

## At the End of a Momentous Year for the UCSF AIDS Research Institute

Dec 17, 2020

All things must end, and I knew that my full retirement would begin at the end of 2020. I did not know how the year would turn our world upside down. All of us involved in the early AIDS epidemic recall that experience as fast-paced and significant. But little could we have anticipated how rapidly a novel pandemic could sweep the globe. Hopefully we will not forget the lesson we are in the midst of learning.

As with the AIDS epidemic, UCSF has responded immediately and honorably to the pandemic. Many in the ARI family are playing lead roles in research, care and prevention. COVID-19 has, of course, led many to pivot at least temporarily from careers solely focused on HIV. Hopefully the rollout of coronavirus vaccines will be swift and effective, helping to bring the pandemic under control and allow a return to our previous work. I am concerned, however, given that our "old" epidemic is still very real: Our efforts to cure HIV infection, care for those suffering from the disease and its stigma and ultimately to end the epidemic remain as vital as ever.

The ARI has in the past year been shaken, but we've adjusted to stark new realities. I'm proud that we've continued to provide support for our HIV community during this critical time of great need. The ARI has provided focused resources for HIV/AIDS research efforts, supporting career success particularly for early-career faculty and advanced trainees. The ARI has also responded to very real demands to respond to the social justice crisis that has gripped our country. The ARI provides salary support for infectious disease fellows, enabling them to receive research training at Ward 86 or in labs. We also award direct research grants to colleagues at critical career junctures and smaller "boost" awards, in partnership with CFAR, for critical one-time needs. To strengthen our community's diversity, the ARI can add to recruitment packages for URM applicants, and we partner with the Dean's Diversity office to fund HIV-focused proposals through that new grant mechanism.

As my time leading the UCSF ARI ends, I am confident that the Dean will continue to support our vibrant family while using this transition as an opportunity to develop strategies to best respond to the new realities we face in today's very different world.

I thank each of you for the creativity and passion you've devoted to your work and for your mentorship of the next generations of those in our field. It's been an honor to work with you, and I hope to stay engaged with your exciting and hugely important endeavors.

Please, also join me in congratulating Diane Havlir as she takes on the role of as interim

director of the UCSF AIDS Research Institute.

For more information, please read about the ARI leadership transition [1].

## **Paul Volberding**

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[1] <https://medschool.ucsf.edu/news/leadership-transitions-school-medicine-1>