



UNIVERSITY CAMPAIGN

‘Thanks a Billion!’

The Meliora Challenge, the University’s comprehensive fundraising effort, passes the \$1 billion milestone.

By Sara Miller

THE UNIVERSITY IS MOVING INTO THE FINAL phase of its first comprehensive fundraising initiative on a historic note, reaching the \$1 billion mark in November. The milestone places Rochester among 29 private universities that have raised at least \$1 billion and moves the University closer to the \$1.2 billion goal set for *The Meliora Challenge* in 2011.

▲ **GIFTED PHYSICIAN:** A commitment from ophthalmologist James Aquavella—above, examining Spencer Eisenhauer at the Flaum Eye Institute—helped *The Meliora Challenge* reach the \$1 billion mark this fall.

“This is a special day, literally a red-letter day,” said President Joel Seligman during a November 20 announcement. “I encourage everyone to take a deep breath and stop and smell the roses. It’s important to celebrate the victories.”

Planned to be completed in 2016, the Campaign is the largest comprehensive fundraising effort in the University’s history.

The \$1.2 billion goal incorporates five priorities: \$225 million for student support, primarily endowed scholarships and fellowships; \$350 million for faculty support with an emphasis on endowed professorships; \$375 million to support programs

vital to the schools and units; \$130 million in unrestricted support through the annual fund; and \$120 million for new facilities and campus renovations.

“We are grateful for the vision, generosity, and support of our alumni, friends, faculty, staff, parents, and students,” Seligman said. “Let me especially thank [Chief Advancement Officer] Jim Thompson and the great Advancement team for our progress to date.

“On behalf of the University, I say to them all: ‘Thanks a billion!’”

Noting that the University will continue to face challenges, particularly due to changes in health care and other issues affecting the funding of federal agencies, Seligman also referred to remarks made by Rochester’s first president, Martin Brewer Anderson:

“But let me add, ‘Our work is but begun.’ We still have much to do to effectively support our faculty, students, and staff and to develop programs that place us in

the vanguard of cutting-edge research, the highest quality education, clinical care, professional schools, and the creative arts.”

A commitment of more than \$4 million from James Aquavella, professor of ophthalmology, pushed *The Meliora Challenge* past the historic mark. A clinician and researcher in the University’s Flaum Eye Institute, Aquavella made the gift in memory of his late wife, Kay, who was a nurse and administrator dedicated to the establishment of the institute.

Aquavella, who joined the University in 1963 and specializes in corneal surgery, said that he and his wife were guided by three great passions: their commitment to one another and their work together; the advancement of ophthalmology; and the University.

“Our gift to the University combines them all,” he said, noting that his work as a clinician and scientist and his wife’s work as a nurse and administrator at the institute are a “case study in the principles of Meliora.”

“I merely represent the many thousands of people who gave gifts of all sizes,” he said.

G. Robert Witmer Jr. ’59, chair emeritus of the Board of Trustees, said the Campaign is one of the University’s most significant initiatives in the five decades that he has been connected to Rochester, noting that the effort is an important partnership among alumni, faculty, staff, and members of the Rochester community.

Beginning with the founding of the University in 1850, and continuing through the 1920s campaigns that helped establish the River Campus and the Medical Center, the Rochester community has a long history of supporting the University, he said.

“The Rochester community has assisted the University and vice versa,” Witmer said. “It’s a symbiotic relationship, and the Rochester community has helped us accomplish what we have achieved to date.”

Seligman said that while major fundraising efforts often are characterized by the amount of money that they raise, he hoped members of the University community would remember that the fundamental purpose of the Campaign is to support faculty, clinicians, alumni, and students as they try to make a difference in the lives of those around them.

“When we started the Campaign, we realized that it’s not about the dollars,” Seligman said. “Dollars enable you. The Campaign is about touching people’s lives.” 

Sara Miller is University spokesperson.

Meliora Milestones

Chaired by University Trustees Cathy Minehan ’68, dean of Simmons College School of Management in Boston and a former U.S. Federal Reserve executive, and Rich Handler ’83, chairman and CEO of Jefferies & Company, *The Meliora Challenge* was publicly launched in 2011 after a quiet phase that began in 2005. The \$1.2 billion goal incorporates five areas, including student support, primarily endowed scholarships and fellowships; faculty support with an emphasis on endowed professorships; support for school and unit programs; unrestricted support through the annual fund; and new facilities and campus renovations.

The Medical Center is a major part of the overall Campaign with a goal of \$650 million, of which \$510 million has already been raised. Among the key priorities are programs and research to find breakthroughs that will treat—and perhaps cure—many diseases, such as muscular dystrophy, Alzheimer’s, spinal cord injury, Parkinson’s, and cancer.

Key gifts since 2005 include:

- A \$30 million commitment from Board Chair Ed Hajim ’58, and his wife, Barbara, to fund student scholarships and to support the endowment of the Hajim School of Engineering & Applied Sciences.
- \$25 million in support from Rich Handler and his wife, Martha, for student scholarships.
- A \$20 million commitment from Paychex founder B. Thomas Golisano for the construction of a new Golisano Children’s Hospital, scheduled to open in 2015.
- \$14 million in support from Trustee Robert Goergen ’60 and his wife, Pamela, including \$10 million for the Robert B. Goergen Hall for Biomedical Engineering and Optics.
- A \$10 million gift from Eastman Kodak

Donor Data

- Represented by all 50 states and 78 countries
- 90,000-plus donors in the Rochester area
- 50,000-plus donors outside Rochester
- 38 percent of faculty and staff have contributed to the Campaign

For more information about *The Meliora Challenge*, visit campaign.rochester.edu.



NEW FACILITY: One of several new buildings supported by the Campaign, Rettner Hall opened in 2013.

Company for the renovation of what is now Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre.

- A \$10 million gift from Rochester businessman E. Philip Saunders and his wife, Carole, to support research programs in muscular dystrophy, cancer, and translational medicine and to name the Saunders Research Building. Saunders dedicated the gift to veterans of the U.S. armed forces.
- More than \$10 million in support from the Wilmot family and the James P. Wilmot Foundation for the James P. Wilmot Cancer Center.
- A multimillion commitment from Trustee Thomas Sloan ’65, ’67 (MS) and his wife, Linda Sloan ’67, to support arts programs.

Recent projects supported by the Campaign include:

- Golisano Children’s Hospital, an ongoing project scheduled to be completed in 2015.
- Ronald Rettner Hall for Media Arts and Innovation, opened in 2013.
- Raymond F. LeChase Hall, home to the Warner School of Education, opened in 2013.
- The Eastman Theatre renovation and expansion project, completed in 2011.

Facts & Figures

AS OF DEC. 1, 2013

- *The Meliora Challenge*: \$1 billion
- 68 endowed professorships
- 247 endowed student scholarships and fellowships
- 2,700 George Eastman Circle members