

Robert C. Robbins, M.D.

Visiting Distinguished Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University and Professor of Surgery, University of Arizona

22nd President of the University of Arizona from 2017 to 2024

Dr. Robert C. Robbins is an accomplished physician, academic leader, and innovator with a distinguished career spanning academic medicine, biomedical research, and higher education leadership. He currently serves as a Visiting Distinguished Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and Professor of Surgery at the University of Arizona, where he previously served as the 22nd President of the University of Arizona from 2017 to 2024 .

During his presidency, Dr. Robbins led the university through a period of significant growth and transformation, advancing its national research profile, expanding interdisciplinary scholarship, and guiding the institution through the COVID-19 pandemic. His tenure emphasized innovation, student success, and economic development, strengthening Arizona's role as a national leader in public higher education.

Before joining the University of Arizona, Dr. Robbins served as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Texas Medical Center (TMC) in Houston, the largest medical complex in the world. There, he led the creation of TMC³, a landmark 30-acre translational research and commercialization campus designed to accelerate collaboration among leading academic institutions, biotech firms, and healthcare organizations. His leadership at TMC was marked by a focus on innovation, global partnerships, and entrepreneurial ecosystem development .

Earlier in his career, Dr. Robbins spent nearly two decades at Stanford University, where he was Professor and Chair of the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery, Director of the Stanford Institute for Cardiovascular Medicine, and Thelma and Henry Doelger Professor of Cardiovascular Surgery II. He directed Stanford's Heart, Heart-Lung, and Lung Transplantation Program, pioneering advances in stem cell research, transplant immunology, and mechanical cardiac support. His research program—funded by the National Institutes of Health, the American Heart Association, and the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine—produced more than 300 peer-reviewed publications and multiple U.S. patents .

A renowned surgeon and educator, Dr. Robbins has held leadership positions in many of the nation's most respected scientific and professional societies, including serving as President of the International Society of Heart and Lung Transplantation, President of the Western Thoracic Surgical Association, and President of the American Heart Association's Western States Affiliate. He has also served on numerous nonprofit and corporate boards, including the American Heart Association, Arizona Commerce Authority, and the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas – Houston Branch .

A Mississippi native, Dr. Robbins earned his M.D. from the University of Mississippi Medical Center, following a B.S. in Chemistry from Millsaps College and an A.A. from Jones Junior College. He completed his general surgery and cardiothoracic surgery training at Stanford University Hospital, with advanced fellowships in congenital heart surgery at Emory University and the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, Australia .

Throughout his career, Dr. Robbins has been recognized for his visionary leadership, scientific innovation, and commitment to advancing medicine and education. His work continues to bridge clinical excellence, research discovery, and institutional transformation in ways that shape the future of healthcare and higher learning.