holder of the Mark Groudine Chair for Outstanding Achievements in Science and Service, awarded in 2016; Dr. David Maloney, holder of the Leonard and Norma Klorfine Endowed Chair for Clinical Research, awarded in 2015; Dr. Julie Overbaugh, who was just awarded the Endowed Chair for Graduate Education; and Dr. Oliver Press, awarded in 2016 the David and Patricia Giuliani/Oliver Press Endowed Chair in Cancer Research.

Four other Hutch researchers will receive their wooden chairs but were out of town for the ceremony. They are: Dr. Nancy Davidson, the Hutch's new senior vice president and director for the Clinical Research Division, who was named to the new Endowed Chair for Breast Cancer Research; Dr. Colleen Delaney, who holds the Madeline Dabney Adams Endowed Chair in AML Research; Dr. Julie McElrath, senior vice president and director of the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Division, who received the Joel D. Meyers Endowed Chair in 2016; and Dr. Nina Salama, who was named to last year to the Dr. Penny E. Petersen Memorial Chair for Lymphoma Research, formerly held by Press.