

School of Pharmacy Launches 'Promises to Keep' Capital Campaign

Contributed by Dabney Weems
05/15/2009

OXFORD,

Miss. - The University of Mississippi School of Pharmacy has formally launched a \$5 million capital campaign, "Promises to Keep," to elevate the school's standing among America's premier public pharmacy programs.

Funds

from the campaign are to help build a new pharmacy school building at the UM Medical Center in Jackson, create endowments for student scholarships and fellowships, and create endowments to support faculty.

"The

success of the capital campaign is essential to the continuing success of the School of Pharmacy," said pharmacy Dean Barbara G. Wells. "In these harsh economic times, it is even more important for those of us who are able to step up and support our educational and religious institutions and our charities. If we do not, then literally decades of progress can be lost in a short period of time, and the most vulnerable people and programs will suffer."

The new 26,000-square-foot

building, slated to break ground later this year, will feature a technology-driven classroom, small group meeting rooms to enhance the problem-based learning curriculum and laboratory space for faculty research.

Besides classroom and research space, the facility includes a student lounge area and space for student association meetings. The new facility will allow pharmacy students to have direct access to faculty, preceptors and administrators under one roof.

The additional space will allow for a 28 percent increase in the pharmacy school's enrollment, thereby addressing the critical shortage of pharmacists. The new building also is imperative for the school's continuing accreditation, as its national accrediting agency found existing facilities at the Jackson Medical Mall to be inadequate and out of compliance with both current and new accreditation standards.

"In addition to meeting accreditation standards and allowing us to continue the enrollment increase, the new pharmacy building at the Medical Center will improve the morale of students and faculty immeasurably," Wells said. "It will allow us to integrate our students into the medical center environment and allow our students to learn, work and socialize in a truly inter-professional setting."

The campaign also focuses on increasing endowment funds benefiting student scholarships. Eighty-two percent of the 2009 Doctor of Pharmacy class graduated with student loan debt averaging more than \$49,000. Scholarship endowments provide incentives necessary to attract promising students as well as assist students with financial burdens. One goal of the campaign is to raise \$1.5 million in named endowments for merit and need-based scholarships and fellowships.

"It is imperative especially during these times of economic challenge and continuously escalating tuition costs that we exhaust all efforts to assist our students in successfully completing their professional degree program while minimizing their debt burden," said Marvin C. Wilson, associate dean for academic and student affairs. "It is indeed tragic in these times of practitioner shortage when the completion of the degree program is jeopardized or, worse yet, denied by the need to work full time to support oneself and/or dependents. Affordability should never be the factor depriving a qualified individual from the opportunity to achieve a professional degree."

Endowments raised to support faculty will allow the school to attract and retain the best and brightest professors, clinicians and researchers.

"Although our pharmacy school is 100 years old, we have no fully funded endowed professorships or endowed chairs," Wells said. "These instruments allow us to hire and retain the best teachers and researchers. I can think of no better way to support both students and faculty or to make a gift that perpetually supports and strengthens teaching and research programs than to establish an endowed professorship or endowed chair."

"Indeed, the capital campaign is about taking the steps to ensure that we keep the promises made long ago," Wells said. "We owe it to our students to provide them with the very best education available anywhere. Our faculty members are dedicated to doing their part and more. Our students are highly motivated to achieve academic success and to better the lives of those they serve. In spite of difficult economic times, by working together to achieve the shared vision, opportunities will abound for us to continue our growth, to elevate the practice of pharmacy, and to improve the care of our patients."

For more information, visit <http://www.umpharmacycampaign.org> or contact Sarah Hollis at shollis@olemiss.edu or 800-340-9542. For more information on the School of Pharmacy, go to <http://www.pharmacy.olemiss.edu> .