

TYING IT TOGETHER

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN R. BRUMSTED, M.D.

On November 12, 2014, the University's academic medical center partner changed the name it had carried since 1995 from Fletcher Allen Health Care to The University of Vermont Medical Center. At the same time, Fletcher Allen Partners, a network of four hospitals in Vermont and Northern New York established in 2012, was renamed The University of Vermont Health Network. Spearheading this transformation at the medical center was President and Chief Executive Officer John R. Brumsted, M.D. A professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences, Dr. Brumsted has been a member of the UVM College of Medicine faculty since 1985. During that time he has held numerous administrative positions, including senior associate dean for clinical affairs at the College of Medicine and president of the faculty practice. *Vermont Medicine* visited Dr. Brumsted to hear firsthand about the new change of name and its reflection on the relationship of the institutions that practice academic medicine in the region.

VERMONT MEDICINE: This change of names or "brand" seems to be an acknowledgment of a longstanding relationship — would you agree?

JOHN BRUMSTED, M.D.:

Actually, as you go back in history over the past four or five decades this is the third or fourth time that the University and the entity that delivers health care at the academic medical center have tried to bring their names or brands together. It's always been a logical approach to tie together from a branding perspective what's been tied together operationally, financially, academically, and clinically for at least the whole time I've been here. The clinical care delivery system and the College of Medicine and College of Nursing and Health Sciences have been inextricably entwined. Frankly, one of the things that attracted me here in the 1980s was the almost seamless movement — if you're one of the professionals here — between the University and the delivery system. So it was a natural transition. I don't remember any time in the 20-plus years that I've been in an administrative

role at this institution that we've done something this major and had such uniform support. The response from everyone is that it is so logical, so perfect.

VM: You and your University partners must have been working on this for a long time. I'm curious about the genesis of the effort and how it unfolded.

JB: The deans of Medicine and Nursing and Health Sciences — Rick Morin and Patty Prelock — sit on our board, so they've been in the governance conversations around the affiliation since the very start. University President Tom Sullivan and I began our presidencies at roughly the same time, and we've developed a strong relationship that allowed us to do the right thing as far as the co-branding. At the same time that we took that co-branding through the governance approval process, we were also able to realign the affiliation agreement between the University and the clinical delivery system, and reach important agreements to move forward the next building project that will tie our campuses together even more.

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— John Brumsted, M.D., President and CEO, The University of Vermont Health Network



because there is no ownership either way in the literal sense — but it really pulls us all together. Faculty physicians have had a foot in both camps for years, so this ties it all together for them. Our organizations are now clearly linked in a way that anyone can see, and that feels good. We know there can be bumps in the road along the way, but we're in it together and we're much stronger and better able to weather those bumps. If you are a research university, having a highly regarded academic medical center with faculty that are in medicine and medical science and nursing and other health sciences has to be viewed as an incredible strength. For the national audience, for the philanthropic audience, making it absolutely clear that the University of Vermont has a vibrant academic medical center is definitely very beneficial to the University.

VM: What will this name change mean for patients?

JB: It will mean that they can expect uniform, extremely high-quality service. And over time they will experience a dramatic decrease in the "friction" in the system. If you're seen by a primary care physician who believes that you need a different level of care, your move to that next level should be much more seamless. The flow of information that supports the

wherever they seek the services that we're providing, they're going to get the same level of high-quality compassionate care. Everywhere in our network we have to meet that expectation. There are a lot of ways to do that — through joint credentialing and through quality programs with national benchmarks that all of the practitioners in the network adhere to. We've raised expectations and it's important for us to meet those expectations.

VM: And now you have to change a few signs, no?

JB: Probably 300 or so signs in the first wave, and thousands of name badges, I'm very proud of all the planning and work by so many people that has gone into this effort. If you've been around the block in administration, you know that name changing and branding is a big deal. And when you deconstruct it to the granular level that we have now it is amazing. I'm most proud of the degree of competence that we display collectively when we do big things like this, and do them well. **VM**

rationale for your getting that care, the flow back to the primary care physician, access in timing those interactions and making sure that all testing is only done once — all of that friction that can frustrate all of us who are getting care should, over time, be dramatically lessened. And that's part of the equation of increased quality and making care more affordable for folks.

VM: Did you feel that many of your physicians and other professionals who were presenting on the national stage were doing their own renaming on the fly?

JB: Yes — in fact, I did it myself! Our professionals love the change because they don't have to take ten minutes when they're presenting somewhere explaining what a Fletcher Allen is and where they work, and that it really is the academic medical center of Vermont. It is so logical and so accurately describes what's going on here in a way that our previous names just did not.

VM: You've been involved in an intensive and successful effort to raise the quality of care here by many measures. Is this an opportunity to broaden those efforts?

JB: When you have a brand that ties you together, people out in the communities that we serve have the expectation that



Read an extended interview with Dr. Brumsted and UVM President Tom Sullivan. Go to: uvm.edu/medicine/vtmedicine



UVM College of Medicine Dean Rick Morin (center) makes a point at the November 12 University of Vermont Medical Center renaming press conference to (from left) John Brumsted, M.D., UVM President Tom Sullivan, and College of Nursing & Health Sciences Dean Patty Prelock.