

UMMC’s new Grenada, Holmes Co. leader aims to enhance patient experience

By Ruth Cummins
UMMC

Wes Sigler didn’t take his master’s in accounting into the workplace intent on becoming a hospital administration executive.

But his skills that would complement the financial side of the business were noticed early in his career by a manager from a global accountancy powerhouse. Sigler left his job as a staff accountant for a large insurance company to become a senior associate at then-Coopers & Lybrand, beginning a 20-plus year journey in hospital administration.

On May 14, the veteran administrator became the new chief executive officer of the University of Mississippi Medical Center Grenada and UMMC Holmes County in Lexington. Since then, he’s been busy meeting employees in Grenada

and Lexington and at the main campus in Jackson.

Sigler “is an experienced hospital administrator and will be an outstanding addition to the team,” said Kevin Cook, CEO of the Health System. “Wes will have a big impact on the organization and the Grenada and Holmes County communities.”

Born in Starkville when his parents were students at Mississippi State University, Sigler grew up in Haleyville, Ala. He received his B.S. in accounting from the University of North Alabama in 1988 and his master of professional accountancy from MSU in 1990.

He came to UMMC from North Mississippi Medical Center’s Eupora hospital, where he served as administrator since October 2014. There, he oversaw a 43-bed acute care facility and 36-

bed nursing home with net revenues of \$25 million and 200 full-time employees. Sigler also implemented a self-managed hospitalist service, added digital mammography technology and oversaw \$2 million-plus in capital projects.

From August to September 2014, Sigler was interim administrator for the Quitman County Hospital in Marks, overseeing the 25-bed critical access hospital and its 60-bed nursing home. From May 2011 to July 2014, he was CEO of Tri-Lakes Medical Center in Batesville, a 112-bed acute care and behavioral health facility with 300 full-time employees and \$25 million in net revenues.

At Tri-Lakes, he oversaw \$10 million in capital projects, reopened an ICU that was closed by the previous owner, and recruited dozens of physicians and sub-

specialists to the market and the medical center staff.

Sigler led Bolivar Medical Center in Cleveland as CEO from July 2008 to April 2011, recruiting 16 physicians to the 165-bed, acute care hospital and 35-bed nursing home. Sigler also added a geriatric psychiatry unit, wound care center and pain management program. Sigler led \$10 million in capital projects and grew the interventional radiology service from fewer than 100 procedures annually to more than 1,000 annually.

Sigler also has served in executive roles at a number of hospitals in Tennessee and Alabama.

“I’ve been kind of a nomad,” Sigler joked.

He sees lots of opportunity for enhancing patient care in Grenada and Lexington, especially in improving patient experience. “There are things we can do in Lexington to build upon our strengths, such as our swing bed line and therapy services,” he said of the 25-bed critical access hospital that saw a completely rebuilt emergency department in 2015 as part of a \$4 million renovation.

But the bigger possibilities are at UMMC Grenada, the 142-bed hospital that serves surrounding counties, not just the city. It offers an array of specialty care ranging from cardiology to pediatric orthopedics to obstetrics and gynecology.

“We have some physician recruiting needs that we’re attending to, and we will always be working on quality and making sure all of our processes are working well,” Sigler said. “The ED is the front-door to our hospital, and we want to make sure our patients always have a good experience, not just in the ED, but throughout the hospital.”

Upgrades to the catheterization lab are planned, along with new initiatives to improve patient experience. UMMC Grenada in recent months has recruited new providers, including orthopedic surgeon Dr. Donna DiPaolo, OB/GYN Dr. Kimberley Farmer; pediatrician Dr. Bailey Gooze; and general surgeon Dr. Jenetta Thompson.

Sigler and his wife Gina will celebrate 28 years of marriage in August. They have two children, Emily, 23, a tax accountant in Memphis who is completing requirements to become a certified public accountant; and son Alex, 21, who later this year will report to Parris Island, South Carolina, for training as a U.S. Marine.

Sigler likes to spend time with his family when he’s not working, in addition to being active outdoors on the golf course and tennis courts. Running and walk-

THE WICKER REPORT

By: United States Senator Roger Wicker



Wicker Reaffirms the Importance of NATO’s Shared Defense

At Brussels Summit, President Calls on Allies to Meet Spending Commitments

President Trump delivered a tough but necessary message at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization summit in Brussels this month: Allies must meet, if not exceed, their commitments to defense spending. NATO’s future strength depends on the contributions of all members.

The President was justified in making this demand. Every one of NATO’s 29 members has pledged to spend two percent of their gross domestic product on defense by 2024. And yet, only five countries, including the United States, are currently doing so.

Burden Cannot Fall Solely on American Taxpayers

Defense spending goes hand in hand with one of the primary benefits of NATO membership: the assurance that allies will come to the aid of each other in the wake of a direct attack. When members fail to meet their individual responsibilities, it affects the alliance’s collective defense capabilities. Countries such as the United States are forced to pick up the slack.

Defense Secretary James Mattis put it this way when meeting with the defense ministers of NATO nations last year: “No longer can the American taxpayer carry a disproportionate share of the defense of Western values. Americans cannot care more for your children’s future security than you do.” Those words echoed a prediction made in 2011 by former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who said Americans would be reluctant “to expend increasingly precious funds on behalf of nations that are apparently unwilling to devote the necessary resources or make the necessary changes to be serious and capable partners in their own defense.” President Trump’s firm stance in Brussels reflected these longstanding and valid concerns from the American

people.

Senate Resolution Reiterates Support for NATO, Condemns Russian Aggression

Prior to the Brussels meeting, I introduced a bipartisan resolution in the Senate that underscored the President’s call for NATO members to meet their defense spending obligations. More broadly, the resolution reiterated the importance of NATO’s role in defending global security and democracy amid new threats to the values we hold dear. It also reaffirmed the Senate’s steadfast support for the protection of any NATO member state against Russian aggression.

The Kremlin has shown it has no qualms about violating international order and the territorial integrity of a sovereign nation, given its invasions of Ukraine and Georgia in recent years. As chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I led a hearing on July 17 specifically focused on Russia’s 10-year occupation in Georgia, which has caused untold harm on innocent civilians. Russia’s aggression in these neighboring states is more than just its flexing of military muscle. Moscow has long expressed a strong opposition to Georgia and Ukraine earning NATO membership.

Brussels Declaration Renews Spending Commitments

The outcome of the Brussels summit was encouraging; all 29 members signed a communiqué that represents a constructive blueprint to strengthen the alliance. The declaration specifically addresses the issue of defense spending, noting that national plans have been adopted by two-thirds of members to spend two percent of GDP by 2024. It also points out Russia’s many campaigns to destabilize Euro-Atlantic security, including its chemical attack against a former Russian spy in England this year.

The President was right to confront the difficult issue of defense spending when attending the NATO summit in Brussels. NATO has been at the bedrock of transatlantic security for nearly 70 years. With complex global challenges, the continued strength of the alliance is all the more imperative. This starts with the cooperation and contribution of every participating member.

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