Business strategy leads to giving that produces results

Martha Crowninshield, a member of the Harvard Medical School Board of Fellows and founding co-chair of the Harvard NeuroDiscovery Center (HNDC) advisory Council, is a savvy businesswoman. Several years ago, she asked researchers at the School and HNDC to develop a business plan that described their new and bold approach to understanding the genetic causes of multiple sclerosis. She then skillfully brokered a connection between the researchers and a cadre of committed friends and associates to discuss the plan and offer support—including her own generous financial commitment—to make it possible. The goal was to identify virtually all MS risk genes—a task to be successfully accomplished this year.

Crowninshield recently made a new commitment of $1,000,000 toward MS research and discovery to build on this knowledge to find better therapies for this disease, particularly for the progressive form.

“I’m a business person,” says Crowninshield. “Business is all about people. If I know the people, know I can trust them and am satisfied, after due diligence, that they know what they are doing, then I can work with them. That’s how I feel about the people I’ve met at Harvard Medical School.”

Crowninshield also points to the collaboration she sees amongst researchers at HMS and within the HNDC—whose tagline is “Collaborating to cure neurodegenerative disease”—as key to her continued commitment. “We’re looking for cures for disease,” she says. “There is incredible human capital here to do it.”

Established in 2001 by Joseph Martin, MD, PhD (Dean of Harvard Medical School, 1997-2007), the Harvard NeuroDiscovery Center is a pioneering biomedical research group focused on ending suffering from MS, Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, and other neurodegenerative diseases. To learn more, visit http://www.neurodiscovery.harvard.edu.

With support from JDRF, researchers work to find cure for diabetes

The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) has committed $4.4 million to support the work of Diane Mathis, PhD, Professor of Pathology and Director of the JDRF Center for Immunological Tolerance in Type 1 Diabetes at Harvard Medical School. The JDRF has been supporting the Center since its inception seven years ago.

The JDRF support has been funding eight interrelated research projects and three technology cores to help the Center target a root cause of type 1 diabetes: what leads to the destruction of insulin-producing beta cells that initiate type 1 diabetes? Mathis and her colleagues will use this knowledge to develop strategies for preventing or reversing the disease. Specifically, this gift will allow the Center to focus on learning to re-establish immunological tolerance in order to find a cure for type 1 diabetes.

The support from the JDRF will make possible several research projects that seek to better understand how breakdowns in the immune system can lead to type 1 diabetes, and how molecular and cellular agents in the immune system can be harnessed for therapeutic ends. One project will also explore the relationship between autoimmunity and inflammation in non-obese diabetes, and will test the effectiveness of anti-inflammatory reagents in treating diabetes.

“The JDRF-funded Center serves as a crystal for immunological research on type 1 diabetes at Harvard, allowing us, as a team, to more effectively tackle some of the research questions critical for achieving a cure,” says Mathis.

The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation is a global leader in supporting research aimed to cure type 1 diabetes.

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Dear Friends,

Looking back over the last several months, I am awed again at the tremendous generosity and commitment to Harvard Medical School shown by so many of our friends and supporters. This issue of the Benefactor features several of your stories.

Martha Crowninshield, a member of the Board of Fellows and a long-time supporter of the Harvard NeuroDiscovery Center, has made a commitment of $1,000,000 toward finding better treatments, and eventually cures, for multiple sclerosis. Thanks to Martha’s dedication, and others who share her mission, I feel confident that we will make tremendous progress toward ending this disease.

The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) has been a supporter of Harvard Medical School for seven years. This organization’s commitment to finding cures for type 1 diabetes has led to a recent gift of $4.4 million to advance the work of Diane Mathis, PhD. Dr. Mathis leads a world-class team of biomedical researchers who are striving to understand how to harness the molecular and cellular agents in the body’s immune system to treat this disease.

Another renowned researcher at Harvard Medical School is Junying Yuan, PhD, Professor of Cell Biology. With a $1.17 million gift from the Ellison Medical Foundation, Dr. Yuan is working to unlock the secrets behind a protein that has been implicated in the development of several age-related neurodegenerative disorders.

These are just a few examples of how powerful partnerships between our generous supporters and our faculty drive potentially life-saving research forward.

Several hundred alumni also returned to campus this spring to celebrate their reunions and to show their support for their alma mater. Individual reunion gifts, including one from an anonymous alumnus for $1.4 million, and several for $100,000 or more joined numerous gifts from alumni to total more than $3.9 million to support students and other important initiatives at the School.

