University Seeks $2 Billion

A five-year $2 billion capital campaign began this year at the University of Chicago, one of the largest fundraising campaigns ever undertaken by any university.

Named the “Chicago Initiative,” the campaign raised $702 million before the campaign was announced publicly and has since raised an additional $30 million. The campaign is seeking support from alumni, parents, friends and other donors for critical university priorities, including programs to help recruit and retain top students, teachers and researchers.

Other campaign priorities include increased endowment for more than 35 full professorships and other faculty support, expansion of cornerstone programs in the humanities and social sciences, and support for the professional programs in business, law, public policy and social service. The campaign particularly will strengthen research efforts in the natural sciences, medicine and computation.

Friends and alumni of the Biological Sciences Division are making meaningful gifts to support the division’s mission and, in some cases, also to honor a respected colleague, mentor, family member or friend.

Pritzker Gift, One of Largest

The Pritzker family of Chicago recently announced a $30 million gift to the Chicago Initiative to support the Biological Sciences Division and the Pritzker School of Medicine, which was named for the family in 1968.

The Pritzker Foundation, whose board includes Robert, Thomas, Nicholas and Penny Pritzker, made the gift on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the family law firm Pritzker & Pritzker. The family is widely known for its philanthropy as well as its many business ventures, including the Hyatt Hotel chain.

“We have long supported the University of Chicago and the medical school that bears our name, and we chose to make this new gift for two reasons family spokesman Thomas Pritzker said. “The first is our longstanding pride in the university’s advancement of human knowledge, especially in medical research and the training of many of the nation’s leading physicians and scientists, and in the important work they have done to help improve the lives of so many.

First Jacobson Professor Appointed

Medical oncologist Mark J. Ratain, MD, has been appointed the inaugural Leon O. Jacobson Professor of Medicine in the Pritzker School of Medicine. The professorship was established this year with the help of friends and family of Leon Jacobson, MD ’39, who died in 1992.

Jacobson is celebrated as a great teacher and scientist who, with his colleagues in 1943, helped develop nitrogen mustard, the first cancer chemotherapeutic agent. He was later credited with laying the groundwork for bone marrow transplantation and initiating the search for the hormone erythropoietin, which regulates red blood cell production in mammals. Erythropoietin is now the basis for a drug that treats chemotherapy-induced anemia in some cancer patients.

Much like Jacobson, Ratain is among an elite group of investigators whose innovations have helped launch major breakthroughs in treatments and have inspired expansion of the field. With his colleagues, Ratain pioneered the field of cancer pharmacogenetics — the study of the genetic factors that influence drug metabolism, toxicity and response to chemotherapy.

Ratain is chairman of the Committee on Clinical Pharmacology and associate director for clinical sciences at the university’s Cancer Research Center. He also serves as chairman for the Pharmacogenetics of Anticancer Agents Research Group, a multidisciplinary committee working to individualize treatments for people with cancer. The group is comprised of investigators from the University of Chicago, St. Jude Children’s Research Center, Tulane University and the University of Pittsburgh.
“The second is our sincere belief that with our support and that of other like-minded people, the university will continue to be the best place to invest in future discoveries,” he said.

University of Chicago President Don Michael Randel, PhD, said the gift comes at an important moment in the history of science and of the university.

“I am extremely grateful to the Pritzker family,” he said. “By providing this gift now, the Pritzkers will build on a long tradition of biomedical research at the University of Chicago, ensuring the benefits of that research for generations to come.”

Lectureship Honors Prominent Physicist

A new lectureship in the Institute for Biophysical Dynamics (IBD) will help advance the exchange of ideas across scientific disciplines. The Frederick Seitz Lectureship, established by former faculty member Atallah Kappas, MD ’50, in honor of the eminent physicist, will highlight national figures in the sciences whose careers and interests span the scientific spectrum.

Seitz, now president emeritus of Rockefeller University, contributed more than 50 years of research on the evolution of solid state physics. His work helped scientists better understand quantum mechanics, defect and transport properties of solids, color centers and radiation damage. His 1940 textbook, Modern Theory of Solids, educated generations of students.

“In his personal qualities, his professional career and the leadership positions he has held, Dr. Seitz singularly reflects the goals and aspirations of Chicago’s new Institute for Biophysical Dynamics,” Kappas said.

The IBD, which is devoted to the study of converging developments in the biological and physical sciences, will be the centerpiece for the university’s new Interdisciplinary Research Building, to be constructed on 57th Street and Drexel Avenue. Scheduled for completion in 2004, the new building will bring scientists from the biological sciences, the medical school and the physical sciences under one roof to promote interdisciplinary collaboration.

Teams of IBD researchers, theoreticians and computational investigators work across disciplines to gain new insights in fields as diverse as molecular-based computing and the treatment of disease.

Alumnus Makes Deferred Gift

Coleman R. Seskind, AB ’55, SB ’56, SM/MD ’59, recently made a $2 million gift to support the medical school. The gift, in the form of a bequest intention, will establish the Coleman R. Seskind Professorship in the Pritzker School of Medicine upon his death. An internist in downtown Chicago, Seskind has been a consistent and generous supporter of the BSD for many years. He has held many leadership positions in the alumni association and currently serves as chairman of the editorial committee.

University Chosen as Sun Center of Excellence

The University of Chicago has been named a Sun Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics, Computational Biology and Medical Informatics.

Sun Microsystems Inc. of Santa Clara, Calif., provides computers for academics, research, high-performance computing systems, campus administration, digital libraries and student instruction systems.

“Our relationship with Sun reflects the importance that is now being placed on computational and informatics sciences in basic biological and clinical research,” said Nancy Cox, PhD, scientific director of the university’s Bioinformatics and Computational Biology Core Facility.

The university joins five other centers that are developing advanced technology to do research in the rapidly expanding field of computational biology. Computation — the storage and analysis of large amounts of data — is essential in biological research, especially genomics, structural biology and molecular evolutionary genetics. Likewise, clinical data also must be warehoused and analyzed in large volumes.

Data from the sequencing of genomes along with anonymous patient clinical and genetic data help researchers answer long-standing biological questions and, in turn, discover new ways to treat disease. The university’s task will be to develop a data warehouse that links genomic data to patient genetic and clinical data and to develop tools to mine that data in biologically and medically meaningful ways.

Marshall Gift Supports Student Aid

Charles E. Marshall, SB ’38, MD ’42, recently increased his already remarkable record of support for student aid. For many years Marshall and his late wife Mary Quimbach Marshall, SB ’40, supported the P. R. Cannon Student Loan Fund, established in memory of the Chicago pathologist. Though he and his wife had intended eventually to make an estate gift to the University of Chicago, Marshall decided to respond to the Chicago Initiative’s call to increase endowed scholarship support. His recent $275,000 gift and $1 million pledge helps support the Dr. Charles and Mary Marshall Scholarship Fund, an endowed fund he established a few years ago. Marshall made his donation through a charitable gift annuity, which will provide him with income for the rest of his life and ultimately will support the scholarship fund upon his death. Marshall is a retired surgeon currently living in Las Vegas, Nev.