

Dr. Ronald Blanton named Chair of Tropical Medicine

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Dee Boling dboling@tulane.edu

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Dr. Thomas LaVeist, dean of the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, announced today that Dr. Ronald Blanton has been named as chair of the Department of Tropical Medicine. He will also become the William G. Vincent Professor in Tropical Diseases and Hygiene.

“I am thrilled to welcome Ronald Blanton to lead the Department of Tropical Medicine,” said Dean LaVeist. “Dr. Blanton is the consummate physician scientist, and he was a natural choice for the role of chair.”

Dr. Blanton is a medical doctor specializing in tropical medicine and global health. He comes to Tulane from Case Western Reserve University’s School of Medicine where he has served as a professor of international health in the Center for Global Health and Diseases and an adjunct professor in Population Health and Quantitative Sciences (formerly Epidemiology and Biostatistics).

“Tulane was immediately appealing,” said Blanton. “Global health begins here. The study of tropical medicine began here in the U.S., and New Orleans is officially a tropical location,” he added. Case Western Reserve is located in Cleveland, Ohio, where, he said, the link to tropical diseases wasn’t always immediately apparent to others in January.

As an infectious disease specialist, Dr. Blanton points out that both the physical and the biological environments impact health, but social constructs are also part of human biology. “At Tulane, in the school’s Department of Tropical Medicine, all those things come together,” he says.

Dr. Blanton's research has touched on a number of different areas, but his primary interest is in schistosomiasis, a parasitic disease that affects the urinary tract and intestines and may lead to liver damage, kidney failure, and, in children, poor growth and learning difficulties. He has conducted research in the U.S., Kenya, Egypt, and Brazil.

"While Ron's been invited to apply for positions at other institutions, it's *Tulane* that specifically interested him since we were the first in the field in 1912, and we are a school that approaches infectious disease from both the tropical medicine and the public health perspective," said LaVeist. "We are excited to have him lead the department that really started it all here at Tulane, one that is poised to play a pivotal role in global health both locally and around the world."

"Necessity has made me a generalist," said Blanton. He looks forward to being at an institution that integrates the teaching, research, and practical aspects of tropical medicine and public health.

Dr. Blanton's appointment will officially begin October 1st.