All of these gifts, and others from friends whose stories appear in this issue, underscore how vital the research strength of Harvard Medical School is toward tackling the diseases that we care most about curing and toward educating the future leaders of medicine, here and around the globe.

Harvard Medical School is truly a dynamic institution, but we remain strong thanks to your continued support. Thank you for your commitment and for all you do for the School.

Regards,

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Research tests new therapeutic pathways for diseases of aging

Junying Yuan, PhD committed early in her career to unlocking the mechanisms of aging-related illnesses—neurodegenerative diseases, as well as cancer, arteriosclerosis, and others. A powerful encounter with a Huntington’s disease patient led Yuan to set her research agenda: understanding the role of cell damage and death in disease progression.

This year a Senior Scholar in Aging Award of $1,017,000 from the Ellison Medical Foundation will enable Yuan to pursue her work, focusing on a cytokine called TNF. Increased levels of this protein contribute to the development of many disorders, implicated, for example, in the neuronal damage associated with neurodegenerative conditions. This makes TNF a prime suspect in disease pathogenesis—and also a prime target for new therapeutics that might reduce its levels.

Junying Yuan’s work could lead to “new therapeutic approaches for inhibiting disease development and promoting healthy longevity.”

Gift supports information sharing about prostate cancer

A diagnosis of prostate cancer and other diseases that affect the prostate gland brings with it many difficult decisions to be made about treatment, lifestyle changes, and other issues. Brothers James and Leon Gorman, along with their late brother John, wanted to help make the process easier through their $600,000 gift to help support the work of Marc B. Garnick, MD, chief medical advisor of the 2010 Annual Report on Prostate Diseases, a production of the Harvard Health Publications and an accompanying website, http://www.harvardprostateknowledge.org.

“Having good, understandable information available helps tremendously.”
—James and Leon Gorman


“Having good, understandable information available helps tremendously.”

Garnick’s report and corresponding website explain in clear lay language the many complexities of prostate cancer, other common conditions of the prostate gland, as well as answers questions about erectile dysfunction and testosterone replacement therapy. Interviews with patients, and discussions with physicians, complete the report.

“A cancer diagnosis is hard,” say the Gormans, who want to make the report widely accessible. “But having good, understandable information available along with others’ stories about their experiences helps tremendously. We wanted to provide that for other men.”

Only the best come to Harvard Medical School. When you support them you also make a contribution to the future leadership of medical care and research.

GIVE TO THE ALUMNI FUND OR TO THE FRIENDS OF HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL.

Contact: Shaké Sulikyan, Director of Annual Giving
617-384-8414 shake_sulikyan@hms.harvard.edu
Or give online at http://give.hms.harvard.edu

THE FUTURE OF MEDICINE BEGINS HERE
Gift that gives back supports leadership through student scholarships

Phyllis Gardner, MD ’76, and her husband, Andrew Perlman, MD, PhD, have directed their gift of $250,000 toward two goals: reducing debt for Harvard Medical students and making a difference in the world.

“We believe in giving back,” says Gardner. They trust Harvard Medical School to solve one of our society’s most pressing issues: medical care delivery. Their giving to create scholarships and financial aid for HMS students supports that mission.

“A high level of debt causes new graduates to go into lucrative specialties, instead of where the need is the greatest: pediatrics, primary care, and internal medicine,” says Gardner. Adds Perlman: “I feel very upset that young people are graduating from medical school and don’t even want to do a residency because they will have to wait so long to be reimbursed.”

“We believe in giving back.” —Phyllis Gardner, MD ’76

Gardner, who credits HMS for being a “preeminent influence,” both professionally and personally in her life, praises the Harvard Medical Alumni Council, on which she serves, for pushing the School to reduce student debt.

“Whatsoever we can do to mitigate that, we want to do,” she says.

Tragic injury inspires desire to continue making a difference

Jack Sisson suffered a traumatic brain injury several years ago as a result of a bad accident. Through his journey to find care and treatment for pain, he became very interested in helping the homeless in his hometown of Tallahassee, Florida and elsewhere. He became acquainted with James O’Connell, MD ’82, President of Boston Health Care for the Homeless, and particularly with O’Connell’s work to survey homeless individuals for schizophrenia and traumatic brain injury in order to know how to best treat them. Sisson’s gift of a $200,000 charitable gift annuity to Harvard Medical School will support neuroscience research.

“A charitable gift annuity guarantees an income for life while supporting the mission of Harvard Medical School.”

