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Gift will help LU students attend medical school

November 14, 2007 | Mitzi Bible

An \$800,000 bequest to Liberty University will make it possible for more LU students to afford to attend Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM), a medical school in Blacksburg that specializes in medical missions.

The announcement was made by LU chancellor Jerry Falwell Jr. at Wednesday's convocation. The money comes from the estate of Pauline T. Harbaugh.

According to a letter from a Mesa, Ariz., attorney, Harbaugh's husband, Duward, "was unable to attend medical school due to financial reasons and had always hoped that this gift to Liberty University could be used, at least in part, to assist needy students with their dreams of becoming physicians."

Early last week, Falwell had scheduled for John Rocovich, an attorney in Roanoke who is also the founder and chairman of VCOM, to speak at this Wednesday's convocation. On Friday of last week, he received the letter.

"The timing was nothing short of miraculous," he said.

Rocovich was joined by the VCOM's president, James Wolfe, and Dean Dixie Rawlins at Wednesday's convocation.

Rocovich said the announcement caught him by surprise but will be put to good use.

"So many of the students will say to me, if I could get my loans paid off I could go [to medical school] and go to the mission field," he said. "We have students who come there with a heart for missions. ... I'm telling you, after you go hug a few of those AIDS children in those orphanages or see those little malnourished children ... you want to do it if you can do it. You cannot come back without being a different person."

VCOM, which began in fall 2003, graduated its first class in June.

Falwell said Liberty made an agreement with the school four years ago, to help LU graduates transition to the medical school. He said interest earned from the endowment each year will be distributed amongst the LU students who decide to attend VCOM. Currently there are about 16 students there who are Liberty graduates.

Rocovich said the school is the only medical college in the United States to offer residency training in missionary medicine. Its focus is on the rural and medically underserved areas of

Virginia, North Carolina and the Appalachian region and on providing scientific research to improve the health of all humans.

To learn more about the scholarship, e-mail ktripp@liberty.edu. For more information about the medical school, go to www.vcom.vt.edu.