Dear Editor:

On behalf of the School of Medicine Faculty Assembly, we write today to express our strongest support for the retention of Dr. Steve Nelson as our Dean.

During Dr. Nelson’s tenure as Dean, the School of Medicine has seen many successes: an increase in the caliber and quantity of its applicant pool with a stronger cohort of matriculating students; increases in the numbers and quality of residency and fellowship programs; enhanced ability to bring in research dollars despite national challenges in securing this funding; greater collaboration with community partners such as the Louisiana Cancer Research Consortium here in New Orleans and the Pennington Biomedical Center in Baton Rouge; expansion of LSU clinical services with >120,000 patients visits annually; successful partnering with private healthcare entities such as Peoples Health, to name one.

In these years, LSUHSC has seen some of its hardest times, including recovery from Hurricane Katrina, significant cuts in state support to less than 10% of the school’s budget, and national funding that is amongst the lowest in the National Institutes of Health history. Despite these challenges, the School of Medicine continues to grow and thrive. During this time, Dr. Nelson has been a true leader, honestly acknowledging our difficulties yet retaining hope and optimism. He has worked tirelessly around the school, community and state, and continues to speak forcefully for what he feels is best for our missions. He listens to all members of the School of Medicine, takes their concerns to heart and works creatively to resolve seemingly insurmountable challenges. While we acknowledge this to be a time of great and exciting change for LSU, we feel a change in leadership would be detrimental for us right now. Our momentum and enthusiasm for growth, outreach, and innovation is due in large part to the inspiration we derive from our Dean.

Even (and perhaps especially) in a time of great change at LSU and its primary clinical training sites, we can think of no one more effective and competent to guide the School of Medicine. If LSU were unable to retain Dr. Nelson, the loss would be that of Louisiana’s citizens, researchers, physicians, and medical training programs. We cannot afford such a loss.

Sincerely,

Murtuza Ali, MD
Michael Levitzky, PhD
Stacey Holman, MD
Andrew Hollenbach, PhD
Donna Neumann, PhD

On behalf of the LSU School of Medicine Faculty Assembly