“I make myself an expert in everything I get myself involved in,” says Sisson. His gift is also a smart choice as the annuity, guaranteed for life, will help pay for his long-term care, while also helping to advance medical education and research at the School.

Persistency pays off for supporter of MD/PhD program

Larry Mayola wanted to support the best in medicine, so he came to Harvard Medical School with a gift in the form of a $150,000 charitable annuity. A life long working man who says he has never made more than $40,000 in one year, Mayola says he wanted to use his accumulated wealth to help support an MD/PhD researcher who may someday be the next Jonas Salk.

“They need funding from someplace, and I’m it,” he says matter-of-factly. “I don’t know why everybody doesn’t do it.”

Mayola says he is committed to two real things in his 79th year. As a certified nursing assistant—having received his certification at age 62—he cares for the dying. And with an insatiable curiosity for learning new and interesting information, he has pursued research on medical science. His journeys inspired him to support future physicians. “I never wavered at that,” he says.

Larry Mayola hasn’t made a fortune in his life, but he is committed to using the wealth he has accumulated to advance medical research.
Clinical professorships link HMS and the hospitals

Harvard Medicine is composed of Harvard Medical School and 17 affiliated first-class hospitals and research institutions. Faculty from each of these institutions holds HMS appointments; many hold the additional distinction of a named professorship. These coveted positions are awarded to faculty who are known experts in their fields and who continue to make major contributions to clinical medicine and research. The generosity of numerous individuals have made possible many endowed named professorships at Harvard Medical School. Below are those that were initiated between January 1 and June 30, 2010.

Gragoudas Professorship, Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary
The Department of Ophthalmology at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary (MEEI), along with grateful patients of Evangelos S. Gragoudas, MD, gave generously to establish the Stelios Evangelos Gragoudas Professorship in Ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School. The professorship is named in honor of Gragoudas’s father. For more than a quarter century, Dr. Gragoudas has been a leading physician on staff at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, as well as a member of the Harvard Medical School faculty. The first incumbent will be based at MEEI.

Egan Professorship, Children’s Hospital
The Egan Family Foundation has established the Egan Family Foundation Professorship in the field of Transitional Medicine at Harvard Medical School. The goal of the professorship is to better serve young adult patients who have survived congenital diseases that traditionally have been limited to pediatric patients. The first incumbent will be Ellis Jacob Neufeld from Children’s Hospital Boston.

Whitten Professorship, Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary
The Department of Ophthalmology at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary (MEEI), along with grateful patients of Joan Miller, MD ’84, Chief and Chair of Ophthalmology at MEEI and the Henry Willard Williams Professor of Ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School, along with the gifts of many grateful patients, has established the Charles Edward Whitten Professorship in Ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School in honor of her father, Evangelos Gragoudas, MD, a revered physician at MEEI, has been nominated to be the first incumbent.

Marks Professorship, Massachusetts General Hospital
The Nancy Lurie Marks Foundation has established the Lurie Family Autism Professorship at Harvard Medical School. The first incumbent will be named at Massachusetts General Hospital and will serve as the director of the Lurie Family Autism Center, based at the hospital. This gift is part of a large commitment the Marks family and foundation have made in the Harvard Medical community to advance the research into and treatment of autism and the training of physicians to care for individuals, particularly adults, with autism.

Friedman Professorship, Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary
The Solman and Libe Friedman Foundation, along with support from friends of the Friedmans and generous funding from the Department of Ophthalmology at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary (MEEI), has established the Solman and Libe Friedman Professorship in Ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School. The professorship was established in honor of Dr. Ephraim Friedman, former President of MEEI and former Chair of the Department of Ophthalmology. Recruitment efforts are underway to identify and install the inaugural incumbent of this prestigious professorship, who will be based at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary.

The Edward N. and Della L. Thome Memorial Foundation gave $105,000 new commitment to the Loreen Arbus Fellowship in Neuroscience.

Proud family tradition continues with support for women researchers

Lorenz Arbus hails from the lights of Hollywood fame. Daughter of the legendary Leonard H. Goldenson, who created the ABC television network, she is the first woman in the United States to head up programming for a national network. Yet her fame amongst many at Harvard Medical School is for her commitment to continuing the generous philanthropy begun by her father, whose contributions to the School are memorialized on the building that bears his name on the Quadrangle. Arbus has continued her support with a $105,000 new commitment to the Loreen Arbus Fellowship in Neuroscience.

Awarded through the Shore Fellowships Program, the fellowship’s purpose is to enhance the quality and diversity of the Harvard Medical School faculty at all ranks.

