Content and Storytelling
Jennifer James, Communications Director
Vol XCIII, No. 311
Wednesday, July 23 2014
$4.25

UNC Health Care Communications

How We Are Organized

UNC Health Care Across the State

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We are content creators & storytellers

Stories Are More Than Words on a Page
Our stories have multiple components.

And More Than a Press Release
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Compelling content makes good stories
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School of Medicine Web Site

http://med.unc.edu

UNC Health Care News Room

http://news.unchealthcare.org
Storytelling is about collaboration, connections & relationship building.

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Strong writing
Photography & slideshow
Personal vignettes
Media outreach
Cross-collaboration
Twitter chat
Future collaboration

And More Than a Press Release

Five Questions With.....

Top of the Line

The next chapter in the story of UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center begins with a new director, Ned Sharpless, an oncologist with a story to tell.


Ned Sharpless isn’t your garden-variety scientist. He’s quite tall, Thomas More on the importance of being principled. He’ll mention George Washington when describing how to run a lab. He’ll point to a picture of the devil tempting Jesus to show that the easy road is not the best road. And he’ll use The Clash—the band Five Days—two illustrate the benefit of breaking through conventional wisdom.

Self-effacing and funny, Sharpless concurs his research with anyone and make it interesting. But these attributes aren’t what earned him his new job as director of the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center. A free-wheeling researcher with exceptional leadership skills, and a penchant to think well beyond the next grant or paper, Sharpless is an innovator and entrepreneur whose research inspired the creation of two companies aimed at helping people in his home state of North Carolina and around the world.

We sat down with Dr. Sharpless two weeks before he took the helm at UNC Lineberger on January 2 to ask him about his journey from UNC as an undergraduate to UNC as a professor and new director of a research organization with 300 scientists from 25 departments across campus. What follows is the story of how Dr. Sharpless landed at the helm of one of the nation’s oldest and largest cancer centers.

Why did you pursue math as an undergraduate and then go to medical school, both at UNC, and then choose to become a cancer researcher?

My early and early school careers were characterized by a strong lack of planning. I was a bit temperament for my age. Many people have a plan, and they’re on a mission to get something done. I wasn’t really like that, though I did love college. I was in the early English and math major but that became untenable. At some point, it became easier to fulfill my major requirements for math.

I remember in some upper level math classes, they gave us two problems and a week to do them. That was really fun. No one could help you, there was no internet back then. You really had to figure it out yourself. But I also loved physics, English and political science. I just had a great, well-rounded situation at UNC, and I still believe in that. I think that writing essays on Shakespeare as an English major has helped me to write crisp, clear, concise explanations of my science, and that’s really good for grants and scientific papers.
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Real Nurses

Video

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