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The Price of Success

More scholarship support is needed



When Jessica Bobula Foster (Medicine '10) was accepted to the School of Medicine, she had already received several offers of admission and financial aid from other good medical schools. So when U.Va. offered her a scholarship, it immediately rose to the top of her list.

"The scholarship has been an amazing gift," said Dr. Foster, who received her degree in May. "Unlike many of my friends, I felt no burden to choose a specialty based on the need to pay back loans." She plans a specialty in pediatrics and a fellowship in hematology/oncology.

This year, however, the School of Medicine was so successful in attracting a talented first-year class that its available scholarship funding is stretched thin.

With the opening of the new Claude Moore Medical Education Building and an innovative Next Generation curriculum in place, the acceptance rate of the School's offers of admission was higher than expected. Even though 18 students have agreed to defer admission until next year, 155 first-year medical school

students arrived this fall, up from 143 a year ago, according to Randolph J. Canterbury, M.D., senior associate dean for medical education.

"This fall's incoming class is the largest—and strongest—group of medical students we have ever had," said Steven T. DeKosky, M.D., U.Va. vice president and dean of the School of Medicine. "The Class of 2014 is a diverse group with the highest MCATs and GPAs in the history of the School, and they have valuable experience in community service."

The larger class size, however, along with the rising cost of educating students in an interactive environment that stresses critical thinking and exceptional patient skills, has created funding shortages. To accommodate the extra students, Dr. Canterbury said, it was necessary to borrow from funding slated for future classes. In addition, the 18 students who deferred their admission until next year were guaranteed \$10,000 in scholarship support for all four years of their studies. The School of Medicine has attracted some of the nation's top students, but needs increased

funding to ensure their success.

The annual cost of attending medical school at U.Va. is about \$58,500 for Virginians and \$69,500 for out-of-state students. Thanks to existing scholarships, the Medical School offers assistance to about 65 percent of students. Even so, medical students currently graduate with an average debt of more than \$132,000.

This fall, the School of Medicine has launched an initiative to raise at least \$720,000 in medical scholarships to help students who have deferred admission until next year. A number of lead donors are needed to secure the success of this effort. In addition, smaller pledges of \$20,000 (\$5,000 a year paid over four years) will provide support for individual students.

"Our alumni and friends have generously helped us build important new facilities and fund vital research and teaching," Dr. DeKosky said. "Our need now is for scholarship support to help tremendously deserving, hard-working students graduate from medical school without a burdensome debt load." 🏠