

people of note

'You're doing a wonderful job'

**Janine Edwards, chair
of the Department of
Medical Humanities and
Social Sciences.**

The Darrell Kirch fan club gained several hundred new members Oct. 7. Kirch, president and CEO of the Association of American Medical Colleges, told a statewide College of Medicine audience that this school has come a long way since its creation – but also that this country's health-care system has a long way to go.

"We've all been basking in the glow of what you've accomplished in the last 10 years, and you should have your buttons just bursting with pride about that," he said at the medical school's capstone anniversary event. "But the last time I checked, we have 90 years to go in this century, and ... we face some huge challenges ... for medical schools and academic medicine in general, and some huge challenges as a nation. And while you should take pride in where you've gotten, I hope you leave here this evening thinking about where you want to go."

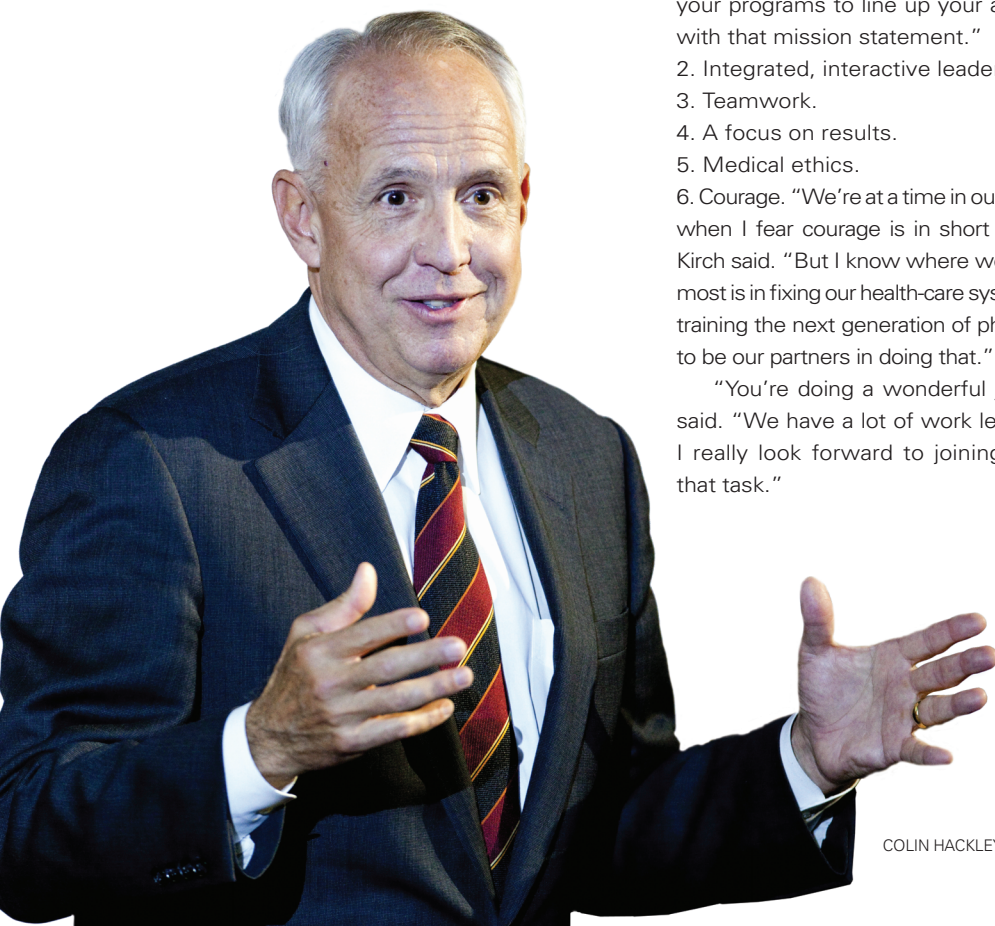
In a voice simultaneously friendly and concerned, Kirch spoke mostly as a patient rather than a CEO. Reviewing the past century of health care, he showed how the U.S. – despite great advances in medical knowledge and education – has created a culture that discourages patient-centered care.

"Who is going to fix this?" he asked. "You need to have some of the best minds in the nation who understand how you deliver health care, how you educate health professionals and how you study – do research on what works and doesn't. You need to have those come together, and they come together in academic medicine."

He described a recipe for change with six ingredients – all of which he had seen in action during his two days at the College of Medicine:

1. A mission statement that you actually intend to fulfill. "You have the most focused mission statement I've ever seen for a medical school," he said. "And you've been relentless in every one of your programs to line up your activities with that mission statement."
2. Integrated, interactive leadership.
3. Teamwork.
4. A focus on results.
5. Medical ethics.
6. Courage. "We're at a time in our country when I fear courage is in short supply," Kirch said. "But I know where we need it most is in fixing our health-care system and training the next generation of physicians to be our partners in doing that."

"You're doing a wonderful job," he said. "We have a lot of work left to do. I really look forward to joining you in that task."



COLIN HACKLEY