Michael Whitfield, PhD, Named Chair of the Department of Biomedical Data Science at Dartmouth's Geisel School of Medicine

HANOVER, NH - Michael L. Whitfield, PhD, has been named the chair of the Department of Biomedical Data Science at Dartmouth's Geisel School of Medicine. Whitfield, a professor of biomedical data science (BMDS) and molecular and systems biology, has served as the department's interim chair since November 2017.

In addition to his leadership role in BMDS, Whitfield is co-director of the Burroughs Wellcome Fund Big Data in the Life Sciences Training Program, which promotes integration of computational and experimental sciences, cross-training students to be equally comfortable at the computer as they are at the bench. He also served as director of the Quantitative Biomedical Sciences Program from 2016-2018. In that role, he worked with faculty in the Departments of BMDS and Epidemiology to establish master's programs in health data science and epidemiology.

Michael Whitfield, PhD

"I am very pleased that Mike has agreed to take on this important role," says Geisel Dean Duane Compton, PhD. "As interim chair, Mike has demonstrated outstanding leadership of a department that is doing very exciting work in the field of data science. I look forward to working with Mike to continue building this department and nurturing its innovative research."

Since joining Dartmouth in 2003, Whitfield has built a successful interdisciplinary research program focused on the genomics, genetics, and mechanisms of systemic autoimmune disease and fibrosis. His lab has brought together experimental and computational scientists, as well as physician-scientists to develop diagnostics based on genome-wide gene expression, and to mine big data and genomic networks in systemic autoimmune disease to identify disease mechanisms and novel therapeutic targets. Much of this research has concentrated on understanding the heterogeneity in scleroderma and the interpretation of outcomes in clinical trials. Whitfield was the first to identify molecular gene expression subsets in scleroderma and to develop diagnostics to stratify these patients. His group has developed multi-tissue networks of fibrosis that suggest interactions between innate immune cells and the stroma are key drivers of pathogenesis. Whitfield has actively collaborated across academic disciplines and with biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies to move discoveries from his lab into implementation in the clinic, making precision medicine a real possibility for patients with scleroderma.

"I am very excited to take on leadership of the Department of Biomedical Data Science at Geisel," says Whitfield. "Biomedical data science is an extremely important area of growth, both at the institution and nationally. There is a huge demand for scientists with the skills and knowledge to analyze the massive amounts of data being generated in biology, healthcare, and beyond. The Department of Biomedical Data Science is poised to lead in these areas. I look forward to further leading and growing the department."

Whitfield graduated with honors from North Carolina State University with degrees in biochemistry and chemistry in 1994. He received his PhD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in biochemistry and biophysics in 1999, and then performed post-doctoral training in genomics and bioinformatics in the Department of Genetics at Stanford University School of Medicine, where he published seminal papers on the genomic analyses of the cell division cycle and scleroderma.

# # #

Founded in 1797, the **Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth** strives to improve the lives of the communities it serves through excellence in learning, discovery, and healing. The Geisel School of Medicine is renowned for its leadership in medical education, healthcare policy and delivery science, biomedical research, global health, and in creating innovations that improve lives worldwide. As one of America's leading medical schools, Dartmouth's Geisel School of Medicine is committed to training new generations of diverse leaders who will help solve our most vexing challenges in healthcare.