

A gift from Dr. Norman Payson ('73) will help ease the financial burden of medical school for students at Geisel. On a recent visit to Geisel, Payson met with second-year medical students Rachel LaRocca (left) and Bridget Curley.



## GIVING BACK, PAYING FORWARD

Photos by Lars Blackmore

**A \$1 million gift from an alumnus will lighten the financial burden of medical school for Geisel students.**

**GIVING IN SUPPORT OF STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS FEELS GOOD.** Dr. Norman Payson ('73) can attest to that. He and his wife, Melinda, recently made a \$1 million gift that brings their total giving to scholarships at Geisel to \$3.5 million. Their most recent gift will benefit students from New Hampshire and those in the MD-MBA program.

“Every time I visit the school and have an interaction with the students, the faculty, the institution, I feel so good about giving,” says Payson, who is a member of the Geisel Board of Overseers and lives in Hopkinton, N.H. “The students are so intelligent, so high-minded, such great people. They make me feel optimistic about the profession of medicine and about our society.”

“I don’t know how I could be at medical school if not for the support of Dr. Payson and his wife,” says Rachel

Martin, a third-year student at Geisel from Holderness, N.H. “Most of my friends never left the town we grew up in.”

Payson can relate to Martin’s experience. Growing up in New Jersey in a family of modest means, he attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on scholarship and Dartmouth Medical School with support from the school and from the U.S. Public Health Service. As a result, Payson didn’t graduate with as much of the financial

pressures that many medical students have today and was free to choose family medicine as his specialty. Gradually, Payson moved into health-care leadership and has served at the helm of multiple health-care organizations, including two S&P 500 companies. Most recently, he was Chairman and CEO of Apria Healthcare.

“I hate to see students under so much financial stress and so much debt when they graduate,” says Payson. That’s why he remains committed to giving back.

Nearly all Geisel students graduate with debt—on average, about \$144,000. Although well below the national average for medical schools, this level of educational debt can be crushing for graduates who still have several years of training ahead of them. As a need-blind



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institution, Geisel is committed to meeting the financial needs of the students it admits. But that is getting more and more difficult.

"There is a growing gap between student need and our capacity to meet it," says G. Dino Koff, associate dean for admissions and student services. Growing Geisel's scholarship endowment, says Koff, is essential to continuing to admit the best and the brightest students, creating a diverse student body, and ensuring that Geisel graduates are driven by their passions and not by their medical school debt.

Dieu-Thi Nguyen (D'07, Med'11) immigrated to Manchester, N.H., from Vietnam with her family as a child. "I dreamt of being a doctor at the age of seven while still living in Vietnam,"

says Nguyen, who was a Payson scholarship recipient while a student at Geisel. "I wanted to alleviate the sufferings of the sick and the poor people I saw on the streets."

Nguyen is now in her final year of residency at the University of Virginia and a medical director at the Charlottesville Free Clinic. "The generosity of Dr. Payson and his wife and other donors has inspired me to give back to the community," she says. She hopes one day to build a clinic in Vietnam.

"It's rewarding when our alumni like Norm Payson pay back and pay forward to make the school they love even stronger," says Dean Chip Souba. "That support means a great deal to our students, not just financially but emotionally."

Giving back to the school that gave him his start is clearly rewarding for Payson, too.

"It goes to my heart strings," says Payson. "Dartmouth helped me become a doctor, which I'm always grateful for. I look at my education here with a lot of fondness. I have a deep-seated identification with the students because I've followed a similar pathway in life."

"I can think of no other career as fulfilling and as privileged as medicine, but the monetary aspect of training is overwhelming," adds Martin. "Scholarships lighten that burden so that we can focus on what is truly important—the health of our patients and our communities."

JENNIFER DURGIN