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Dean's Message

Ithough it's important that we focus our attention on such things as the curriculum in order to maintain our school's solid reputation, too often we overlook changes outside the classroom that affect our students' ability to excel.

One such change is the extraordinary financial pressures felt by many students today. These pressures not only distract and worry students, but they also significantly undermine our school's mission and that of medical education as a whole in our country.

All medical schools today must look long and hard at ways they can better assist their students financially, and UB is no exception. The urgency of this is highlighted by the fact that the average debt for graduating medical students today is \$120,280. (UB medical students currently graduate with an average debt of \$109,000.)

At UB, the cost to attend medical school has risen from \$1,600 per year in 1976 to \$18,800 per year in 2005. Although data nationwide now indicate that tuition at state schools such as UB is less than at private schools, it is increasing at public schools faster than at private schools and this affects the type of applicants to state schools. Of further concern is the fact that even though the average debt for students is going up, the proportion of students who carry debt is actually going down slightly in public schools—in other words, public schools are beginning to look like private schools.

Our school's mission, in part, is to train physicians for New York State. In order to do that effectively, we need our student body to be the brightest it can be and to reflect the diverse socioeconomic demographics of our state.

This is especially important given the fact that physicians from poor rural or urban areas often return home to practice medicine, thereby helping to address the dire needs of medically underserved populations.

Unfortunately, medical schools in our state (and in other states) do not reflect this socioeconomic diversity, as data indicate that over 60 percent of medical students today come from families with incomes in the top 20 percent bracket.

Each year, our school attracts about 2,800 applicants, many of whom have very high MCAT scores. In recent years, however, we have had only about \$85,000 in scholarship funds to distribute among 145 incoming MD/PhD students. This leaves us no choice but to award minuscule scholarships. As a result, students who would contribute to making our incoming class the brightest and most diverse often go elsewhere due to scholarship enticements. In 2005–2006, our students funded over 80 percent of their educational costs through loans—far too much!

For all these reasons and many more, we have launched a new campaign to raise \$1.25 million for the Medical Alumni Endowed Scholarship Fund over the next five years through reunion giving and the annual fund program. The campaign, called *Practice Giving* . . . the Alumni Scholarship Campaign for UB Medicine, is being chaired by John Bodkin II, MD '76.

I encourage you to turn to the outside back cover of this issue to learn more about how you can make a gift to the *Practice Giving* campaign. The help you provide to our students today will significantly affect the quality of our medical school—and health care—well into the future.

FREDERICK C. MORIN III, MD

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