The Commonwealth Fund pledged $100,000 to support the work of Joan Reede, MD, Dean for Diversity and Community Partnership, and the Harvard University Fellowships in Minority Health Policy. The program is designed to prepare physicians for leadership roles in designing and implementing public health policy and practice on a national, state, or local level, turning them into leaders in minority health. The pledge will support the five 2011-2012 fellows in their practicum programs, which will analyze public policy or management processes, and grant them master’s degrees in health policy.
Reunion gifts score big points

Memorial Day weekend looked a little different this year for alumni from HMS classes ending in 0 and 5 who returned to campus for Reunion and Alumni Day. The new time presented a great opportunity for a twist from tradition, including an elegant gala and cocktail reception at the Boston Harbor Hotel and a slate of fun activities including a Duck Tour and visits to Fenway Park and area museums for families and guests. Two full days of symposia covered topics as wide-ranging as the 40-year war on cancer, relief efforts in Haiti, and the Class of 1985’s “Medical Odyssey.”

“You are a major force behind our ability to accept the very best students, independent of their socioeconomic circumstances.” —Dean Jeffrey S. Flier, MD

All totaled, the reunion classes contributed more than $1 million to the Alumni Fund and more than $2.9 million to HMS. In his state of the school address to the alumni, Dean Jeffrey S. Flier, MD, acknowledged the alumni and thanked especially the work of the Reunion Gift Committee. “You are a major force behind our ability to accept the very best students, independent of their socioeconomic circumstances,” he said.

For a recap of the 2010 Alumni Day and reunion, including photos and videos from the symposia and the annual business meeting, visit http://alumni.hms.harvard.edu.
A Strategy for Success

Harvard Medical School is a world leader in medical education, health care policy, global health, and biomedical research. The examples are many: raising a respected voice in the current national health care debate; providing a force on the ground in Haiti following the devastating earthquake there in January; graduating the nation’s best doctors; and producing Nobel Prize-winning research. Dean Jeffrey S. Flier’s strategic plan is geared toward advancing HMS’s standard of excellence and international leadership in key areas.

Knowledge of Disease
Harvard Medical School is home to the largest community of biomedical researchers in the world. Through robust departments in the basic and social sciences as well as expertise in areas such as bioengineering, stem cell and regenerative biology, and therapeutic discovery Harvard Medical School is poised to make great breakthroughs in the most vexing diseases of our time, including cancer, Alzheimer’s disease, and autism, as well as diabetes, mental illness, muscular dystrophies, and six other degenerative diseases.

Health around the World
Harvard Medical School is committed to improving the health of people around the world, from villagers in the poorest, most remote communities of central Africa to those living in western urban metropolises. Whether it is developing ways to improve the delivery of medical care in Rwanda or changing U.S. national health care policy, HMS’s key priority areas of global health and social science will enhance and continue HMS global leadership.

Leaders in Medicine
The medical education curriculum developed at Harvard Medical School serves as a national model. Continually ranked the best in the country by U.S. News and World Report, Harvard Medical School attracts the most gifted students and graduates the most sought after doctors. Alumni become specialists in their fields, advise presidents, shape national policy, win Nobel Prizes, and more.

Your partnership with us to end human suffering caused by disease is creating the future of medicine here and around the globe. There are many ways to support Harvard Medical School. To discuss the best way for you, please contact Christopher Painter, Executive Director of Individual Giving, at (617) 384-8462, christopher_painter@hms.harvard.edu.

“Harvard Medicine has always been a magnet for curious, creative individuals who are encouraged and supported to pursue ambitious research and innovative teaching and who keep the pipeline of scientific excellence flowing.” —Jeffrey S. Flier, MD, Dean, Faculty of Medicine

Harvard Medical School is the third oldest medical school in the United States, founded in 1782. Building A, the first building of the “new” campus, was built in 1906 from marble originally intended for the New York Public Library. In 2002, nearly 100 years after the original marshland was transformed into a premier center of medical education and research, the administration building was rededicated as the Ellen R. and Melvin J. Gordon Hall of Medicine.
Neal Baer, MD ’96, hosted a symposium for friends and alumni in Los Angeles in March that explored the future of personalized medicine. Baer is Executive Producer of the NBC television series “Law & Order: Special Victims Unit.” Previously, he was Executive Producer for the series “ER,” for which he received five Emmy nominations. (To view the webcast, visit the HMS Alumni website at http://alumni.hms.harvard.edu/events/events-archive.html)