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Ferris optometry faculty support campaign for new building

BIG RAPIDS – Ferris State University’s Michigan College of Optometry (MCO), buoyed by a unanimous show of support from its faculty members, has launched a campaign for a new state-of-the-art optometry building on campus.

The “Realizing The Vision” building campaign seeks to raise private support to provide appropriate, modern facilities to educate future optometrists to serve the needs of MCO and the regional community. The new building will enable the college to continue providing the best clinical education to its students and highest quality vision care to its patients in a much more effective and cost-efficient manner.

One hundred percent of the MCO faculty has made gifts or pledges to the campaign totaling \$140,000. That total is expected to increase as some donors are considering naming opportunities for conference rooms, examination rooms and laboratories. Faculty members have five years to fulfill their pledges.

In addition, many faculty have volunteered to help contact alumni and professional acquaintances. MCO will conduct a phon-a-thon in support of the new building in January with faculty members calling former students and other alumni. Word of the appeal is spreading among the Michigan optometry community since the campaign was first announced in early October at a meeting of the Michigan Optometric Association in Lansing.

“The current building, Pennock Hall, was built as a residence hall and as such is hardly an adequate or appropriate facility for the preparation of optometrists in the 21st century,” said Dean Kevin Alexander. “A new building, specifically designed to train the optometrist of the future, will bring great value to the Ferris campus and be an asset to the health care of the people of Michigan.”

Working from its outdated headquarters for the past 30 years, MCO has developed a reputation of providing the finest optometric training in the United States, producing more than half of the practicing optometrists in Michigan, said Dr. Alexander. A leader in vision care technology, patient care delivery and curricular innovation, MCO is committed to producing graduates who are highly skilled in the art and science of optometry, he added.

“As the scope of optometric practice has grown more complex, it has become increasingly difficult for MCO to provide the resources and learning environment its students and faculty need and deserve in its current location in the decades-old Pennock Hall,” stressed Alexander.

A new facility would be crucial to improving the educational experiences for students and the patient care for the many who visit MCO’s specialty clinics. “We see children for vision and learning problems and eye-coordination problems,” said Mark Swan, associate professor and chief of pediatric and binocular vision service. “I would like a pediatrics reception area that is more inviting for children. A custom-designed building for optometry would also help us to better serve patients with wheelchairs. A new facility would also help our students see more patients for more learning experiences,” explained Dr. Swan.



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As part of its \$40 million capital outlay budget request to the State of Michigan for fiscal year 2004 and 2005, Ferris has included \$25 million for a new optometry building. Critical private support, coupled with University and State funding, will enable Ferris to move forward with plans to build an estimated 80,000-square-foot modern health-care facility with state-of-the-art eye and vision care. Ferris officials plan to locate the new facility near the Colleges of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences on the west side of campus to create an educational synergy in the University's health sciences.

- 30 -