

To: BSD Faculty, Other Academic Appointees, and Staff
From: Kenneth S. Polonsky, MD, Dean and EVP for Medical Affairs
Subject: Appointment of Christopher O. Olopade, MBBS, MPH as Dean for Academic Affairs
Date: September 29, 2020

I am delighted to announce the appointment of **Christopher O. “Sola” Olopade, MBBS, MPH**, as **Dean for Academic Affairs** in the Biological Sciences Division, effective October 1, 2020.

Dr. Olopade is Professor of Family Medicine and Medicine in the Section of Pulmonary, Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine. He completed medical school at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, residency at Cook County Hospital in Chicago, and a fellowship at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Before joining our faculty in 2009, Dr. Olopade rose to tenured professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He currently serves as Associate Director and Chair of the Education Committee of the Center for Global Health. Additional committee service includes the Executive Committee for Admissions of the Pritzker School of Medicine (PSOM) and past service on the Committee on Advancement and Promotions (COAP).

Dr. Olopade is an environmental scientist who early recognized the multiple potential health risks of exposure to household air pollution (HAP). HAP and its associated morbidities are severe for one-half of the world’s population—the energy poor who are forced to rely on polluting biomass fuels or kerosene to meet household energy needs. A randomized controlled trial that Dr. Olopade conducted in Nigeria was the first to explore the effects of transitioning pregnant women from polluting fuels to clean-burning ethanol for cooking. He discovered that more mothers in the intervention group (ethanol-users) carried their pregnancies to term than in the control (polluting-fuels) group. Mothers who cooked with ethanol also had healthier babies, lower rates of miscarriage, stillbirth and neonatal deaths, and significantly reduced risk of developing hypertension during pregnancy. Fortunately, the knowledge gained from this intervention research reveals a ready path by which a large portion of humanity may leapfrog to significant gains in health and well-being. The World Health Organization, the Pan African Ethanol Stoves and Fuel Alliance (a coalition of 12 countries), and numerous other international agencies and policy makers have taken note of the tremendous transformative potential of Dr. Olopade’s research. With NIH R01 funding, he is now extending this research in a longitudinal investigation of the impact of in-utero and early childhood exposures to HAP on early childhood development in early childhood. Concurrently, he is conducting asthma research that focuses on the relationship between environmental and genetic factors and how these affect the expression of asthma, particularly in low resource settings. Overall, his research provides a comprehensive look at regional differences, comparing rural and urban settings, ultimately enabling comparisons of such settings to inner city Chicago.

Dr. Olopade’s expertise in global health has also contributed to the success of impactful educational initiatives at the University of Chicago. He created and directs a program of courses in Global Health that have been very well received. These include undergraduate and graduate offerings, including a Global Health Sciences Specialization sequence for College students. As

Director of International Programs at PSOM, Dr. Olopade established the Global Health Scholars Track and helped raise funds to provide scholarships for students interested in global health research. Dr. Olopade directs a very successful, NIH-funded R25 pipeline summer research training program the “Summer Program to Increase Diversity in Biomedical Research and the Physician Workforce.” It encompasses two training initiatives at PSOM. Both are designed to enhance the training experiences of underrepresented minority and disadvantaged students who are interested in pursuing careers in medicine and biomedical research.

As Dean for Academic Affairs, Dr. Olopade will lead the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA). The OAA provides human resource services to academic units and administrative staff on a wide range of topics related to academic personnel management within the BSD. OAA works closely with other administrative units on campus such as the Office of the Provost, Office of Legal Counsel, Staff Benefits, Payroll Office, Medical Staff Office, and others, to provide timely and complete information about BSD academic human resource management. In the role of Dean for Academic Affairs, Dr. Olopade will focus on appointment, reappointment, promotion, and tenure recommendations, interpretation of academic criteria, and academic policy development.

Dr. Olopade succeeds Dr. Martin E. Feder, Elise and Jack Lipsey Professor of Organismal Biology and Anatomy, who has announced his plans to retire next year. Dr. Feder joined the faculty in 1979 and has served in many leadership roles, including Master of the Biological Sciences Collegiate Division. Since his appointment as Dean for Academic Affairs in 2004, Dr. Feder has played an instrumental role during an active period of faculty growth. Dr. Feder will work closely with Dr. Olopade until his retirement to ensure a smooth transition.

Please join me in congratulating Dr. Olopade on his appointment as Dean for Academic Affairs. At an appropriate time in the next few months, we will thank Dr. Feder for his many outstanding contributions to the BSD and the University.